



'If you're going to protect orang-utans, you need to protect their habitat.'

Daniel Murdiyarto
CIFOR scientist

Two for the price of one

REDD projects are primarily about keeping forest carbon where it is—in the forests—rather than in the atmosphere. But there could be other benefits too. REDD projects could help to put money into the hands of communities who look after forests. They could also play an important role in protecting biodiversity.

In 2008, CIFOR scientist Daniel Murdiyarto was asked by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for advice on how its projects in Indonesia could take climate change into account. One of these projects was the Orangutan Conservation Service Program, which protects the orang-utan. When designing the programme, USAID had not considered the potential impacts of climate change.

Murdiyarto visited Tanjung Puting National Park, in Central Kalimantan, interviewed national park staff and the local community, and assessed the threats posed to the resident population of 6000 orang-utans. Around 16 000 hectares to the north of the park had already been cleared for oil palm plantations, and there were plans for the development of a further 60 000 hectares to the south of the park. Between the proposed development and the park lies a strip of peat forest. This strip provides products valued by the local community, is rich in wildlife and could, if properly managed, provide a buffer zone to protect the park.

The Orangutan Foundation Indonesia, one of USAID's local partners, told Murdiyarto that it wanted the government to upgrade the status of this area in order to protect it.

'I thought that could take too long,' says Murdiyarto, 'and it would also pit central government against local government, which favours oil palm expansion.'

Instead, he has suggested that organisations with an interest in safeguarding the orang-utan should apply to manage the area under an Ecosystem Restoration Permit.

In the long term, Murdiyarto believes the area could take advantage of money made available for REDD projects.

'If you're going to protect orang-utans, you need to protect their habitat,' says Murdiyarto, 'and if you are protecting the habitat, or rehabilitating the habitat by planting trees, you will be helping to improve carbon stocks. So our advice to USAID and its partners was that they should explore the possibility of using REDD as a way of protecting wildlife.'



Baby orang-utan in the Tanjung Puting National Park in Kalimantan on the island of Borneo, Indonesia.
Photo by Keren Su



Tanjung Puting National Park.
Photo by Paula Bronstein/Getty Images