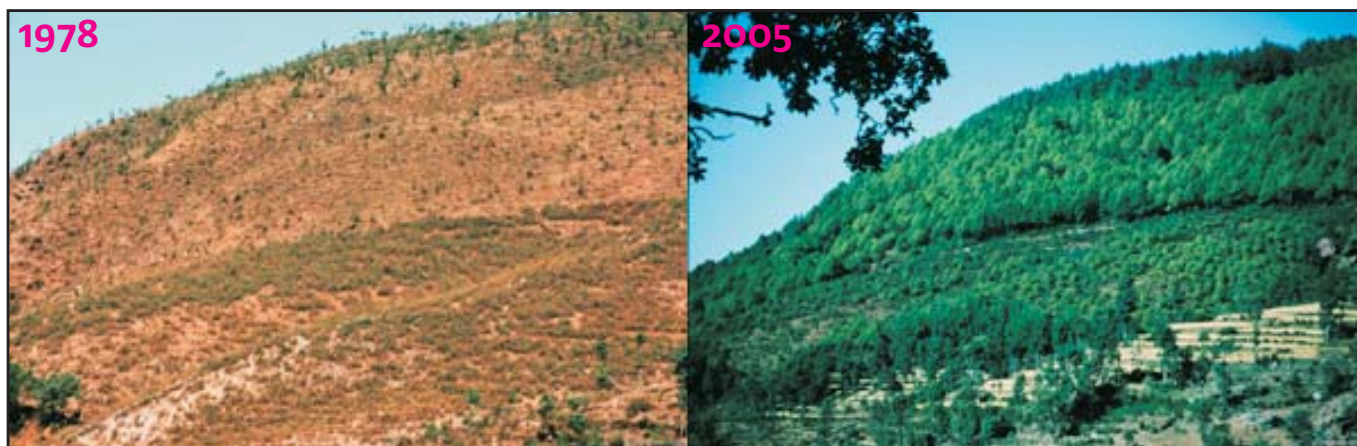


Making REDD Work for the Forest-Dependent Poor: Civil Society Perspectives from the South



Following the explicit recognition of the principle of Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) as a potential means to combat climate change in the Bali Action Plan, a plethora of methodological issues and options have been put forth. While many of these issues are real and need to be tackled before a REDD mechanism can be functional, it appears that the most fundamental issue is not being sufficiently recognized. The most critical issue is not “how to implement” REDD but “who is it that we are rewarding through REDD and carbon financing”? In developing countries it is not the state, nor the private sector, but local communities, indigenous groups and forest dwelling peoples, as well as their local governments and associations, that should receive the lion’s share of the rewards for their efforts in combating deforestation and degradation.



Picture of Namdu, Dolakha, Nepal in 1978 (before community forest) and 2005 (after community forest)

Source: Bharat Pokhrel, Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project

These groups not only constitute some of the world’s poorest people, deprived of basic necessities of life, but are also the local stewards of forest, supplying “cheap labor” to protect, nurture and rehabilitate forests - a global environmental service which, till now, has been provided free of cost to the global community. These are the people who have foregone the luxury of modern development and lived in the forest ecosystems fighting against the nexus of corrupt state officials and logging companies - the main agents of deforestation. In the Himalayan regions of Nepal and India, for instance, local people have reversed the past trends of deforestation triggered by faulty government policies. In Nepal, about 10 million people have directly brought about 1.5 million hectares of forests under sustainable management, breaking the past trends of degradation and deforestation. Likewise, in the Indian state of Uttaranchal, local people, especially women, fought against the state-authorised

loggers in a widely-publicised campaign known as the “chipko movement”.

Despite these local efforts to conserve forests, the scientific evidence generated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reveals that global emissions of carbon dioxide are growing alarmingly, leading to unprecedented changes in the earth’s climate. Local forest-dependent peoples, whose contributions to global warming are negligible, are now feeling the worst of the effects. While REDD is a positive move in that it recognizes the role of forests in addressing climate change, we need to be critical of a mechanism which allows the industrialised countries to use REDD as a licence to continue polluting the earth’s atmosphere. Southern civil society is deeply concerned with such proposals around REDD, and would like to propose equitable, just and environmentally responsible mechanisms for REDD.



We hereby urge the international climate change (and more specifically the REDD) negotiators to seriously bear in mind the following issues:

1. While it is valid to account carbon offsets for financial reward, financing of climate change mitigation efforts must address the needs of both people and forests. Forests cannot be conserved without addressing the basic livelihood concerns of local poor and marginalized groups.
2. Deforestation and forest degradation must not be misunderstood as a financial problem. It is a result of the denial of local rights over forests, the lack of an enabling policy environment, irresponsible and unregulated private sector activities, corruption within government forestry agencies, and many external drivers such as the cost of fuel. The solution lies in allowing forest-dependent peoples to take leadership in combating deforestation by implementing sustainable forest management.
3. Any future REDD mechanism must channel funds from industrialised countries to reward, expand and promote community based forest management in developing countries.
4. REDD must not merely be seen as payment for the amount of carbon offsets created; it must be intrinsically and explicitly recognised as an element of the industrialised countries' debt towards the poor and forest dependent people who have conserved forests.
5. The transfer of finance through REDD must not be a means to relocate the burden of emission reduction from the rich countries to the poor. The industrialised countries must commit to, and achieve, emissions reductions at home, without relying on trading emissions with the South.
6. Any REDD financing mechanism must include provision to help local people to cope with the risks and vulnerabilities induced by global warming.
7. REDD must not privilege highly-forested and high-deforestation countries; funding priorities must be based on both the urgency of the human problem as well as the scope for carbon sequestration. Moreover, REDD should not only reward reduced-deforesting 'sinners' but also improved-protecting 'saints'.
8. While there is a need for research, analysis, monitoring and verification processes in relation to REDD funding for sustainable forest management, these processes should not be monopolized by the carbon experts, state agencies and international organizations. Local people and civil society organizations should be fully informed of, and have opportunity to participate in, these processes. Locally-based intermediaries should be capacitated and provided with opportunities to implement local-level REDD processes.
9. REDD schemes should not be limited to national level; sub-national innovations in forest conservation should be rewarded. At national and sub-national level, REDD should be implemented by multi-stakeholder groups and committees in a transparent and participatory manner.
10. REDD should not be relegated completely to the principle of the market. We need to be more responsible actors towards our mother earth and towards each other, beyond the narrow logic of profit.

For more information, please contact:

Dr Hemant R Ojha
 Email: hro@forestaction.wlinkcom.np,
 ojha Hemant1@gmail.com
 ForestAction Nepal
 P O Box 12207, Kathmandu, Nepal

Bhola Bhattarai
 General Secretary
 Email: bhola_fecofun@yahoo.com
 Federation of Community Forestry Users,
 Nepal (FECOFUN)



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