

REDD: A Threat to Our Rural Sustainable Development

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Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation or REDD is the hot topic in climate change talks. It was first introduced in 2005 and is believed to have a significant role in slowing the global warming process and will be benefiting all parties, developed as well as developing countries. Too bad, in scrutinizing the concept we can see that the concept is flawed. REDD is not a proper way in dealing with climate change because it tends to harm rural livelihoods.

The basic idea of REDD is that developing countries will earn money from developed countries from protecting their forest. Developing countries could mean the national or local government, individual, community or corporate which reside in developing countries, vice versa, developed countries could be mean entities which reside in developed countries¹. For every ton of carbon each entity in developing countries could hold on ground, they will receive a certain amount of money from their counterparts in developed countries.

Though the idea seems alluring as it offers money to save the forest, it will eliminate rural people's access into the forest and eventually will eliminate people's source of income, which means, the number of forest-based agrarian conflicts will potentially rise. In their press statement, The International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change stated that REDD will result to more violations to indigenous people's rights as it will violate their rights

¹ Leo Peskett and Zoe Harkin. 2007. Risk and responsibility in Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Forestry Briefing 15. Can be downloaded from <http://www.odifpep.org.uk/>

over land, territories and resources². Their concern is not just an imaginary thinking as cases in parts of the world have occurred as evidences. At Mount Elgon National Park in east Uganda, where the Dutch FACE Foundation has been planting carbon 'offset' trees since 1994, villagers have been beaten and shot at by armed park rangers guarding the 'carbon trees' inside the park. The 'offset' project then sells carbon credits to Greenseat, a Dutch company with clients that include Amnesty International, the British Council and the Body Shop³. To mention similar case at national level is the case of Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park in South East Sulawesi where indigenous people were evicted from their land when the government in 1976 stated their village as part of the national park while in fact they have lived there since 1920. A research from CIFOR found that from 1997 to June 2003, there were 359 forest based agrarian conflict occurred and 36 percents of those conflicts were caused by restriction in accessing the forest⁴. Remembering that REDD will be a very risky and costly business⁵, we can assume that the business is a sensitive one and [since] carbon 'seller' could be very protective over the areas. Therefore, there is great possibility that the number of agrarian conflict will increase.

From the compensation scheme, Indonesia believes to receive 3, 75 billion USD⁶ but it is not clear how rural people will receive the payment. Is it going

² Statement from the International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change (IFIPCC) at the 13th Session of Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC--SBSTA 27, concerning agenda item 5/REDD. See <http://www.globalforestcoalition.org/>

³ Human rights abuses, land conflicts, broken promises – the reality of carbon 'offset' projects in Uganda. See <http://www.fern.org/>, <http://www.sinkswatch.org/>

⁴ Yuliana Cahya Wulan, Yurdi Yasmi, Christian Purba and Eva Wollenberg. 2004. Analisa Konflik Sektor Kehutanan di Indonesia 1997 - 2003. Center for International Forestry Watch

⁵ Transaction costs for carbon projects can be high, frequently between US\$80,000 - 130,000 while implementation costs are likely to be highly variable and context-specific. Cost factors for underlying activities may include the enforcement of forestry and land-use regulations, improved forest management, etc. On the other hand the carbon revenue comes only from carbon sale. See Policy Brief: REDD Policy Scenarios and Carbon Markets. Can be downloaded from <http://www.ecosecurities.com/>

⁶ See: Antara News, 13 August 2007. Minister of Environment Rachmat Witoelar stated that the government of Indonesia provides 37,5 million hectares of its prime forest for REDD projects, on the assumption that the base price for Indonesia prime forest is 10 USD per year. On the other occasion,

to be from local or national government? Can it be paid directly? Who should regulate and watch the transaction? As the buyers need certainty to whom they should pay the compensation, entities who claim to hold the carbon right should have a legal statement over the land. This has become a major difficulty as in Indonesia, no one 'owns' a forest. Though, for example if one company has usage right on hectareages of land and it decides not to chop down any trees in order to receive the compensation, it has to lay off its workers which off course are local people. Will the REDD scheme pay the loss of source of living of these workers?

Partial Paradigm in addressing global warming

This damaging mechanism is derived from partial paradigm in over viewing climate change. In the context of Indonesia, the main reason why people force forestry sector into the account was because Indonesia is the third world largest emitter. The calculation came from the burning forests in 1999. While acknowledging that forest burning is of course one source of emission, we have to keep in mind that the main and most constant source of emission comes from heavy industrial instead of forest deforestation and degradation. In his presentation at The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change working group, Jayant A. Sathaye from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory stated that forest protection and sustainable management in forestry sector could only influence 7% from the global emission while renewable energy and demand management in electricity sector can influence 20% from the total world emission. The same number goes for diversification in energy sources⁷. Let us then recall the Vienna Climate Talk in August 2007 which recognized that industrial countries should reduce their emissions by 25% to 40% by 2020 compared to 1990 level. The question is, why have we

Rizaldi Boer, an academic from Institute of Bogor Agriculture stated that Indonesia will at least receive 2 billion USD per year from REDD fund. See: Kompas, 6 Februari 2007

⁷ Jayath A. Sathaye. Presentation at IPCC WG3, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Mitigation. Can be downloaded from http://unfccc.int/meetings/sb26/side_events_and_exhibits/items/3981.php

never heard of major campaigns for industrial energy efficiency? Why should all burdens be put into forest? Why does the idea of demand management never come into the surface? It is because, in this market oriented world, those ideas are bad for business.

The context of market and economy then can also be pulled into north and south issue. Buyers are entities in developed country and sellers come from developing country. One side does not want to reduce their emission as it will harm the economy, and the other part is willing to exploit itself to earn income. The enormous growth of green house gases was started by the industrial revolution⁸ in the North Country. In 1996, the average number of emission by one American was 3,76 ton of carbon and a single person in Germany emitted 2,87 ton of carbon. Let us then compare this to one Brazilian who used 0,46 ton of carbon and an Indonesian who used up only 0,33 ton of carbon. British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy 2007 shows that Europe, North America, Australia and Saudi Arabia are the most energy consumptive region⁹. The question then, why do we, when talking about climate change, focus on the future hot temperature, forgetting the ones who started the fire and urging others to put off the flame?

At country level, the burden of global warming is put into the shoulder of rural areas when government proposes for REDD. Though the government of Indonesia has a program on energy efficiencies for households, the program is not significant as it only covers lightning efficiencies. Meanwhile, for transportation as one of the worst emission producers – for example – the government has no program to reduce the production of vehicles.

With the above considerations, if REDD is implemented, Indonesia will potentially break some international commitments, to mention some are the

⁸ See <http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbontrends/index.htm>

⁹ Material can be downloaded from www.bp.com

economic, social and cultural (ecosoc) rights and ICARRD. In 2005, as we ratified ecosoc rights, the government is obliged to respect, protect and fulfill the livelihood of the people. Since REDD harms the rural people, it means that on the implementation, the state will not be able to fulfill its obligation to the people. The implementation of the project is also contrary to government's commitment at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) in 2006 which recognized that food insecurity, hunger and rural poverty are often the result of the absence of access to land, water and other natural resources, and other livelihood assets. Because REDD is disadvantaging rural areas therefore the government should reconsider its implementation.

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