

Cameroon: Redd Processes Reinforces Community Rights

BY EFFA TAMBE NCHAM, 26 AUGUST 2012

Representatives of eleven countries from East, West and Central Africa which have large forests zones met in a workshop from August 21 to 23 to seek ways of working together using processes of the Reduce Emission from Deforestation and Degradation, REDD, to give communities the rights to forests.

The countries which have a common goal to keep the forest standing so as to conserve carbon stock and to reinforce carbon where there are no forests, are Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Cameroon, among others.

In a press conference which took place after the workshop, the representative of the Centre for Environment and Development, CED, Samuel Nnah Ndiobe, said they were seeking to evaluate how to mainstream community rights in forest issues. He said all participating countries have common problems such as the need to reform forest and land tenures, increase participation levels of the civil society and community because they are not involved in decision-making but blamed as key drivers of deforestation.

Stating the problem, François Tiayon of Rights and Resources Initiative, RRI- USA said the communities have been owners of land but the law now states that all land is owned by government and the communities are considered as tenants. He said while 73 per cent of land in the world is governed by governments, in Africa 98 per cent is owned by the government while two percent is owned by the community. He said surveys have been carried out which reveal there is an upward trend towards recognition of community rights. He said if government can ameliorate the law and allow community to use enough land, it will not only conserve the forest but will also alleviate poverty. "If more land is given to community, they will protect it and manage it in a sustainable way. If the rights of community are secured it will solve a lot of issues", he said.

They concluded that government should engage in meaningful reform in land tenure and take in recognition of the rights of communities. There should be improved participation of key stakeholders such as the community and the civil society, in all steps of REDD processes.

The civil society is calling on government to carryout objective studies that do not lay blame on the community but transparent methodology and study carried out by independent researchers.



Photo: World Resources Institute

Cameroon is home to an incredibly diverse rain forest.

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