



Communities Must See the Plus in REDD-plus

REDD-plus demonstration projects are providing important lessons for a REDD-plus framework in Cambodia that works for communities

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The Forests Dialogue

www.theforestsdialogue.org



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Acronyms

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| CMDG | Cambodia Millennium Development Goal |
| CFMC | Community Forestry Management Committee |
| COP | Conference of the Parties |
| GDANCP | General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| MAFF | Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries |
| NPASMP | National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| NSDP | National Strategic Development Plan |
| NTFP | Non-timber Forest Product |
| OM-REDD-plus | Oddar Meanchey REDD-plus (Demonstration Project) |
| RECOFTC | Regional Community Forestry Training Center—Center for People and Forests |
| RGC | Royal Government of Cambodia |
| REDD | Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation |
| REDD-plus | REDD, and the Role of Conservation, Sustainable Management of Forests and Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks |
| SPFF | Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries |
| TFD | The Forests Dialogue |
| NFP | National Forestry Programme |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| UN-REDD | United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries |
| WCS | Wildlife Conservation Society |

Executive Summary

The Cambodia dialogue on REDD-plus readiness was convened on 1–4 November 2010. It came at an exciting time for the national REDD-plus movement: Cambodia’s REDD-plus readiness plan proposal (the national ‘REDD-plus roadmap’) was being finalized, and a deal was imminent to secure the first tranche of funding for a national REDD-plus readiness strategy.

Under REDD-plus, payments are made for reduced greenhouse-gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation achieved through, among other things, forest conservation, the sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of carbon stocks. The Cambodia REDD-plus readiness dialogue built on the experience of four preceding REDD-plus readiness dialogues convened in other tropical countries. Participants visited a REDD-plus demonstration project in Oddar Meanchey Province and interacted with representatives of local communities, non-governmental organizations and government. The following two-day meeting explored the key issues to be addressed if Cambodia is to become REDD-plus ready.



Co-chair Kalyan Hou

Participants developed the following themes on REDD-plus in the Cambodian context on the basis of observations they made in the field and subsequent discussions:

- ➔ A community forestry system, including an effective framework for the distribution of benefits is well-established.
- ➔ The sharing of benefits from REDD-plus needs to be clarified.
- ➔ More user-friendly information on REDD-plus is needed at the community level.
- ➔ Broader and more integrated national land-use planning is needed.
- ➔ More stakeholder participation is required.

The dialogue identified four main challenges for REDD-plus readiness in Cambodia and a number of possible actions.

Benefit-sharing: Communities could lose access to forests under a REDD-plus framework. The inadequate sharing of REDD-plus benefits, therefore, would erode incentives for permanent greenhouse-gas emissions reductions.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Create enforceable agreements between parties.
- ➔ Clarify intra-community benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- ➔ Research existing experience in communities on the sharing of benefits derived from the harvesting of non-timber forest products.
- ➔ Create a transparent and independent financial instrument.



Co-chair Jeannette Gurung

Information: Even when information is disseminated to community representatives, communication barriers prevent potential beneficiaries at the local level from receiving it, particularly those who are illiterate.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Build a multi-media awareness-raising strategy.
- ➔ Pilot a study to assess the forest-related dependence of communities.
- ➔ Simplify REDD-plus language and support non-governmental organizations to disseminate information to communities.
- ➔ Conduct long-term capacity-building with universities.
- ➔ Collect national carbon-stock inventory data.

Land-use planning: A major obstacle to adequate land-use planning in Cambodia is the lack of an inter-ministerial institution responsible for reconciling the various national needs for land allocation.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Organize workshop(s) to develop a landscape approach to planning that would support a national REDD-plus strategy.
- ➔ Map relevant sectoral policies for better national coordination.
- ➔ Update community land-use plans in the light of REDD-plus.
- ➔ Map and demarcate community forest areas nation-wide.

- ➔ Extend the terms of community forests beyond 15 years.
- ➔ Reinforce the power of communities to determine plans for community forests that meet needs for food, timber and other community resources.
- ➔ Demarcate land-use boundaries.
- ➔ Prioritize process, transparency and community engagement in national land-use planning.



Co-chair Ratanakoma Long

Participation: The equal participation of all stakeholders is critical for developing the trust needed for any REDD-plus agreement. It requires time and effort. Therefore, an ongoing challenge is to institutionalize meaningful participation to ensure that all key actors are involved.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Strengthen the network of NGOs that could help implement participatory and consultative processes for promoting REDD-plus.
- ➔ Introduce guidelines at the national level for free, prior and informed consent to improve coordination at the local level.
- ➔ Increase consultation between government and communities on the implementation of the REDD-plus roadmap through a grassroots civil-society representative forum.



Co-chair Stewart Maginnis

- ➔ Link to working groups on food security and good governance, and coordinate with the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact.
- ➔ Strengthen the capacity of the existing community forestry network to better represent the interests of communities.
- ➔ Form multi-stakeholder forums at the local and provincial levels.
- ➔ Produce best-practice guidelines on participation.
- ➔ Invite the armed forces to participate in meetings.

Introduction

The Forests Dialogue and Forest–Climate Issues

Since its inception in 1999, The Forests Dialogue (TFD)¹ has encouraged and facilitated international engagement and dialogue on the most pressing issues facing forest conservation and the sustainable use of forests. TFD brings together individuals from diverse forest stakeholder groups in various regions of the world to explore contentious forest-related issues and areas of opportunity where dialogue may be helpful. Participants take part in these dialogues on a personal basis rather than as delegates of their countries or organizations. Each dialogue stream involves face-to-face meetings and field visits and is complemented by interaction and information exchange at distance.

In December 2007 TFD began an intensive multi-stakeholder process to discuss and seek better understanding of the role that forest-related strategies could play in global climate-change mitigation. The first round of international dialogues, which included four global meetings, resulted, in 2008, in the well-received *Statement on Forests and Climate Change*.² More than 250 leaders from around the world participated in this set of dialogues, which triggered calls from global climate-change negotiators for more input from TFD to help them address this crucial and complex topic.

In 2009, a second stream of dialogues was convened on the financial framework for the implementation of what is now known as REDD-plus (see below). The three international meetings organized around this topic engaged almost 100 stakeholders. The recommendations generated by this process fed into negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the Informal Working Group on the Interim Finance of REDD-plus, which in 2010 developed into the REDD-plus Partnership. The recommendations were later set out in the TFD Review *Investing in REDD-plus*.³

REDD-plus in an International Context

After years of discussion on the inclusion of forests in the Kyoto Protocol, the 2001 Marrakesh Accords limited options for forest-related climate-change mitigation to provisions for afforestation and reforestation within the Clean Development Mechanism. In 2005 the issue of avoided deforestation resurfaced at the UNFCCC in negotiations for a post-Kyoto climate-change regime, via a submission from Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Coalition of Rainforest Nations. The idea for including reductions in emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in the post-Kyoto climate-change regime quickly

gained prominence, with discussions concentrating on methodological issues and the scope of the mechanism. The Bali Action Plan, which was agreed at the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC, laid the foundation for the scope of a forest-based mitigation mechanism. An agreement at the UNFCCC's COP 16 in 2010 established the principle of REDD-plus, an evolved form of REDD: that is, reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, recognizing the role of forest conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of carbon stocks.

In the wake of COP 13, international resources were deployed to support forested tropical countries to prepare for REDD. The World Bank launched the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and the United Nations developed its Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD); both these institutions provide funds for the preparation of national REDD-plus strategies and, at a later stage, the conduct of pilot activities. The launch of the REDD-plus Partnership in 2010 provided information about additional resources that could be made available for early REDD-plus activities. The REDD-plus Partnership might also provide support for the REDD-plus readiness phase in those countries which have not yet received financial support.

The agreement on REDD-plus made at the UNFCCC's COP 16 illustrates the progress that has been made in negotiations in the two years that followed the disappointing outcomes of COP 15, which was held in Copenhagen in 2009. What is yet to come, however, is a decision on a more comprehensive and legally binding agreement.

The decision made at COP 16 on REDD-plus contained the following crucial elements. It:

- ➔ Set out the broad scope of REDD-plus, in line with paragraph 1.b.iii of the Bali Action Plan.
- ➔ Specified that the implementation of REDD-plus should be in three phases.
- ➔ Outlined the financing of REDD-plus, which is to be made through voluntary funds, and postponed a decision over compliance markets.
- ➔ Affirmed the promotion and support of safeguards, including
 - Safeguards to prevent negative impacts such as the conversion of natural forests and to promote the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem functions.
 - Safeguards to ensure full participation and sustainable livelihoods and the addressing of gender issues.
 - Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

REDD-plus Readiness Dialogues

TFD has convened a series of dialogues on the REDD-plus readiness phase of forest-related climate-change mitigation. The process of preparation and planning for REDD-plus, which many forested nations have now embarked upon, has exposed gaps between a country's interest in participating in a future REDD-plus mechanism and its technical and institutional capacity to do so. Initial REDD-plus readiness activities show that the development of national REDD-plus strategies is proving to be highly challenging, for example with regard to the monetary and technical resources required for capacity-building and consultation. TFD's REDD-plus readiness dialogues build on the premise that while many countries share common challenges in REDD-plus planning and implementation, solutions to many of these challenges will need to be country-specific. Issues such as stakeholder consultation and participation, the clarification of land and carbon rights, and the development of systems for distributing the benefits of REDD-plus must be tailored to suit specific situations. TFD's REDD-plus readiness field dialogues are therefore convened in tropical countries that are actively undertaking REDD-plus readiness activities.

Based on the success of the exchanges made possible through the REDD-plus readiness dialogues, a community of REDD-plus practitioners has been created, providing a feedback loop between the international dialogues and national and local readiness processes. The outcomes and insights derived from this stream of dialogues inform countries engaged in national REDD-plus planning, and the lessons learned are being fed into international negotiations. Information is presented in REDD-plus readiness country reports and the community of practitioners contributes to the translation of insights into practical action for various stakeholder groups.

The Cambodia REDD-plus readiness dialogue built on the experience of four other TFD-convened REDD-plus readiness dialogues held between October 2009 and June 2010 in Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala and Ecuador. These developed common themes while also showing the importance of addressing country-specific issues and challenges.

In Brazil, participants found that, while forest governance appears strong on paper, implementation can be weak. There is a need for more governmental involvement and—since the challenges in the forest sector are too big for any single stakeholder group—a multi-stakeholder approach. The dialogue suggested that state-level experiences could be scaled up to the federal level through a cross-sectoral approach.

In Ghana, dialogue participants observed only limited understanding of REDD-plus processes at the sub-national and local levels. It was particularly evident among district-level officials, reinforcing the realization that information needs to be taken to the local level. The rights to land and trees is a big issue that Ghana needs to address. Ghana and other countries, including Guatemala, need to integrate various stakeholders and to formalize participatory processes around REDD-plus preparation.

The rich discussion in Guatemala showed how a strategic framework for REDD-plus could be integrated into overall development plans. The synergy that can be built among pilot projects can provide a basis for the preparation of such a framework. Guatemala has more than a decade of experience in creating forest incentives for forest management, conservation and reforestation. The challenge is to extend that experience to REDD-plus.

In Ecuador, participants found that the direct drivers of deforestation there are well recognized, but a deeper analysis of indirect drivers is needed if REDD-plus is to tackle the problem effectively. Ecuador should build on existing national programs and platforms to establish better channels for engaging local stakeholders. It also needs to create a two-way information flow that both involves the acquisition of the data required to inform the REDD-plus readiness process and helps raise awareness among stakeholders about REDD-plus and its potential for the country, communities and individuals.

Cambodia Dialogue on REDD-plus Readiness

The Cambodia dialogue on REDD-plus readiness was convened on 1–4 November 2010, an exciting moment for Cambodia's national REDD-plus movement. Coinciding with the dialogue, Cambodia's REDD-plus readiness plan proposal (the national 'REDD-plus roadmap') was being finalized, and the country was preparing to seal a deal with UN-REDD for the first tranche of funding for its REDD-plus readiness strategy.⁴ The dialogue attracted 26 leaders from various local stakeholder groups, as well as 24 people working on REDD-plus-related issues in Canada, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam.

Dialogue participants visited Cambodia's first REDD-plus demonstration project, which is located in Oddar Meanchey Province, and interacted with three local communities as well as representatives of local NGOs and local government. The ensuing two-day meeting built on the observations made and discussions held during the field trip and further explored the key issues to be addressed if Cambodia is to become REDD-plus ready. International participants shared their experiences and good practices, and all participants worked together in plenary and group sessions to explore REDD-plus readiness approaches that would work in Cambodia.

This report presents the outcomes of the Cambodia REDD-plus readiness field dialogue. Chapter 2 captures the context and status of REDD-plus readiness in Cambodia, building on material prepared for the dialogue and presentations made during it. Chapter 3 highlights lessons learned from international and local experiences. Chapter 4 explores the key challenges and ways forward for REDD-plus readiness in Cambodia, as identified by participants.

Cambodia and REDD-plus Readiness Planning

Cambodia’s Land-use and Policy Context

Forest use and policies in Cambodia

Before the Khmer Rouge created political turmoil in 1975, Cambodia had strong institutional control over specific classified forest uses (e.g. production, conservation, wildlife and research). It was not until 1994, however, that the country was again able to address the management of its forests. In the period 1994–97, 36 forest concessions covering seven million hectares—close to 70% of the country’s forests—were granted by the government to the private sector. However, a lack of monitoring and law enforcement resulted in rampant over-harvesting, illegal logging and forest-sector corruption (Broadhead and Izquierdo 2010). A high rate of deforestation and forest degradation was quickly depriving Cambodia, especially the poor, of the social, economic and environmental services provided by forests.

Realizing the essential role that forests play in supporting the national economy and rural livelihoods, a logging moratorium was introduced in January 2002 to reverse the trend of forest loss and degradation. As noted by Broadhead and Izquierdo (2010):

the lifting of the logging moratorium was contingent on the preparation and approval of strategic forest concession management plans that included review and approval of environmental and social impact assessments and re-negotiation of the existing concession agreements. While most of the production forestry concession agreements were ultimately cancelled by 2006, all remaining logging concessions, which have been reduced to 3.4 million hectares of the Permanent Forest Reserve, remain at a halt.

A number of laws aimed at reforming institutional arrangements in the forest sector and enhancing forest management have been introduced in Cambodia in the last decade, including the Land Law (2001), the Forestry Law (2002), the Fisheries Law (2005) and the Protected Areas Law (2008). The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has also started to implement a new vision for Cambodia’s forest sector, based on the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency (Phase II), the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP; Update 2009–2013), and the National Forest Program (see Box 1).

Cambodia is a high-forest-cover, high-deforestation country. In 2006 it had about 10.7 million hectares of forest (59% of total land cover, one of the highest proportions of forest cover in Southeast Asia) and, in the period 2002–06, it had an estimated annual deforestation rate of 0.5% (with the loss of about 379,000 hectares of forest over the period; Forestry Administration 2007). Table 1 lists the major direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

TABLE 1: DRIVERS OF DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION IN CAMBODIA

| | Within the forest sector | Outside the forest sector |
|----------|--|--|
| Direct | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Unsustainable and illegal logging· Fire (role disputed)*· Unsustainable woodfuel collection** | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Clearance for agriculture· Expansion of settlements· Infrastructure development |
| Indirect | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Lack of demarcation of forest areas· Low institutional capacity and weak policy implementation· Inadequate forest law enforcement· Weak forest-sector governance· Low levels of stakeholder participation and involvement· Lack of transparency and accountability· Inadequate assessment of social and environmental impacts· Lack of sustainable or alternative supply of wood, including for energy· Demand for wood energy for domestic and industrial use· Low efficiency of wood conversion and use for construction, energy production, etc.· Lack of incentives promoting sustainable forest management· Lack of finance to support sustainable forest management by line agencies, local authorities and local communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Population growth· Poverty· Rising incomes and demand for resources· Increasing accessibility of forest areas· Low agricultural yields· Migration into forest areas· New settlements, including in border areas· Large-scale agro-industrial development (including economic and social land concessions and other concessions)· Land speculation· Regional demand for resources· Poor environmental and social impact assessment regulations and lack of implementation· Governance· Weak forestland tenure—tenure is weakest in forests and other areas outside residential or farming zones· Land-grabbing· Weak law enforcement· Limited implementation of land registration (private and state)· Insufficient implementation of land-use planning· Overlapping/unclear jurisdictions· Social norms (e.g., claiming land through use)· The economic benefits provided by sustainable forest management at the national level often appear lower than alternative land-uses· High opportunity costs of sustainable forest management at the local level· Low awareness of the environmental roles of forests |

* The role of fire has been discussed extensively in Cambodia, but its role in driving land-use change remains unclear. Although the use of fire is widespread—e.g., in the deciduous dipterocarp forests in the dry season—such use has been common for centuries and whether it is sustainable (and can continue at the current extent) is uncertain.

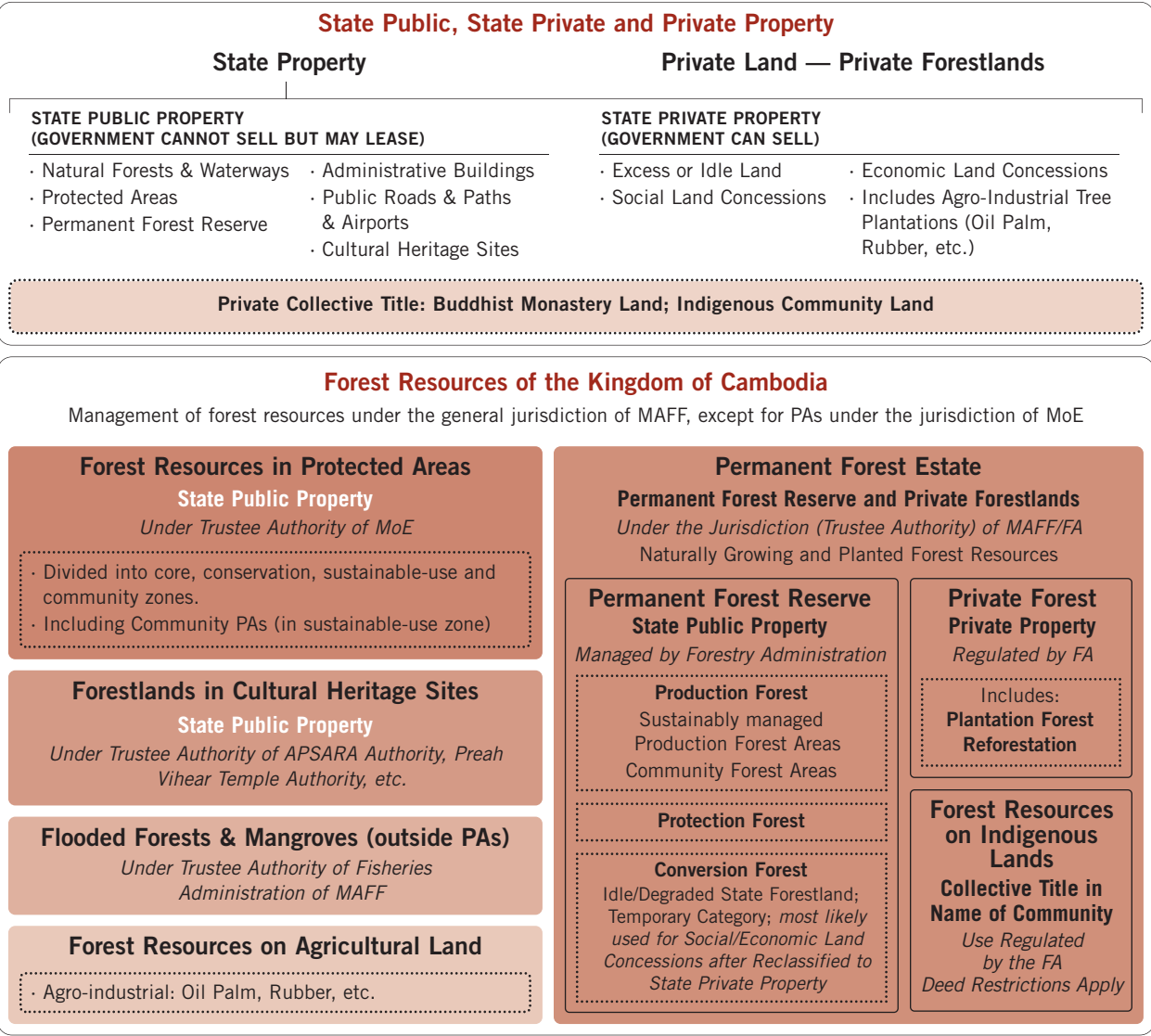
** The contribution of woodfuel burning to overall greenhouse-gas emissions is unclear, since it depends on the source of the woodfuel (i.e., whether the wood would have been burnt anyway) and the sustainability of the resource.

Source: Broadhead and Izquierdo (2010).

Issues for implementing REDD-plus in Cambodia

As summarized in the Cambodia readiness preparation proposal (RGC 2011a), management and regulatory jurisdictional authority over forest resources in Cambodia is attributed to several government agencies by various laws (e.g., the Fisheries Law 2006, the Forestry Law 2002, the Land Law 2001, the Protected Areas Law 2008, the Royal Decree on Creation and Determination of Nature Reserves 1993, and Sub-decree #83 on Registration of Land of Indigenous Communities 2009).

FIGURE 1: LAND CLASSIFICATION IN RELATION TO FORESTLAND MANAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA



➔ *Unclear benefit-distribution mechanism:* the establishment of a comprehensive benefit-distribution mechanism stands out as one of the most significant challenges to the sustainability of REDD-plus in Cambodia, given entrenched competing interests, the complexity of forest management within government, and the lack of legal rights to carbon.

Cambodia’s REDD-plus Roadmap

As stated in RGC (2011b):

The Cambodia REDD-plus Roadmap is a national plan for how the RGC wants to move ahead with REDD-plus Readiness. Following initial stakeholder consultations in late 2009 and early 2010, the government agencies created the inter-ministry REDD-plus Taskforce in January 2010, with an interim mandate to develop the Cambodia REDD-plus Roadmap. The Taskforce is primarily composed of technical officials. It was chaired by the Forestry Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries ...; and includes the Departments of Wildlife and Biodiversity; Forestry and Community Forestry; and Forest Plantation and Private Forest of the Forestry Administration; the Departments of Climate Change and National Parks of the General Department for Administration of Nature Conservation and Protection (GDANCP) of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction. The Clinton Climate Initiative and The Center for People and Forests (known as RECOFTC) served as civil society representatives on the REDD-plus Taskforce. Development partners are represented by UNDP/WCS and FAO. The REDD-plus Taskforce’s initial mandate was for an interim period only, with the expectation that it would be replaced by more permanent National REDD-plus management arrangements at the end of the Roadmap process.”

The Cambodia REDD-plus roadmap is linked to a UN-REDD national program document and is expected to generate US\$4.4 million in funds from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UN-REDD in the period 2010–12 and an additional \$3.6 million from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, although these amounts are insufficient for all activities proposed in the REDD-plus roadmap. The roadmap has a three-phased approach:

- ➔ Develop a national strategy for REDD-plus (completed in 2010).
- ➔ Develop the capacity to implement REDD-plus, including policies and legislation.
- ➔ Implement REDD-plus.

Box 1: Key policies relevant to REDD-plus in Cambodia

At the national level, the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency (Phase II), supported by the NSDP and supplemented by the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs), emphasizes “ensuring environmental sustainability” and prioritizes the sustainable management and use of natural resources, including forests. The NSDP covers the period of the Fourth Legislature of the National Assembly (2008–13) and sets a national target of 60% forest cover, 450 approved community forests (noting that there are currently 420 community forests at various stages of development), and a reduction in the dependence on fuelwood of 19% by 2013 (RGC 2009). The CMDGs also set goals and indicators for the forest sector by 2015, including an increase in the total area of forest and the area of protected forest, and a decrease in fuelwood dependency.

To operationalize the NSDP and to achieve the forest-related CMDGs, some key sectoral policies have been enacted, including:

- The National Forest Program, its focus on the permanent forest reserve.
- The planned National Protected Areas Strategic Management Plan (NPASMP) for the 3.1 million hectares of existing protected areas, which is mandated in the 2008 Protected Areas Law but yet to be developed.
- The Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (SPFF).

The National Forest Program sets out nine objectives for the forest sector, including: contribution to the economy; *climate change and REDD*; forest governance; the conservation of forest resources; improved forest management; and sustainable financing (Forestry Administration 2010). The NPASMP is expected to improve linkages between projects and national plans, zoning, and the involvement of communities in the management of protected areas. The SPFF specifies indicators aimed at reducing the loss and degradation of flooded forests and mangroves.

At the provincial/local level, Cambodia is committed to the implementation of the Decentralization and Deconcentration Policy, which aims to transfer power from national to sub-national administrations. This will be critical for the implementation and measurement, reporting and verification of any future REDD-plus activities.

Source: Cambodia Interim REDD-plus Task Force et al. (2010).

The detailed timeline for these three phases and indicators for the transitions between them remain unclear and will depend in part on both the level and efficiency of the support provided by development partners.

The six main sections of the REDD-plus roadmap are set out below.

1. *The management of national REDD-plus readiness*, which describes how REDD-plus readiness activities will be coordinated and managed, the future role of the REDD-plus taskforce, and the roles and responsibilities of various government agencies.
2. *A consultation, stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising plan*, which focuses on how stakeholders—government agencies, local people and civil society—will be consulted throughout the implementation of the roadmap and how stakeholders will be engaged in the process, respecting the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities.

3. *The development and selection of REDD-plus strategies*, which describes how Cambodia will develop and evaluate strategies to reduce deforestation and forest degradation and how the country's REDD-plus strategies will be developed, and identifies priority areas for implementation at the sub-national level.
4. *Implementation framework*, which comprises the implementation framework for REDD-plus; plans for supplemental legal regulations, the development of REDD-plus policies and governance arrangements; plans for social and environmental impact assessments; the verification of results; and the setting up of transparent and decentralized benefit-sharing arrangements.
5. *Development of the reference scenario against which performance will be measured*, which proposes the reference scenario for REDD-plus and reference emission levels based on the analysis of national circumstances and historical data, and discusses how to set a sub-national reference scenario.
6. *Development of the monitoring, reporting and verification system*, which proposes a monitoring system for REDD-plus and the technical plan—with budget—for how Cambodia will develop a forest carbon monitoring system and describes how to integrate sub-national projects into the national system.

REDD-plus Demonstration Projects in Cambodia

Three REDD-plus demonstration projects have been initiated to date in Cambodia: the Oddar Meanchey REDD-plus (OM-REDD-plus) project, in Oddar Meanchey Province; the Seima Protection Forest project in Monduliri Province; and the northern plains project in Preah Vihear Province. Although at varying stages, each is a promising showcase of project design and coordination between provincial governments and the RGC, international NGOs and local communities.

OM-REDD-plus: Initiated by the Forestry Administration in December 2007, this is Cambodia's first REDD-plus demonstration project. The area contains 13 community forestry groups in previously established community forestry areas, comprising more than 50 villages and covering 67,000 hectares.

Developed in collaboration with the Clinton Climate Initiative, Community Forestry International, Terra Global Capital (the private project developer) and Pact (an international NGO), the OM-REDD-plus demonstration project will generate, over its 30-year life, an estimated 8 million tons of CO₂ offset credits for sale on the voluntary carbon market. While still in its infancy, the project is gathering significant support among local people because of its promise to distribute at least 50% of future revenue to communities.

Seima Protection Forest: Work on the Seima Protection Forest REDD-plus demonstration project began in mid 2008, after an independent feasibility study by Winrock International

concluded that the project was highly feasible and would, even under a conservative scenario, avoid millions of tons of carbon emissions. The project encompasses about 188,000 hectares of ecologically important forest that serves as a key ecological migratory corridor for the Asian elephant and other species. The Mondulkiri forests are also home to the indigenous Bunong minority, and the demonstration project will be important for demonstrating the benefits of REDD-plus to local people (WCS-Cambodia 2010).

In 2009, the area was given protection forest status. A project design document was produced by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Forestry Administration and submitted for verification in 2010 by the Voluntary Carbon Standard and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (WCS-Cambodia 2010). Terra Global Capital, in partnership with Community Forestry International, completed the first of two validations of a mosaic REDD methodology that was submitted to and approved by the Voluntary Carbon Standard.

Northern plains: Following the experience of WCS in the Seima Protection Forest, a similar feasibility assessment was undertaken in the northern plains of Preah Vihear Province and was due to be completed in 2010. Preliminary results are promising, and it is likely that at least some management units will be able to proceed to the development of a project design document in 2011 (WCS-Cambodia 2010).



Participants visit Sang Rukhawan community forest

International and Local Insights from the Dialogue

Drawing on observations from the field, dialogue participants discussed successful practices associated with and key challenges for Cambodia’s REDD-plus readiness process, and outlined key actions for all Cambodian REDD-plus stakeholders to consider.

OM-REDD-plus Demonstration Project Context

Oddar Meanchey Province is located in the northwestern corner of Cambodia (Figure 2); it shares a 224-km border with Thailand and has a total area of 6158 square km. It is one of Cambodia’s poorest provinces and was the site of the former Khmer Rouge’s stronghold and final hideout. The prevalence of landmines in the area creates an ongoing hazard and has meant that, in the past, the province had a significantly lower rate of deforestation than other provinces. In 2002 more than 75% of Oddar Meanchey was forested, but the removal of landmines combined with increasing land pressures have increased forest loss, and the annual rate of deforestation of more than 2% is now the highest in the country.

Nearly 200,000 people live in Oddar Meanchey Province, and the population is growing by 8% annually. Shifting cultivation and land-clearing for rice farming are major drivers of deforestation, second only to the clearing of public lands in the name of economic land concessions granted to private industry.

FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF ODDAR MEANCHEY PROVINCE, CAMBODIA



Dialogue participants toured three of the 13 community forestry groups participating in the OM-REDD-plus project, accompanied by members of NGOs and communities associated with the project. Question-and-answer sessions were held to further tease out the experiences of community groups, including the challenges they face and the benefits they expect from REDD-plus. On day 1, participants visited the Sang Rukhawan community forest, which is managed by a group of Buddhist monks known as the Monks’ Community Forest Association. The monks are responsible for implementing the conservation objectives of six surrounding villages, with a combined jurisdiction of about 18,000 hectares of forest. On Day 2 participants visited the Samaky community forestry group and the Samaki Sangkros Prey Chheo community forestry group, which encompass 1,079 and 4,151 hectares of protected forest, respectively.

Representatives of Pact and the Children’s Development Association (a local NGO) gave presentations on the roles of those organizations as project facilitators, providing dialogue participants with useful ground-level perspectives on the project. A briefing by Terra Global Capital touched on the technical challenges and accomplishments of the project, as well as the current state of project accreditation.

Observations from the Oddar Meanchey REDD-plus Demonstration Project

Five themes emerged from a synthesis of observations made in the field by local and international participants.

- ➔ **A community forestry system is well-established:** Evidence from the field revealed a strong existing framework for the distribution of benefits derived from the harvesting of communal non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Although access to these resources, which include resins, mushrooms, bamboo and fruits, is typically on a first-come, first-served basis, harvests are pooled on their way to markets, with at least one village imposing a 20% tax that is placed in a communal fund. Such communal arrangements may provide lessons and a structure for benefit distribution under REDD-plus.
- ➔ **Benefit-sharing as it relates to REDD-plus needs to be clarified:** A key gap observed by dialogue participants is a lack of clarity on how REDD-plus benefits would be distributed at the community level. Community members expressed their hope for substantial gains from the project, soon, yet even community representatives have little information on how and when such gains might be realized, even though they have been promised at least 50% of net revenue by FA.⁵ Questions were raised about how net revenue will be calculated, after subtracting project costs incurred by implementing agencies, including the Forest Administration. Moreover, community institutions or mechanisms for fund management are lacking, other than those associated with NTFPs, pointing to a future logistical challenge for benefit distribution. Any future sub-national or national REDD-plus

project in Cambodia will also need to identify how additional stakeholders (e.g. ministries, NGOs and wildlife sanctuary managers) will benefit.

- ➔ **More user-friendly information on REDD-plus is needed at the community level:** Discussions with communities revealed that the scope of the OM-REDD-plus demonstration project (e.g. project timeline, and implications for the future use of forest resources) has not been fully conveyed to members of the 14 villages participating in the project. NGOs indicated that the information that has been made available is difficult for the average village stakeholder to understand, and that, overall, climate change and its mitigation through REDD-plus are not well understood. This may explain, in part, the observation that communities are not concerned with leakage outside the project area.
- ➔ **Broader and more integrated national land-use planning is needed:** A problem with Cambodia's forest law framework is its inconsistency with the country's land-use planning laws. The 2002 Forestry Law, for example, allows the Forestry Administration to reclassify 'idle or degraded' public forests as State Private Land, which in turn makes much of Cambodia's forest vulnerable to reallocation through social or economic land concessions. Moreover, economic land concessions are granted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Council of Ministries with relative ease and over the course of just a few months, with leases granted for 90 years. In contrast, the process to establish a community forest involves a planning process that takes, on an average, two years to complete in order to obtain a renewable 15-year lease. This speaks to a broader issue of policies that currently appear to favor private enterprise over forest conservation. In order for REDD-plus to be successful, these priorities will need to be realigned, particularly at the national level.
- ➔ **The long-term sustained participation of all stakeholders needs broadening:** The Cambodian REDD-plus planning, design and implementation process needs greater participation, especially from local stakeholders. Although consultations with communities were conducted in the development of the OM-REDD-plus demonstration project, the process could have been more inclusive and extensive. In particular, although there is evidence that women regularly attend meetings, their participation within those meetings could be bolstered. Cambodian women are highly dependent on forests but they lack significant political involvement in community forestry management committees (CFMCs), the main official mechanism for coordinating the involvement of stakeholders in community forest management. Women participate actively in fewer than 10% of community forestry groups, while fewer than 5% of women hold positions of authority in CFMCs. There is considerable discrepancy, therefore, between the dependence of women on forests and their capacity to influence forest management.

Key Challenges and Action Opportunities for REDD-plus Readiness in Cambodia

This chapter outlines the challenges facing REDD-plus readiness in Cambodia, practices that could be effective, and opportunities for action.

Benefit-sharing

Challenges

In Oddar Meanchey Province it is estimated that almost 50% of rural livelihoods are highly dependent on forests, and there are concerns that REDD-plus could lead to a loss of community access to forests. Consistent with the situation in many other countries (including all those that participated previously in TFD-convened REDD-plus readiness dialogues), the scope and extent of forest dependency are poorly understood and tend to be under-estimated by government, donors and NGOs. The extent of forest use by communities is often underestimated and, therefore, the calculation of opportunity cost made at the national level on behalf of communities often does not reflect ground-level reality. This highlights the need for the careful consideration, early in the planning process, of benefit-sharing arrangements to ensure that this often-overlooked issue receives proper attention.

Additional opportunities for communities to supplement potential REDD-plus funding, including through expanded NTFP practices, should also be sought, particularly in light of recent logging bans in many community forest areas. If a market approach to REDD-plus is adopted internationally, future benefits will be prone to market fluctuations and irregularities, further pointing to the need for diverse sources of income.

Without adequate benefit-sharing, incentives for achieving permanent emissions reductions will erode, thereby undermining mitigation gains. As REDD-plus projects are likely to last a minimum of 30 years, there is a strong need to clarify whether communities will receive benefits over the full duration of projects. Like any investment opportunity, a lack of finance certainty will diminish the willingness to participate.

Formal legislative instruments are needed at the national level to ensure that benefit distribution works across local, provincial and national scales. A UN-REDD process initiated in 2011 includes studies of benefit distribution and potential funding distribution mechanisms, with a set of options to be explored during the pilot phase.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Define all parties in the REDD-plus process and create an enforceable agreement between party members that sets out percentages and fixed costs.
- ➔ Clarify intra-community benefit-sharing mechanisms to determine if funds will be shared among individuals or used for community projects, and at what percentages.
- ➔ Research existing experience with NTFP benefit-sharing at the community level.
- ➔ Create a transparent and independent financial instrument before payments for carbon credits commence.

Information

Challenges

One of the main challenges in the Cambodian REDD-plus readiness phase remains the limited flow of information between the local, provincial and national levels. At the national level, global signals from international negotiations and the potential carbon market for REDD-plus remain opaque, resulting in policies for the scaling up of national REDD-plus projects that are encouraging yet timid. Despite the uncertainty about future international discourse on REDD-plus, the greater distribution of existing information to communities should be a priority. Although progress has been made, the dialogue with community forest leaders revealed only rudimentary knowledge of REDD-plus, particularly about how and when any benefits might arrive.

The unreliable information on potential REDD-plus funding affects the degree of involvement of donors, governments and project developers. The uncertainty that exists at different levels tends to reinforce itself. This is due partly to the newness of the REDD-plus concept, a lack of models to follow, and the front-loaded nature of the REDD-plus planning process (and costs) in advance of a carbon-based income stream. The lack of a tangible, tradable asset is further complicated by a lack of capacity in communities to understand their rights to and regulations affecting the ownership of carbon.

There is a fundamental tension in Cambodia between the need to deliver, in the name of transparency, all the information on benefits, risks and opportunity costs, and the desire to wait until accurate information is available. Yet even when information is disseminated to community representatives, communication barriers prevent potential beneficiaries at the local level from receiving it, particularly those who are illiterate. Information available only in English has a limited readership, and a lack of translations into local languages makes it difficult for practitioners to understand and convey accurate messages to communities.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Build a multi-media awareness-raising strategy.
- ➔ Pilot a study to assess the forest dependence of communities and update socioeconomic assessments of those communities.
- ➔ Simplify REDD-plus language for awareness and capacity-building, and increase support for NGOs that are disseminating information to communities.
- ➔ Conduct long-term capacity-building with universities (including in the use of REDD-plus communication/training materials, radio advertising, etc.).
- ➔ Collect national carbon-stock inventory data.

Land-use Planning

Challenges

A major obstacle to land-use planning in Cambodia is the lack of an inter-ministerial institution responsible for reconciling the various national needs for land allocation. MAFF is tasked with both reallocating degraded forests in preparation for economic land concessions and facilitating a national framework for avoiding emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Allowing public degraded lands to be gazetted for private use may create an incentive structure that promotes further degradation. Ultimately, land-use planning cannot be coherent without cost-benefit analyses. However, without predictable income streams, policymakers will remain conflicted on the allocation of forest land.

An additional challenge is the mode in which community leaders are brought into the REDD-plus planning process. To date, top-down approaches have dominated policy decision-making, and there is a need for greater representation among community leaders at the provincial and national scales. Community forest representatives often have inadequate information on REDD-plus, leaving them at a disadvantage in negotiation processes. They tend to rely on NGOs for information, which also often lack the capacity to fully understand the complexities of REDD-plus and so may convey misleading information.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Organize workshop(s) to develop a landscape approach that supports a national REDD-plus strategy (monitoring, reporting and verification).
- ➔ Map all relevant sectoral policies (e.g. investment, infrastructure and mining) in order to better coordinate national ministries and institutions.
- ➔ Update community land-use plans in the light of REDD-plus.

- ➔ Map and demarcate community forest areas nation-wide.
- ➔ Extend the terms of community forests beyond 15 years.
- ➔ Reinforce the power of communities to determine plans for community forests that meet needs for food, timber and community resources.
- ➔ Demarcate the boundaries of villages, protected land and areas for sustainable timber harvesting.
- ➔ Prioritize process, transparency and community engagement in national land-use planning.

Participation

Challenges

Many meetings were held between Pact, the Children's Development Association and community leaders during the readiness phase of the OM REDD-plus demonstration project. Much of the purpose of those meetings, however, appeared to be the dissemination of



Meeting with local stakeholders at the Samaki Sangkros Prey Chheo community forestry group.

government decisions channelled through NGOs rather than to act as a platform for the two-way exchange of ideas. Currently, the communities' vehicle for addressing concerns directly with the government is limited to sub-group under NFP taskforce, which is the entity that will control the disbursement of future REDD-plus funding. The Forestry Administration is responsible for negotiating carbon sales. Neither of these entities has direct community participation, limiting the representation of local people and local perspectives in determining equitable benefit distribution among local, provincial and national stakeholders.

The role of the armed forces in the REDD-plus context remains unclear. Efforts need to be made to bring the military to the table because it has been implicated in illegal deforestation activities.

Women's participation at the community level has been hindered by a dearth of women leaders, the unavailability of women due to their heavy domestic workloads, cultural norms that favor men's engagement in public forums, and the inattention of implementing agencies to gender issues and women's empowerment. Special efforts are required, therefore, to build the capacity of women to become engaged in REDD-plus and to encourage their active participation in REDD-plus planning and benefit distribution.

The equal participation of all stakeholders is critical for developing the trust needed for any REDD-plus agreement. It requires time and effort. Therefore, an ongoing challenge is to institutionalize meaningful participation to ensure that all key actors are involved.

Action opportunities

- ➔ Strengthen the network of NGOs that could help implement participatory and consultative processes for promoting REDD-plus.
- ➔ Introduce guidelines at the national level for free, prior and informed consent to improve coordination at the local level.
- ➔ Increase consultation between government and communities on the implementation of the REDD-plus roadmap through a relevant grassroots civil-society representative forum.
- ➔ Link to working groups on food security and good governance, and coordinate with the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact.
- ➔ Strengthen the capacity of existing community forestry networks to better represent the interests of communities.
- ➔ Form multi-stakeholder forums at the local and provincial levels.
- ➔ Produce best-practice guidelines on participation.
- ➔ Invite the armed forces to participate in meetings.

Concluding Remarks

Deforestation has increased in the last decade in Cambodia, yet this trend could be reversed because the country’s forest policies are proving receptive to the REDD-plus conservation strategy. While the future funding prospects for REDD-plus remain vague, it is clear that the Cambodian government, via the Forestry Administration, strongly supports the development of REDD-plus in the country.

As attitudes at the national level continue to evolve, preparation at the local level is advancing rapidly. Many obstacles remain, however, including the lack of a fundamental framework for an agreed-upon benefit-distribution mechanism. Despite the lack of clarity surrounding future funding streams and the principles behind the REDD-plus mechanism itself, some community foresters have begun to reduce deforestation in advance of a comprehensive agreement, in part due to the perceived opportunities to obtain cash and co-benefits.

While negotiating terms between local, provincial and national stakeholders must remain a priority, future actions will need to ensure greater stakeholder participation in planning at all levels. Although Cambodia’s nascent REDD-plus strategy is off to a promising start, further integration and communication between communities and lawmakers will be critical to its ultimate success.

Endnotes

- 1 www.theforestsdialogue.org.
- 2 http://environment.yale.edu/tfd/uploads/TFD_Forests_and_Climate_Statement_w_Briefing_Notes.pdf.
- 3 http://environment.yale.edu/tfd/uploads/TFD_FCC_Review_InvestingInREDD-plus_lo-res.pdf.
- 4 UN-REDD approved US\$3 million for the Cambodian national REDD-plus program during its fifth policy board meeting, held on 4–5 November 2010 in Washington, DC, United States.
- 5 Government decision 699 on OM-REDD article 3 and sub-point b stipulates that “maximize the benefits flows to local community who is participating in the project”. Based on this principle, FA states that it commits to more than 50% of net revenue to contribute to communities.



Meeting with the Monks’ Community Forest Association at the Sang Rukhawan community forest

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Community forestry stakeholders in Cambodia.

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All omissions and inaccuracies in this report are the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the institutions involved, nor do they necessarily represent official Norad policies.



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- *Forests and Poverty Reduction*
- *Forests and Climate Change*
- *Investing in Locally-Controlled Forestry*
- *Free, Prior and Informed Consent*
- *Food, Fuel, Fiber and Forests*
- *Genetically Modified Trees*

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