

Poland – Poznan, December 6th 2008

Forest Day 2. Side Event

REDD for Rural Development

The 'REDD for Rural Development' side event was officially co-hosted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) and the Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP). These three institutions are joined through a common vision and recognition that community-level participation will be an essential component of REDD policies and measures.¹

The side event was organised as an interactive debate concerning two thematic REDD issues which are in the forefront of current global debate: scale – or national versus sub-national accounting approaches; and financing – market versus fund-based mechanisms. Both debates were couched in terms of the impact on the benefits to local communities and their participation. The event was introduced by David Huberman, IUCN, followed by presentations by Margaret Skutsch of Twente University, Netherlands², and Leo Peskett of ODI, UK. These presentations looked, respectively, at the opportunities for active local participation in REDD and the importance of securing pro-poor outcomes in the design of REDD mechanisms. A conclusion to the event was given by Ben Vickers of RECOFTC, Thailand.

The proposing and opposing cases for each debate were presented by representatives of community-based networks from around the world. These networks are members of the Global Alliance for Community Forestry (GACF). The event attracted an audience of about 50 delegates who engaged actively in the debates. The comments generally reflected the reciprocal relationship between REDD and rural development. As the keynote speakers clarified, this is not simply a matter of directing the benefits from REDD to rural communities, but also of reinforcing the message that active participation of these communities is essential for an effective REDD mechanism that addresses reduced forest degradation.

As well as stimulating a lively, informative exchange of views, all sides were able to construct credible arguments based on the promotion of good governance, equity and financial sustainability. All agreed that, without these, REDD will be stillborn. Although the 'winners' of the debates were less significant than the discussions they generated, it was interesting to note that the audience expressed a marked preference for sub-national approaches and a less clear-cut inclination for fund-based financing. It was stressed that markets for forest products have a poor track record in delivering benefits to local people. National governments moreover, have often proved to be unwilling or unable to defend the interests of rural communities.

If there is a key message to take away from the event, it is this: that local communities themselves can and must underline their importance to the success of a REDD mechanism. Whatever the ultimate outcome of the negotiations on finance, scale or other outstanding issues, the arguments for clear and meaningful participation of local communities are unchanged and unavoidable.

¹ For in-depth analysis of the Building on the findings of the PEP report 'Making REDD Work for the Poor', <http://www.povertyenvironment.net/pep> .

² Margaret Skutsch was representing the Kyoto- Think Global Act Local (KTGAL) Program: www.communitycarbonforestry.org