

Poor people, forests & climate change mitigation

Deforestation accounts for about 17% of greenhouse gas emissions – more than the world’s entire transport sector. Without progress on reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD), there is little hope of holding global warming to a maximum temperature increase of 2°C.

It will be hard, if not impossible, without more focus on the poorest, including those who depend on the world’s forests for their livelihoods. Over the past year, ODI has reinforced the need to include the forest-dependent poor in the climate change debate.

Building on years of environmental research and network-building, ODI has drawn together evidence on the need to reduce people’s dependency on forests through positive employment and development policies, rather than negative punitive measures. Without such policies, attempts to limit carbon emissions from deforestation may increase hardship for some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable communities.

ODI has worked as part of the Poverty and Environment Partnership, alongside the World Bank, the United Nations, the UK Department for International Development, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Wildlife Fund and others, on a groundbreaking report: *Making REDD Work for the Poor*, which has been well received in policy circles. This was one of the first reports to put many REDD issues, and their implications for the poor, on the table.

ODI was part of a consortium that produced the REDD Options Assessment Report, which has helped the Government of Norway navigate issues around the participation of those who rely on forests. ODI’s contribution to the report, for example, outlined how the forest-dependent poor should feature in international mechanisms to reduce deforestation.

The Government of Norway is forging ahead on this issue, providing £1 million over four years to create a dynamic network around the REDD concept. REDD-Net will build the capacity of civil society in Africa, Asia and Latin America to champion the interests of the poor on REDD issues. A practitioner network will share field experiences and pilot activities, and develop tools to help shape REDD policies and projects on a global scale.

The debate on REDD is fairly young, but ODI’s long history of networking on environmental issues – with networks in place since the 1980s – means that it brings a unique combination of depth and responsiveness to the table. Over the past year, ODI has helped to ‘unpack’ the often complex issues around climate change mitigation and the world’s forests. In doing so, ODI has highlighted the critical importance of the needs and rights of the forest-dependent poor at a crucial time: as policy-makers prepare for the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

‘ODI’s emphasis on the potential implications of REDD for the poor has contributed a crucial element to the debate about how to include forests in a new climate protection regime’

Frances Seymour, Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research

ODI works to ensure that the poor are part of the climate change debate.

