

Pondering on Poznań – Reflections on COP-14

Two months on, Amanda Bradley from [Community Forestry International](#) (CFI), reflects on her participation in the [United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP-14\)](#) in Poznań, Poland, last December. With financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Amanda joined the RECOFTC delegation, bringing together a diverse group of community forestry practitioners from several countries including Cambodia, Thailand, Tanzania, Nepal, and Nicaragua. Their daily planning and review sessions helped maximize opportunities for learning and sharing. Although disappointed by the lack of progress made in the overall climate negotiations at COP-14, Amanda learned much from the experience that she is already applying in [CFI's Carbon Offset Project](#) in Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia. The project is based on the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) framework.



Decoding the “black box”

One of the challenges in designing international climate change mitigation strategies is that countries are often treated as a “black box,” and the complexity of their internal workings or disparities are neither recognized nor dealt with. For example, in Poznań my eyes were opened by the sophistication of the discussions around gender and climate change. I learned that although men’s carbon footprints are significantly larger than women’s, women are

much more vulnerable to the actual impacts of climate change. And at the same time while women have less access to markets, they have a higher perception of the risks of climate change. In the case of Community Forestry International’s REDD project in Oddar Meanchey, we have been working hard to ensure that women are actively involved in project activities and receive equitable benefits. However, so far I haven’t heard mention of such important gender differences in the related national policy discussions. In future planning discussions, we must find more concrete ways to consider and understand women’s roles.

Indigenous People’s Concerns on REDD

During the conference, I also became much more aware of the concerns of indigenous peoples with regard to REDD. Understandably these center around the recognition of indigenous people’s rights to lands and resources and their participation in the process of formulating and implementing REDD policy and projects. By putting a monetary value on forests, indigenous people fear an increase in competition for their lands, leading to resource appropriation. There is also concern and fear around some of the key definitions. For example, if monocultures are considered forests, then threats of conversion of indigenous people’s forest lands would grow.



Traditions of shifting cultivation could be threatened by definitions of degradation. There are major concerns about equity and governance and how funds would be used. Money is generally not seen as a solution to climate change by indigenous people; on the contrary, the influx of money into their communities could have very damaging effects. During the presentations, two indigenous people's representatives criticized the lack of opportunities for participation in the design and implementation of REDD projects as well as negligible benefits for local people.

These discussions made me even more aware of the need to fully involve local communities in the Oddar Meanchey REDD project and make sure they receive maximum benefits. In the case of this project, the Forest Administration has guaranteed that a minimum of 50% of the revenues will benefit local communities. This rate is comparable if not higher than other



projects mentioned at COP-14, but exactly how the benefits will be delivered has not yet been defined. Another pressing question is who exactly will decide what is best for the community—to what extent will the communities themselves have a say?

Community Forestry International has so far supported numerous workshops and awareness-raising on the Oddar Meanchey project, and also supported the operation of an elected Community Forestry Federation to represent communities

throughout the province. Nevertheless, we need to take a more active approach to involve local communities and continue to build their knowledge and understanding around issues related to REDD. In addition, there are opportunities to prepare indigenous people in other areas of the country to deal with REDD as new initiatives are introduced. Additional financial resources should be directed towards these efforts in Cambodia. Along with RECOFTC, the [Heinrich Boll Foundation](#), [Indigenous Community Support Organization \(ICSO\)](#), [East-West Management Institute \(EWMI\)](#), [The NGO Forum on Cambodia](#), and others could be interested in taking this forward along with Pact/CFI.

Views and Policies on REDD

Delegates from more than 190 countries attended the conference and we learned much from the way they relate REDD to their own national contexts. For example, Brazil favors a historical reference rate to counteract rapid rates of deforestation over the past years, while Guyana would support “forward-looking baselines” to compensate for their very low deforestation rate of 0.1%. We discussed the pros and cons of national versus sub-national approaches to REDD and market versus fund-based approaches. RECOFTC organized a debate during a Forest Day 2 side event to develop the understanding around these two issues, which I helped to prepare for.

In the case of Cambodia, there is strong support for the sub-national approach through the Oddar Meanchey and Keo Seima pilot REDD projects, endorsed by the Forestry Administration. There is also an initiative by the Clinton Foundation to support national accounting of carbon emissions. In its approach to REDD, the Cambodian Government needs to formulate a clearer position and strategy, involving many stakeholders. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry Administration must cooperate closely to formulate a clear position

on REDD. Cambodia's preparation for COP-15 to be held in Copenhagen in December, 2009, needs to start immediately.

Expanding the Scope of REDD: Agriculture, Biodiversity, Landscapes

There were also several interesting presentations on how REDD could or should take a wider landscape approach. Speakers argued that agriculture must be included in mitigation strategies since carbon is sequestered in soil and 10–12% of emissions are generated by the agriculture sector. Also, farmers are key players in emissions reductions, whether in relation to better farming practices or in avoiding deforestation. Some 26% of land is used for grazing worldwide, and poor grazing practices have a huge impact on climate. Well-managed grasslands could have as great an impact on climate change as better management of forests. Speakers also noted that Southeast Asia in particular has the most potential for conserving soil carbon, along with Latin America. It is important that the real value of carbon is delivered to farmers in order to prevent conversion of forests. Additional investment is needed in agricultural research due to underinvestment during the past 30 years, particularly in view of a looming food crisis and growing demand for land. Yields must be increased through more investment in agriculture.

In the context of the Oddar Meanchey project, members of the community forestry groups are primarily rice farmers. Expansion of existing *chamkar*¹ and rice fields either by residents or new migrants is a leading driver of deforestation. Agricultural intensification, improved grazing practices, and better land use planning must be integrated and supported through the project.

There are also concerns from conservationists with regards to REDD who fear that the credits may be generated from conversion of natural forests to plantations. Speakers suggested incorporating in REDD different strategies for various types of forest depending on the level of threat. Also, they advised making sure that degradation is included and that indigenous people, as the most effective stewards of biodiversity, are fully involved.



It was also useful to know why greater harmonization of the Convention on Biodiversity and Kyoto Protocol is needed. During a presentation of the Community Climate and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA), I understood that the Oddar Meanchey project could be required to develop a more accurate and comprehensive knowledge base on biodiversity in the target area. Currently, we have data on tree species from the inventory plot assessments and anecdotal evidence on important mammal species, but it will be important to conduct more scientific studies and set up a monitoring system involving local people.

¹ Vegetable fields

Conclusion

The conference in Poznań really helped to stimulate my thinking around the broader issues related to climate change and REDD, while at the same time giving me some new ideas for our approach to the REDD project in Oddar Meanchey and to national policy development. Community Forestry International and the Forest Administration worked together to present a poster at Forest Day 2 in Poznań. It is hoped that by COP-15, the Oddar Meanchey project will provide a best-practice model for REDD implementation. I would like to thank RECOFTC and SDC again for this valuable opportunity to attend COP-14. I aim to keep in touch with many of the individuals I met at the conference, particularly those involved in supporting local communities through REDD.

Did you know?

- Tropical forests cover about 15% of the world's land surface and contain about 25% of the carbon in the terrestrial biosphere.
- 25 hectares of forest are lost every minute. Roughly 13 million hectares are converted to other land uses each year.
- Loss of forests accounts for a fifth of global carbon emissions, making land cover change the second largest contributor to global warming.
- There was a 70% increase in CO₂ emissions between 1970 and 2004.
- Some old growth forests can sequester as much as 2000 tons of carbon per hectare.
- Forest resources directly support the livelihoods of 90% of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty.
- Forests are home to nearly 90% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity.
- The voluntary market for carbon is worth approximately US\$300 million per year.
- The cost of cutting global carbon dioxide emissions from forests in half by 2030 would cost approximately US\$17–33 billion dollars annually (if forest carbon is included in global emissions trading).

Sources: COP side event presentations; [The Little REDD Book](#) by Global Canopy Programme, and [Simply REDD](#) by CIFOR.