

## REDD+ issues explored at Anti-Corruption Workshop in Thailand

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**At the 14<sup>th</sup> International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) this month in Bangkok, UNDP for the UN-REDD Programme and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GTZ) held a joint workshop to explore how to prevent corruption in the development and implementation of REDD+ strategies.**

What are the critical issues to successfully prevent corruption in REDD+? What experiences, failures and successes can the anti-corruption community share? Who are the actors best positioned to tackle corruption in REDD+? These were questions examined at the UNDP/GTZ workshop, entitled "Opportunities and risks in REDD+: Why we need an active anti-corruption community when US\$15-30 billion might be invested to mitigate global warming".

The IACC explored various aspects of the fight against corruption and devoted two streams to natural resource management and climate governance. In this context the GTZ/UNDP workshop, held on 13 November, brought together over 60 practitioners and activists from the climate, forestry and anti-corruption areas.

The workshop opened with a key note speech by Bernd-Markus Liss, GTZ, principal advisor for climate projects in the Philippines funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment. "With substantial pledges and funding expected in billions of dollars, REDD could be the best thing that ever happens to the forest sector", he started; "but truth is also that in the forest sector corruption is widespread".

Workshop participants were then brought up to speed on REDD+ in a [presentation by Tim Clairs](#), UNDP's Senior Technical Advisor at the UN-REDD Programme. Clairs highlighted the processes and actors in REDD, REDD+ and REDD+ readiness, noting that different activities under REDD+ may lead to different governance and corruption risks. He described the UN-REDD Programme's governance support, including its risk-based approach to social principles, work on assessing and monitoring governance, support to anti-corruption measures, and transparent, efficient and accountable management systems for REDD+. In conclusion, Clairs pointed to a new UNDP publication, "[Staying on Track: Tackling Corruption Risks in Climate Change](#)" and its [chapter on REDD+](#), complete with a [summary table](#).

Aled Williams, Programme coordinator at the [U4 Anti-Corruption Center](#), reported the [findings from a new U4 study on REDD governance and corruption challenges](#). Williams explained that corruption is generally acknowledged as an enabling factor for deforestation. He distinguished between corruption risks associated with land planning, harvesting, and transportation. Williams briefly highlighted counter-measures related to regulatory frameworks, accountability and transparency and law enforcement. While REDD+ could provide incentives for new forms of forest-linked corruption, there is also evidence it could contribute to a reduction in forest sector corruption by strengthening management and accountability. Despite some similarities across national contexts, Williams concluded, the scope and nature of issues varies considerably and tailored strategies are necessary.

Gerthie Mayo-Anda, environmental lawyer and founder of the [Environmental Legal Assistance Center](#) based in the Philippines, shared [insights on her country's specific opportunities and challenges](#), describing the “legal maize” for REDD+ and anti-corruption, and the civil society-driven national REDD+ strategy. Mayo-Anda explained that a thrust towards decentralization, participation and community-based management is taking place; she added that it will be crucial to adopt norms for access to information and transparency to insulate REDD+ process from corruption, learning from pilot projects and civil society participation. She also pointed that building institutional capacity of existing bodies is preferable over creating new institutions, as the latter poses a risk of nepotism and rivalry.

Often citing examples from the Philippines and Indonesia, participants in the ensuing discussion emphasized the need for coordination and synergies at various levels, for example across sectors and governmental institutions and between practitioners and research communities. Timing and sequencing were also debated: “Are we catching up with corruption in REDD+, or is it catching up on us already?” one participant asked. Recommendations included capacity development and engagement of local communities and implementing government agencies, cooperation with law enforcement agencies for REDD+ implementation and formalisation of ownership or tenure rights of forest users. Sustaining momentum to make REDD+ a corruption-proof reality was generally seen as a real – yet surmountable - challenge.

The workshop was not the only occasion where REDD+ was the subject of energetic discussion. Day three of the IACC featured a plenary discussion on “Climate governance: ensuring a collective commitment” for an audience of 1,500 people, with interventions on REDD+ by Global Witness and CIFOR. The same day Tim Clairs and Estelle Fach of the UN-REDD Programme contributed to [a roundtable discussion](#) on civil society actions and needs to promote climate