Can REDD+ social safeguards reach the right people? lessons from Madagascar

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Background

There is debate about the potential impact of the climate mechanism REDD+ on the welfare of local people and social safeguard procedures are being developed. Lessons can be learned from existing safeguard assessments such as those carried out where protected area establishment funded by the World Bank has the potential to negatively impact local livelihoods.

Madagascar, which has REDD+ pilot projects at various stages of development, shares context with a number of REDD+ countries (deforestation driven by small-scale agriculture, difficult access and poor data on forest edge communities).

Case study

We worked in the corridor Ankeniheny Zahamena (CAZ)-a REDD+ pilot project established with World Bank funding. 1835 households have been identified as Project Affected Persons (PAPs) and so eligible for compensation under the social safeguard assessment. We investigated whether those identified represented those bearing the highest opportunity cost from conservation measures.

Methods

We constructed a sampling frame of households in one area

Sketch maps with key informants to identify villages

Visiting each village/hamlet to map location

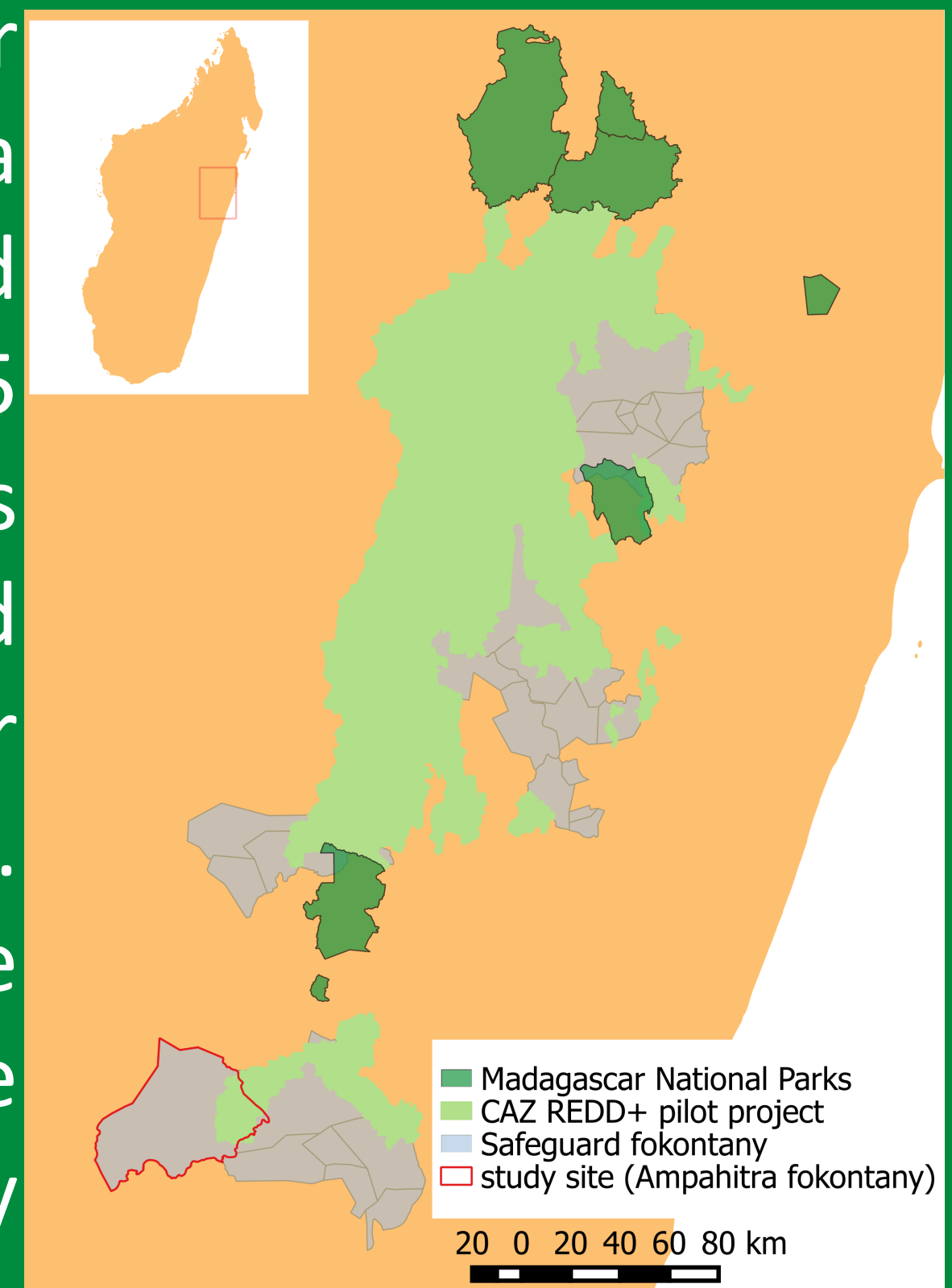417 households identified, stratified random sample of 203 selected

We conducted detailed household interviews looking at demographic characteristics, indicators of poverty, social capital and livelihoods.

We included questions which allowed us to identify whether a household has been identified as eligible for compensation by the World Bank safeguard assessment.

Results

Households with power in local natural resource management institutions and who were more food secure were more likely to be identified as eligible for compensation. There was no effect of dependence on the forest or proximity to the forest
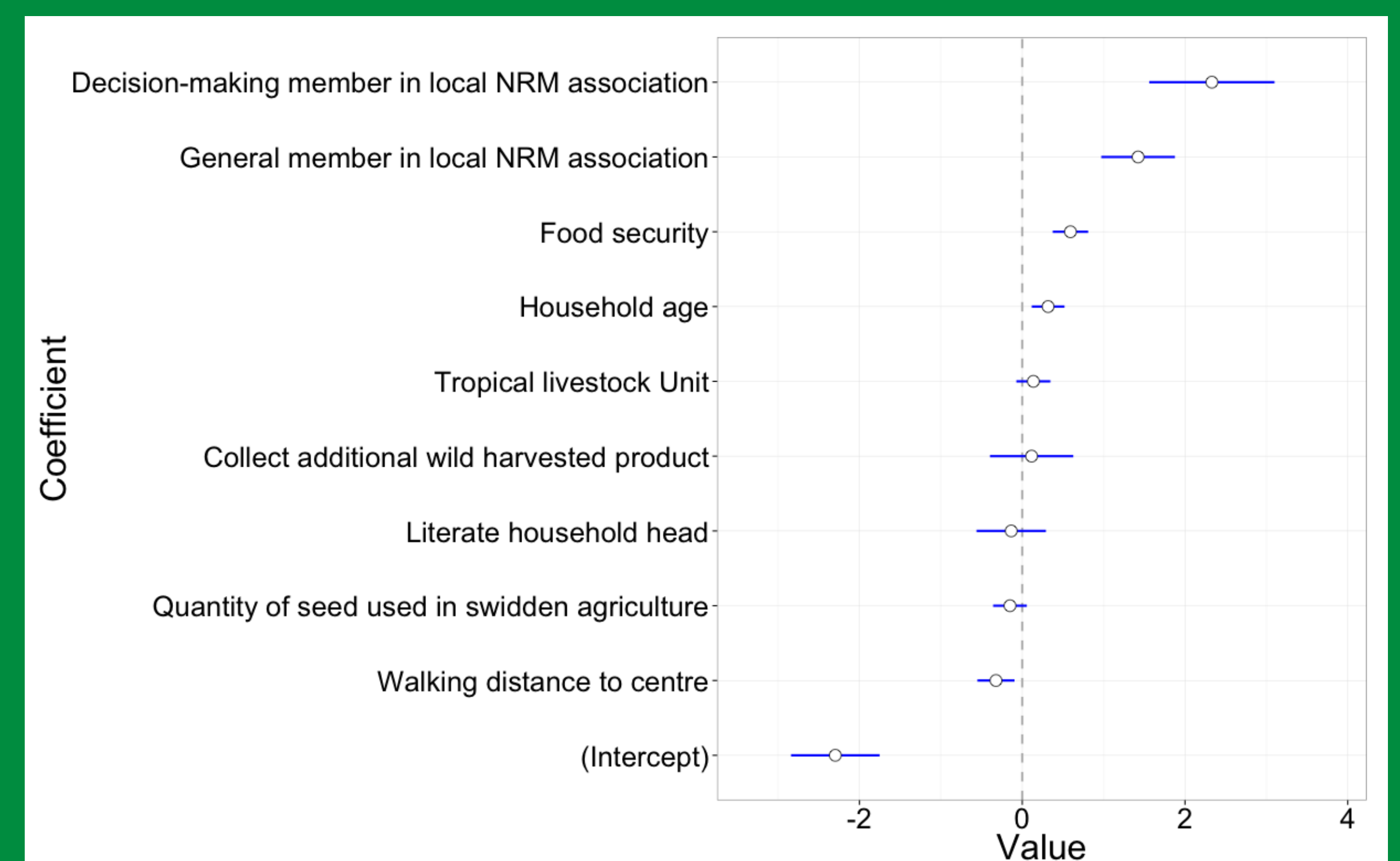

Fig 1: Coefficient plot of variables predicting likelihood of a household being identified as eligible for compensation under social safeguards (NRM=Natural Resource Management)

Lessons for the development of social safeguard systems

Safeguards assessment in CAZ has captured households likely to bear costs from forest use restrictions BUT field work suggests others have been left out and that people with power in natural resource management institutions are more likely to be benefit from compensation. Given the poor information on the distribution of communities in this region, poor access, and people's unwillingness to self-identify as dependent on illegal farming practices, such local elite capture would be difficult to avoid.

We suggest safeguard assessments in similar contexts should beware of relying on existing institutions to access people affected by forest use restrictions. Where access and information on location of populations is limited, the cost of a full safeguard assessment will be high. **The optimum solution therefore may be over-compensation, rather than investing the necessary resources in an accurate safeguard assessment.**

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