



The Forests Dialogue

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United States

Amelia Wright
Family Forest Owner
United States

Gary Dunning
Executive Director
The Forests Dialogue

THE FORESTS DIALOGUE

Scoping Dialogue on Poverty Reduction through Commercial Forestry

Dates: June 19-21, 2006

Location: Richards Bay, South Africa

Overview:

Poverty reduction is one of the most urgent issues facing mankind today. Development assistance agencies have been leaders in identifying and delivering initiatives to reduce poverty. Increasingly, businesses are being challenged to put in place 'pro-poor' business models. Environmental and social groups are focusing their efforts on ways to ensure that poverty reduction is both ecologically and socially sustainable. The challenge for all these efforts is to identify poverty reduction approaches that engage poor communities and contribute to local livelihoods.

What is the forest sector's role in poverty reduction? Forests can be poverty traps; they can be safety nets; but they can also offer ways out of poverty through increasing income. High capital requirements, security of tenure over long time frames, technological requirements, economies of scale, and increasing barriers to market entry, have all precluded commercial wood production from playing a major role in the livelihood systems of poor people except in some informal markets. While non-timber forest products have dominated initiatives to reduce income poverty in the forest sector, what is the potential for the 'big deal' - wood production for timber, pulp and paper - to offer a route out of poverty? And what might be the special advantages that poor communities bring to sustainable forest management, in terms of outgrowing, processing and selling timber and supplying associated environmental services such as biodiversity, carbon storage or fresh water supplies?

The Forests Dialogue (TFD) will convene a "scoping" dialogue to begin to put these questions to an assembled group of experts. The intent is to identify the key areas for potential collaboration among a diverse group of stakeholders to catalyze progress towards maximizing forestry's potential to reduce poverty and develop truly sustainable pro-poor initiatives. It will bring together representatives from development agencies, corporations, NGOs, and community groups all interested in working toward this common purpose.

Objectives:

- ➔ Examine illustrative cases and identify obstacles to replication elsewhere;
- ➔ Clarify the necessary roles, commitments and actions of stakeholders to realize the potential of commercial forestry to reduce poverty;
- ➔ Refine and prepare for TFD's full Dialogue on Forests and poverty reduction in development for early 2007.

Desired Outcomes:

- Evidence on the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing “pro-poor” forestry are identified and discussed, drawing especially from the TFD background paper, local field visits in South Africa and participant’s expertise
- Enterprise models that present the greatest opportunities and least threats to poverty are identified
- Priority employment models that enable a reasonable distribution of wealth across the stakeholders are identified
- Necessary local institutions and negotiation strategies are identified
- Policy and financial instruments, which show promise in supporting the above, are identified

Format and Content:

About 30 individuals will be invited to participate at this scoping meeting. Participants will represent development assistance agencies, forest companies and corporations, social and environmental NGOs, investment community and community groups. TFD’s informal dialogue process will seek to share perspectives and learning, identify opportunities, strengthen relationships and move towards joint solutions and collaboration. There will be several background and scene setting presentations, however the bulk of the meeting will be devoted to a dialogue among participants aimed at understanding personal experience and opportunities for collaboration.

Preparatory material will be circulated to all meeting participants in early June 2006. It will include a background paper commissioned by TFD specifically for this meeting and a detailed agenda.

Preliminary Itinerary

- June 19* - Meet in the morning in Durban, South Africa
- Travel to Richards Bay
- Field tour of relevant projects
- Stay at Mondi’s Facility in Richards Bay
- June 20* - Full day dialogue, Richards Bay
- June 21* - Morning dialogue, Richards Bay
- Arrive back in Durban by afternoon.

Preliminary Agenda:

Scope the issues for further dialogue at global level, but with illustrations from Southern Africa:

- a) Discuss the evidence in the TFD Background Paper;
- b) Discuss a brief case study – e.g. corporate-community forestry partnerships in Southern Africa;
- c) Identify priority enterprise models that present the greatest opportunities and least threats to poverty (e.g. from small to large, from single-owner to partnerships, from pulpwood to timber sold with ‘bundled’ environmental services);
- d) Identify priority employment models that enable a reasonable distribution of wealth across the stakeholders (e.g. alternative compensation systems, cooperative ownership patterns, sweat equity, and co-determination schemes vesting communities and workers in the decision making process);
- e) Identify what local institutions are needed, and what they can do to negotiate better deals;

- f) Identify promising policy and finance instruments that support the above;
- g) Define the purpose and scope of the subsequent full dialogue, its participants and dialogue questions.

Planning and Organization:

This dialogue process is being developed by members of TFD's Steering Committee. Leading the group are Steve Bass (IIED), Bill Street (BWI), James Griffiths (WBCSD) and Gary Dunning (TFD). Enquires should be directed to Gary Dunning at TFD - info@theforestdialogue.org

The background paper is being prepared by James Mayers at the International Institute for Environment and Development.

Preliminary List of Sponsors



World Business Council for Sustainable Development

More information:

For more information about The Forests Dialogue please see the website at www.theforestdialogue.org or e-mail info@theforestdialogue.org