

GIZ Partner Event at the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW) 2016

Forest landscape restoration – Challenges and opportunities for ecological resilience, economic development and enhancing livelihoods in Asia and the Pacific

Holiday Inn Hotel, Mimosa Leisure Estate, Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga, Philippines
Wednesday, 24th February 2016, 9:00-10:30am

In the frame of the Asia Pacific Forestry Week 2016, GIZ Philippines, in partnership with DENR and the SNRD REDD+ Working Group, organized a side event on “Forest landscape restoration – Challenges and opportunities for ecological resilience, economic development and enhancing livelihoods in Asia and the Pacific”. With over 80 participants, the event was extremely successful and featured presentations from partners of the Asia and Pacific region, sharing their experiences on the application of various approaches to, and the views on, Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), with a particular focus on the challenges faced and the solutions developed.

Dr. Bernd-Markus Liss, Director and Principal Advisor of the GIZ Climate Program in the Philippines, opened the event with a brief introduction of FLR within the context of recent international policy developments and initiatives such as the Bonn Challenge, the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement of UNFCCC’s COP21. Emphasizing that while elements of FLR are already known, there is still the urgent need to fill the concept with life based on practical experiences with its implementation, in order to achieve the ambitious goals set and the commitments made by the international community.



The keynote speech of APFW 2016 host country, given by DENR-FMB **Director Ricardo L. Calderon**, provided lessons learned from implementing the National Greening Program (NGP) of the Philippines. As one of the government’s priority programs to reduce poverty, promote food security, ensure environmental stability, conserve biodiversity, and enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation, the NGP goes far beyond reforestation. Due to its success, President Benigno S. Aquino III recently issued an Executive Order expanding NGP’s coverage and duration. Director Calderon provided an outlook on this Expanded NGP, under which forest development activities shall be harmonized including development of forest plantations and forest parks, bringing together the private sector, local government units and organized upland communities.



Mr. Dian Sukmajaya from the ASEAN Secretariat followed with an input on FLR, SDGs and ASEAN Cooperation on Forestry. He presented the vision and the new Strategic Plan of Action for ASEAN cooperation in forestry until 2025, featuring as its backbone the promotion of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) at landscape level. Based on this, central for the way forward is not only making best use of the mechanism already existing within ASEAN, but also sharing best practices on FLR implementation in the region and fostering synergies among the food, agriculture and forestry sector, as well as policy dialogue. He highlighted that the ASEAN efforts also need the support of partners on the regional level regarding how to formulate and strengthen FLR throughout the region.



Setting the conceptual framework, **Dr. Juan M. Pulhin** presented an overview on FLR based on the current status of research and forest restoration challenges in Asia and the Pacific. After discussing the key aspects of FLR, particularly its potentials, requirements and application challenges within the specific physical, political and economic context of the region, he highlighted the overarching challenge: Balancing the trade-offs between financial and livelihood benefits, and biodiversity across the landscape to achieve optimal benefits that satisfy present and future needs of various stakeholders.



Mr. Abdullah Abraham Hossain, Assistant Conservator of Forests in the Bangladesh Forest Department, shared his experience with contributions towards FLR in the frame of the project Management of Natural Resources and Community Forestry of the Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary. In addition to restoring forest landscape by facilitating assisted natural regeneration and enrichment planting in the core zone and social forestry in the buffer zone of the sanctuary, the project took measures to alter the behavior of forest users. Those included organizing local communities into co-management groups, supporting them with trainings and engaging them in alternative income generating activities (AIGAs) as incentives. Even though challenges, e.g. tenure conflicts, capacity limitations regarding ecosystem management and trade-offs in rotation period and benefits of social forestry and FLR, were faced, ecological integrity has been enhanced and introduced co-management activities secured public credibility and acceptance of FLR.



Social and technical experiences from land use planning exercise at the Emalu REDD+ Pilot Site in Fiji were presented by **Mr. Ilaitia Leitabu**, Emalu Landowner representative, and **Mr. Jalesi Mateboto**, forester SPC. The extensive participatory land use mapping and planning exercise, undertaken to identify and implement measures in order to alleviate pressures on the forest, revealed that most of the surrounding area is degraded grassland and the site is threatened by encroaching agriculture clearance. Actions taken by the project included the identification of alternative areas for agriculture, rehabilitation of degraded areas for food security and ecosystem restoration, introduction of alternative livelihood options and training on sustainable agriculture and land management practices as well as awareness building on REDD+. Both presenters stressed that next to technical



issues (e.g. conflicting sectoral policies and incentives, extreme weather conditions and species selection), land conflicts, high expectations of communities and the length of preparation/readiness period creating tension and doubts among landowners and partners are the main challenges to be tackled.

The Indonesian case presented by **Mr. Herwin Purnomo** from the Forestry Service South Sumatra showed how the challenge of forest rehabilitation on peatlands after land and forest fires is approached in the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) project “Village Forest” in South Sumatra. Applying a Forest Management Unit (FMU) approach to FLR, the input presented technical requirements, particularly with regard to eco-hydrology and water management, and minimal accessibility. Furthermore, Mr. Herwin highlighted the crucial governance and tenure arrangements that have to be put in place, ensuring community engagement and the sustainable use of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in order to pursue effective and sustainable forest rehabilitation and management.



The event culminated in a lively open discussion on technical, social and governance issues with regard to FLR. Questions raised concerned the identification, practical usage and possible source of (esp. native) species, the concrete role of local stakeholders – both within the decision making process as well as in implementing FLR – as well as the challenge of sustaining the achievements of FLR made so far vis-à-vis directly or indirectly addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the long run. The responses given by the side event’s presenters highlighted once again the essential role of



securing local stakeholders’ full participation within the decision making process and their ownership from there onwards. This calls not only for inclusive and extensive but flexible capacity building and expansive preparation periods but also for clearly established and secure tenure rights, directly addressing trade-offs and assuring social benefits. Although implementing FLR remains challenging on the ground – not least due to FLR approaches having to be very much specific and adapted to the ecosystem, governance system and stakeholder needs in question – the side event’s inputs from existing FLR approaches in the region shed light on practical options to carry FLR forward in the Asia and Pacific. Realizing its potential for ecological resilience, economic development and enhancing livelihoods within the region is admittedly not a simple exercise.

However, the multitude of possible co-benefits to be achieved and their importance for securing long-term effects of restoration efforts make FLR as a strategy an integral part in the implementation of REDD+, GHG mitigation efforts in general and one of the key options for effectively and efficiently combating the impact of climate change.

