

COURSE REPORT

Seminar-Workshops on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) for the Philippines National Commission on Indigenous Peoples

Course 1: Davao, June 1-2, 2010

Course 2: Quezon City, July 8-9, 2010

Courses jointly sponsored by:

Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)

Philippines National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)

CoDe REDD

United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Background: Tropical forests play a very important role in regulating the global climate by sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Deforestation and forest degradation not only reduce the ability of forests to serve this vital role as a 'carbon sink', but also cause forests to become a 'carbon source' when forest biomass, which is roughly 50% carbon by dry weight, is released into the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide through burning or decay. With 13 million hectares of tropical forests lost each year, the forestry sector contributes approximately 12-20% of total carbon dioxide emissions—more than those caused by the entire global transportation sector.

In order to address this problem, a United Nations-backed mechanism known as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation—plus conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks—(REDD+) is being developed. Through this mechanism, industrialized countries would compensate tropical countries for reducing their forest sector emissions. While the details of this mechanism are still being worked out for inclusion in a global regulatory system, REDD+ demonstration projects are currently being developed to protect specific areas of tropical forests. Carbon credits resulting from these demonstration projects are currently being sold on the voluntary carbon market, though at lower prices and smaller volumes than is expected if REDD+ becomes part of the regulatory system.



The creation of this new market in forest carbon credits has led to the establishment of a number of private sector carbon companies, whose representatives are travelling through the tropical regions of the world trying to set up forest carbon projects. Pejoratively known as "carbon cowboys", some of these individuals have taken advantage of weak government oversight and local people's limited understanding about REDD+ to gain control over carbon rights. In the Philippines, these carbon cowboys are particularly targeting ancestral domains, i.e., those areas that have been legally recognized by the Philippines Government as belonging to an indigenous group, where approximately 80% of the forest eligible for REDD+ are located.





In one recent case in the Philippines, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between a private sector firm and indigenous community leader's group without adequately following standard procedures that had been developed by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, a government body tasked with providing administrative oversight for ancestral domain areas. In particular, these regulations require that the NCIP be a party to any MOU over land use, as well as ensure that indigenous groups give their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of any land-use activity that occurs in a ancestral domain.

As a result of this case, and in recognition that other "carbon cowboys" are moving throughout the region, the NCIP requested that trainings be held for their field staff to begin familiarizing themselves with forest carbon projects and to investigate the implications of this new business activity for current administrative safeguards. A series of two trainings were held: The first for staff from the Mindanao offices, and the second for staff from Luzon and the Visayas.

Course Objectives: The course objectives varied slightly between the two trainings, but can be summarized as follows:

- Increase awareness on the science of climate change and the importance of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation,
- Inform participants about the REDD+ project cycle, carbon markets and standards
- Identify the role of NCIP within the forest carbon project development process
- Revisit the FPIC process, identify areas of enhancement, and draw out action points towards crafting protocols and guidelines on reviewing and approving forest carbon-related agreements.

Coordinators and Course Instructors: The training program was designed by an organizing committee comprised of representatives from NCIP, CoDe REDD, ELTI, and Fauna & Flora International. Logistics were handled by CoDeREDD, ELTI, and NCIP with funds being provided by the United Nations Development Program-Manila, ELTI, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Meanwhile, the training modules were delivered by a team of qualified instructors that participated in one or both events, including Dr. Florencia Pulhin (ICRAF-Philippines), Dr. David Neidel (ELTI), For. Romeo Acosta (formerly Department of Environment & Natural Resources-Forest Management Bureau), Atty. Gerthie Mayo Anda (Environmental Legal Assistance Center), Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Tebtebba Foundation, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues), Dr. Aldrin Mallari (FFI-Philippines), For. Estrella Pasion (Conservation International-Philippines), and Atty. Jeanette Florita (NCIP).

Participants: Both courses were attended by staff from the NCIP regional offices. The first course had 55 participants from the southern island of Mindanao. The second course had 50 participants from the northern island of Luzon and the central island region of Visayas. Even though all of the participants represented the same organization, their level of background knowledge about REDD was variable, and the Mindanao training course was heavily influenced by the participants' concerns about the national government's apparent bias and leniency towards mining concessions in the region.

Outcome & Course Follow-Up: Following the first training, and as a result - at least partially - from the repeated engagement with the organizing committee, the leadership of the NCIP passed En Banc Resolution A-020 declaring “that in any forest carbon engagement, the indigenous people have carbon ownership.” This resolution was a significant step in clarifying the legal issue of carbon ownership, which has been a heated and contentious issue in virtually every country that is being targeted for REDD.

Both of the courses ended with the widespread recognition of the need to develop additional protocols for applying the FPIC process in the case of Forest Carbon Projects. These protocols will need to be developed by NCIP itself.

The NCIP leadership has also recognized the need for the development of an independent technical assistance unit, comprised of experts who would be on call to provide input on all MOUs being developed for forest carbon projects. ELTI has been invited to participate in that technical assistance unit. There is a chance that the work of the technical assistance unit could also be extended to other MOUs covering large-scale, land-use activities being planned within ancestral domains. This would effectively counter the influence of the Department of Environment & Natural Resources, which is legally mandated to play this role, but which has shown a strong proclivity to supporting extractive activities.

Finally, there is a growing recognition in the NCIP that safeguards being put in place for forest carbon projects, as mandated by voluntary carbon market standards (i.e., the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Standards), should be applied to all extractive activities being planned in ancestral domains, including mining, logging, and infrastructure development.

ELTI will continue to assist NCIP with these processes as deemed appropriate.



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