

WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, INCLUDING REDD

QUESTION:

1. During the South East Asia Indigenous Peoples' Consultation on REDD last November 2008, participants distinguished redd/REDD. What are our strategies towards:

- redd (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation)?
- REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation)?

2. How can we address/propose concrete recommendations to:

- WB Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)
- UN-REDD
- Norwegian Climate Forest Initiative
- Governments implementing REDD

Discussions:

Engagement with national-level forest processes carry risks for indigenous peoples, because of underlying difficulties in guaranteeing full and effective participation, and ensuring their contributions are incorporated in decision-making. Therefore, indigenous organisations must assess each process, to weigh the risks and opportunities, and to spell out their options regarding engagement in national forest processes, including REDD.

For example, in Malaysia, Indigenous organisations walked out of the FLEGT process, because of serious procedural obstacles, which did not favour good outcomes.

Given past experiences and lessons learnt, participants agreed to redd/REDD engagements, but to proceed with caution, and based on local circumstances. The decision to engage will be made by the relevant communities, and their decisions will be respected based on the right to self-determination.

Workshop participants strongly supported the strengthening of community conservation, resource management, and sustainable use practices which are consistent with reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (redd). Indigenous peoples want recognition of their historical and continuing actions on nature conservation and forest management which are important contributions to addressing the climate crisis. Legal recognition by governments of customary rights would increase security of land tenure, and will enable these sustainable practices of indigenous peoples.

Documentation of these customary resource management systems of indigenous is important for indigenous peoples, and can serve many other purposes.

Clarify the legal and political context of indigenous land and resource rights.

The forest situations in different countries and islands have their own distinct characteristics, and legal classifications, e.g. protected areas, customary forests, state forests, overlapping and conflicting land uses, etc. The concerned indigenous peoples, are in the best position to understand their political and legal context, and to determine the appropriate demands for legislation and policy reform.

In Thailand, the government's legal and policy framework could make REDD a serious problem for hill tribes. Protected areas encompass many indigenous communities, leading to prohibitions on farming activities. There are direct conflicts between communities and government, and people have been arrested and punitive fines have been imposed. Public awareness and education campaigns may be needed to address the critical situation.

In Vietnam, forest policy is in transition from State ownership of lands towards transferring these to communities/ families. Support is needed to process land certificates and also to strengthen community-based forest management.

The Kalahan experience highlighted that **Legal recognition of indigenous rights and security of tenure, are important conditions for enabling indigenous peoples' participation in REDD.** These lessen the threat of State usurpation or increasing control over indigenous lands and forests and addresses some risks of engagement with REDD.

There are risks, when external organisations become involved in community programmes as researchers, fund holders or project managers, therefore **such external interventions require free, prior, informed consent of the relevant community/ies or people(s).** The same holds true for government-initiatives on indigenous territories.

There is a great need for awareness-raising and capacity-building for indigenous communities so they can make informed decisions about REDD.

AIPP shared information about its proposed capacity-building project for Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change in six REDD countries: Indonesia, Nepal, Cambodia and Laos, and also the Philippines and India. Among the activities envisaged are the following:

Training at various levels, and the production of training resources for communities (including in local languages)

Engagement with governments, including Roundtable Workshops

Outreach and advocacy with the broader public, including video documentaries.

Support for demonstration projects.

Regional networking and exchanges: list-serves, website, bulletin, visits.

Testimonies and advocacy at UNFCCC meetings, including COP15.

Participants also identified the following recommendations:

Establish an Asia network on Climate Change and strengthen information sharing.

Hold a Technical Workshop to study and critique R-PINS and R-PLANS submitted by Asian countries

Take advantage of political interest on forests/ REDD to heighten policy dialogue with governments and to push for legislative and policy reform.

There should be monitoring of various government forest initiatives and REDD developments in the country.

Local communities need support for documentation, as well as research and technical support.

Build capacity and linkages to have greater access to technical support and expertise from within the network and beyond.

Payments of funds must be decided through community organisations and/or customary authorities.