

Making REDD Work for the Poor

A Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP) side event during UNFCCC COP/MOP 13 Forest Day, Ayodya Hotel, Nusa Dua, Bali – December 8th, 2007

Summary

The Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP) hosted an event during the Bali conference on climate change. As part of a full day devoted to the role of forests in climate change, organized by CIFOR, the PEP made sure that social issues and linkages to poverty reduction were high on the agenda. The PEP event examined proposals in the current round of climate change negotiations for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), focusing on how these new climate mitigation mechanisms can ‘work for the poor’.

With an audience of over 200 people, experts from around the world shared insights from experience on how to integrate poverty reduction in forest conservation and sustainable forest management, and the implications for the design of new REDD mechanisms.

Overall, a strong message that came out of the session was that social concerns cannot be considered to be ‘add-ons’ to the ongoing debate on REDD, and that they are essential to the sustainability of the scheme. It was stated that equitable participation and benefit sharing was essential for the successful implementation of REDD. It was expressed that a ‘pro-poor’ approach to REDD would need to focus on strengthening the rights of marginalized populations, and of women in particular.

Proceedings

Introductory presentations –

Charles McNeill (UNDP) welcomed the Forest Day participants and presented the outline of the session before handing the microphone over to David McCauley (ADB) for a brief introductory speech. Dr. McCauley presented the PEP, and provided some background information on the activities leading up the side event, including the lessons learned from the two previous PEP meetings, held successively in Copenhagen (June '07) and in Washington DC (November '07).

Following this introduction, Joshua Bishop (IUCN) made a brief presentation of the preliminary findings of the technical paper being prepared by IUCN on the social implications of REDD. Dr. Bishop reminded the audience that the paper was still ‘a work in progress’ and that it would be adapted in accordance with the day’s proceedings. A main message of the presentation was that there already exists a considerable amount of accumulated experience that can help inform the design and implementation of a ‘pro-poor’ REDD regime. A key challenge identified for moving forward with ‘pro-poor’ REDD was the establishment the roles and responsibilities for coordinating efforts at sub-national, national, and international levels.

The next presentation, offered by Michael Dutschke (biocarbon.net), offered some further insights into the main features of the different REDD proposals from various stakeholders. The presentation highlighted some of the main conflicts that are currently impeding a global consensus on how to move forward with REDD.

Leo Peskett (Overseas Development Institute) built on the previous presentation by introducing examining the social and poverty-related implications of the different REDD options described previously. This presentation offered some initial insights on the necessary building blocks for making REDD 'work for the poor'.

After Peskett's presentation, the floor was opened for questions. The initial inquiry asked for clarification on the main stakeholders of REDD implementation, and in particular what the role of governments was in relation to the different stakeholders. Peskett answered by saying that experience in Indonesia has showed that the initial negotiation phase was critical in determining roles and responsibilities. Further issues raised related to rights (rights to land, rights to carbon – how can they be improved and made more equitable?), to resource access, and to the risk of marginalizing women. The example of New Zealand, where the government owns the carbon rights, was seen as problematic if extrapolated to other regions.

Open discussion between the floor and the experts' panel

At the beginning of the second segment of the session, Charles McNeill invited the group of expert panelists up to the podium and introduced them to the room. The panelists were: Benoît Bosquet (World Bank), Eric Bettleheim (Sustainable Forest Management Ltd.), Ian Kosasih (WWF-Indonesia), Jan Börner (International Center for Tropical Agriculture), Marcus Colchester (Forest Peoples Programme), Maria Berlekom (SwedBio), Lera Miles (UNEP- World Conservation Monitoring Centre), and Peter Minang (ICRAF).

Following the introductions, the audience was invited to query the panelists on how their different experiences related to the issue of making REDD work for the poor. During this highly interactive segment, the moderator went through a couple rounds of collecting questions from the floor and then soliciting responses from the panel.

An issue that was raised early on in the discussions related to the concept of poverty. It was stated that the concept did not have a clear definition, and that is often more appropriate to move beyond a strictly income-based appreciation of poverty. Related to this point, it was stated that equity was of paramount importance in the whole poverty debate. The importance of adequately integrating equity concerns was believed to be more than a moral obligation, as it actually helps achieve greater effectiveness in the practical implementation of REDD-like projects. Furthermore, it was stated that procedural exclusion of certain segments of the population was a significant risk with regards to the implementation of REDD. This was believed to be particularly significant in the case of women, who are often excluded from the decision making process, even at the community level.

Another significant topic of discussion related to the social implications of using the carbon market as a financial mechanism for REDD. While on the one side it was argued that markets were efficient at identifying and incentivizing projects that provided benefits that are additional to carbon capture (e.g. biodiversity conservation, livelihood improvements); it was also argued that markets were not sufficient for ensuring equitable benefit sharing.

The trade-off between efficiency and equity was evoked as being an important issue to address in order to avoid having only 'big' stakeholder benefit from REDD. Certification was considered to be a promising option of moving forward with a sustainable use of market mechanisms for REDD. Nevertheless, it was argued that markets could only be useful in cases where governance structures were adequate and effective.

Related to the critical issue of governance, the lack of effectiveness of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in Africa was evoked as an example of how national level capacities are essential to carry out critical tasks such as carbon accounting and the distribution of economic incentives. The problem of poorly established property rights was mentioned as a significant barrier to the ability for the carbon market to positively affect local communities. Well-defined rights were seen as being essential to the increase in financial flows for REDD. On a more positive note, it was stated that the amount of money needed to carry out REDD in many parts of the world was not very high, and that a \$5 per ton price for carbon would help protect a significant portion of the world's forests.

The issue of rights was commonly evoked by both the floor and the panel. It was expressed that a pro-poor approach to REDD needed to go beyond the principle of 'do no harm' and focus on securing rights for marginalized populations. Also, in terms of developing pro-poor standards, it was argued that many of them are already available (e.g. for protected areas, community-based ecosystem management) and that they could be easily applied to REDD.

In conclusion, Dr. Bishop highlighted some of the main issues raised during the discussion, and informed the audience on next steps. Upcoming meetings of the CBD and the PEP, among others, were evoked as possible venues for furthering the debate on 'pro-poor' REDD.