



REPORT OF FORUM ON REDD & FOREST DEPENDENT COMMUNITY RIGHTS

By

Environmental Rights Action/ Friends Of The Earth Nigeria(ERA/FoEN)

**A Stakeholders Forum on Climate Change, REDD & Forest Dependent
Community Rights**

**28 February – 2nd March, 2011
Ikom, Cross River State, Nigeria.**

1.0 Introduction

The forum was a learning and sharing point for forest dependent communities living within and around the three REDD targeted sites of Cross River State, Nigeria.



Being an emerging issue, REDD has elicited widespread reactions and condemnations across places and peoples due to its challenge to forest/community people's rights to resources they have managed over the centuries.

Many forest community people were hearing and learning about REDD for the first time at the meeting.

In order to close the information gap, it became critical for **Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria, ERA/FoEN**, in conjunction with a Calabar-based Non Governmental Organisation- **Green Concern for Development, GREENCODE**, to organize the program at Ikom to build local knowledge on the facts about REDD, how it works, its implications and to allow forest dependent community people make informed choice about developments around them. The workshop revealed lack of critical knowledge on REDD in Nigeria.

2.0 A brief on Ikom

The forum was hosted at Ikom the administrative headquarters of Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria, because of its strategic location to the REDD targeted communities.

Ikom is rich in forest resources like mahogany, iroko, aphoria (black and white) opepe, Obeche, teak, mangrove and Ebong.

Besides, Ikom forest has a wide variety of animals facing the threat of extinction. These include species of monkeys, leopards and wild pigs etc.

The major occupations of the people of Ikom are farming and trading on forest resources.

3.0 Objective of Meeting

The aim of the REDD stakeholders meeting was to

- bring to the fore the issues surrounding REDD and the implications to forest dependent peoples as well as use in climate change actions, and
- To raise awareness and build consciousness on REDD among forest community people and other relevant stakeholders.

4.0 REDD in Cross River State, Nigeria

Cross River State (CRS), holds the largest share of rainforest in Nigeria. The forest supports the livelihoods of more than 85% of rural dwellers.

Cross River State, one of the Niger Delta states is the state targeted to pioneer the UN-REDD scheme in Nigeria. One million hectares of forest lands is waiting to be grabbed under the CRS REDD scheme.

Cross River State is also a member of the Governor's Climate Change and Forests Forum (GCF). The state has also set up a Technical Committee on REDD+. There has been collaboration between CRS and the Katoomba West Africa Incubator (supported by Forest Trends and hosted by the Nature Conservation Resource Centre in Ghana) to site the three (3) pilot areas and to draft PINs and carry out carbon stock sampling in these locations. A carbon registry is already being set up in the state.

The **three forest blocks earmarked for REDD** take off in Cross River State are:

- a) Mbe/Afi forest block
- b) Ekuri forest block
- c) Mangrove forest reserve

A bill on Climate Change strategy is before the National Assembly with a huge section of REDD+ in it.

The relationship between the state and the Federal Government is strong. The Federal Government and the CRS collaborated with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) programme in conducting a preliminary assessment of carbon, biodiversity and ecosystem services to produce a carbon/co-benefits map of Nigeria.

They requested membership of the UN-REDD programme in December 2009. Nigeria was later admitted as an observer country and hosted a UN-REDD mission in October, 2010.

The Cross River State government and the Federal government through its Ministry of Environment in Collaboration with three United Nations agencies- UNEP, FAO the UNDP have been the driving force behind the REDD+ agenda in Nigeria.

They plan to duplicate this initiative across many states in the Nigerian federation.

5.0 GOODWILL & "ILL WILLED" MESSAGES

There were goodwill messages from different community groups, organizations and Government representatives at the meeting.

Community representatives and NGOs present were thankful to ERA/FoEN and GREENCODE for creating the opportunity for them to engage in the REDD discussion.

Arikpo Arikpo of the Cross River State Forestry Commission who also represented Government admitted that there are flaws in the REDD project because it is a new process. According to him, REDD scheme will be the best thing that has ever happened in the history of forest conservation in the state because of the benefits the community would derive from it.

He added, "We cannot afford to miss REDD. The world is looking at Cross River State to take a cue from".

There were a lot of reactions from community people as most of what the forestry commission said about REDD and its engagement with communities were debunked by the community people at the stakeholders forum.



Apart from Ekuri community (one of the target sites for REDD take off), all other community people at the forum said that they were just hearing about REDD for the first time at the meeting and that they were not aware of any consultation or

engagement of community people in the REDD process.

Ekuri has been adjudged the largest communally controlled forest in Nigeria, rich in primary forest. This feature has attracted REDD to it.

It was also observed at the meeting that REDD has started causing division among forest community people of Ekuri as a result of deceptive tactics employed by REDD consultants, and contractors of Government in Cross River state.

6.0 PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Climate Change & REDD by Tony Atah of Concern Universal, CU. The paper described REDD as an enormous potential boom that is important for addressing climate change.

The paper posited that REDD initiatives can deliver significant climate change mitigation benefits along with co-benefits which include protecting the environmental services that forests offer, improving the livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities, and clarifying land tenure rights.

6.2 Impact of Climate Change on Women and Children by Elder Okon Enemi of Green Vision Movement. The paper explained that most women in rural communities depend on the ecosystem which is threatened by climate change. Environmental degradation such as deforestation, erosion and desertification have significant impacts on the health and livelihood of women.

6.3 Edem Edem, Programme Coordinator of GREENCODE in a presentation entitled Forest Dependent Community Rights and the FPIC said, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is the right to give or withhold free, prior and informed consent and applies to all activities, projects, legislative or administrative measures and policies that take place in or impact the Lands, territories, resources or livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Free, prior and informed consent is founded in the rights articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. He said, free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent

communities should be sought through an open, transparent consultation process involving the rights holders.

The paper identified the principles of FPIC in REDD process and added that proposed REDD+ readiness activities should take into account the socio-cultural, environmental, financial, and spiritual context of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent communities and should be relevant to the lifestyle of indigenous community.

6.4 ERA's Presentation and Position at the Meeting

ERA used the forum to debunk misleading comments of pro-REDD group at the event. This was succinctly done in a 8-page document on “REDD and its Implication



on Community People” delivered by ERA's Forest & Biodiversity project officer, Rita Osarogiagbon. The paper exposed the false claims of REDD and highlighted the negative impacts on community people and the environment.

The paper also included recommendations to government and ERA's position on the subject. **See**

attached appendix 2 for details.

7.0 MAJOR OUTCOME

ERA Sets up Community Forest Watch in CRS.

As part of efforts to build the capacity of forest dependent peoples in order to promote active engagement so as to be able to question the REDD process of Government in the state, ERA/FoEN constituted and inaugurated Community Forest Watch in the state. The inauguration was done immediately after the general stakeholders forum. Membership of these forest watchdogs cuts across the 75 forest dependent communities in Cross River State.

Meanwhile, to strengthen coordination of the watch, a leadership structure was set up by the community people present.

The Community Forest Watch (CFW) is led by:

The **coordinator**: Chief Edwin Ogar

The **Forest/Environmental Campaigner**: Mr. Maurice Olory

The **Secretary**: Mrs. Sylvia Ndim

The **PRO**: Mr. Peter Bette

The **Treasurer**: Rev. Anthony Essien

8.0 CONCLUSION

Community watch members agreed to take the bull by the horn by organizing towards protecting the forests within their domain.

Ikom REDD forum is the 2nd of its kind in the series of awareness raising and capacity building training organized by Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria in conjunction with Green Concern for Development, GREENCODE.

The first was a strategy workshop to build the capacity of NGOs and CBOs on REDD. It was held in Calabar the capital city of Cross River State Nigeria on the 8th of August, 2010.

Check attached appendix 4 for previous communiqué.

9.0 PHOTOSPEAKS





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Environmental Rights Action ERA/Friends of the Earth Nigeria is a Nigerian advocacy group dedicated to the defense of human ecosystem in terms of human rights.

ERA/FoEN is the Nigerian chapter of Friends of the Earth International. Forests & Biodiversity is one of its key thematic areas.