



ENSURING THAT COMMUNITY FORESTRY SUPPORTS AND BENEFITS FROM ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

A paper submitted by the ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN) Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Forum¹

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¹The ASFN CSO Forum is a collective of over 40 civil society organizations and community based organizations from 8 countries in ASEAN including local and indigenous peoples network, community forest peoples organizations, community forest enterprises, and indigenous peoples enterprises that are all active in the forestry sector in the implementation of capacity building, awareness raising, and technical support in programs on forest and NTFP livelihood and marketing, forest rights and tenure, traditional and indigenous knowledge systems on natural resources, and projects in REDD+. The forum critically engages ASEAN on social forestry issues including land tenure, livelihoods, safeguards and other governance concerns. This statement was initiated during the ASFN CSO Forum at Inle Lake, Myanmar, 29-30 May 2015.

2015 marks the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), a regional initiative that envisions liberalizing trade through the elimination of intra-regional tariffs and non-tariff barriers. In a move to forge stronger cooperation among the ASEAN member states to advance as one united force against many larger players in the region, ASEAN envisions an economic community with a single market and production base with free flow of goods, services, investment, capital, and skilled labor.

Industries and the manufacturing sector are receiving the most attention for AEC. However, though forestry agriculture and fisheries (FAF) is one of the specific measures requiring support and demanding action, forestry and social forestry appear to be somehow left behind.

Through ASEAN Economic Integration, ASEAN will open up its borders for more trade. Increased trade liberalization, can increase economic activity. However, economic activity alone does not contribute to sustainable growth or improved livelihoods, and equity especially for rural and forest dependent people. Without effective regulatory systems, increased economic activity may actually exacerbate economic inequality and existing forestry challenges such as cross border illegal logging, wildlife trade, and economic displacements of forest dependent communities.

ASEAN is home to an estimated 300 million¹ people that depend, directly or indirectly on the various benefits derived from its forests. These people and their communities can contribute to sustainable growth in the region if empowered through supportive policies and programs. AEC integration should not result in additional pressure on forest communities. Rather, supportive policies and programs that respect the rights, cultural heritage and sustainable livelihoods of forest communities and protect the environment and enhance forest-based livelihoods will contribute to the AEC's goal of equitable economic development.

The AEC also promotes equitable economic development as one of its banner programs. The AEC has a special focus on small and medium enterprises. However, previous Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) did not provide the promised support from participating governments to SMEs (Tambunan, Chandra 2014). Furthermore, the support that is available for small businesses is targeted to the urban sector and not smallholders in rural and forestry sectors. For rural smallholders to truly benefit from the AEC, policies, programs and mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that the benefits of economic integration reach the people who need it the most, while ensuring the protection of their rights and welfare. Equally important, policies need to protect the land and tenure rights of forest people so that they can continue to utilize forests resources in traditional and sustainable ways. Otherwise, integration risks increasing existing inequalities between urban communities, indigenous peoples, and forest communities.

Current economic development models and forestry trends in ASEAN are unsustainable. The conversion of forests and the displacement of peoples due to mono-crop agricultural plantations, large-scale mining, unsustainable logging, and hydropower dams, often without sufficient consultation and support from local communities exacerbate economic inequality and environmental destruction. Instead of benefiting the people closest to them, these projects generally benefit far off industrial zones, investors and business enterprises, and much wealthier urban communities.

By AEC focusing predominantly on industrial and manufacturing sector growth, ASEAN also risks further marginalizing forest dependent peoples and their culture, compromising food security and

¹ Excerpted from the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Forestry 2012.

poverty reduction goals, which are now central to the international agreement on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Food security goals should also ensure security to land tenure and also consider cultural and nutrition aspects, all important to long term and holistic food security solutions.

Provided this situation, the ASFN CSO Forum has several recommendations for ASEAN in the context of the AEC:

- 1. *Safeguards should be implemented in the execution of the AEC.*** At a minimum, affected upstream and downstream communities should be consulted and their free and prior informed consent (FPIC) secured for all infrastructure and major extractive and agro-industry projects that will affect them. Formulation of ASEAN FPIC guidelines is needed in line with the international human rights instruments for indigenous peoples. In order to legally recognize and safeguard community rights in forests, it is also important to simplify and accelerate community forestry and land tenure agreements. Safeguards for the protection of indigenous knowledge, systems and practices should be developed and enforced through intellectual property and non-intellectual property mechanisms. Knowledge and practice specifically on design, craft and art, should be safeguarded. The fluid boundaries of AEC will lead to inequity for artisans and forest peoples if rights are not sufficiently protected. Impacts of migration and eco-tourism should also be evaluated from human rights and sustainability perspectives. Enforcement related to cross border illegal trade should be heightened. In the design, implementation and monitoring of safeguards, affected groups and local communities should have effective and meaningful participation. Thus, it is recommended that a regional multi-stakeholder body in ASEAN oversee the implementation and monitoring of safeguards related to large-scale projects, forestry and climate change, including regional criteria and indicators.
- 2. *Community forestry enterprises, industries and value chains that support sustainable development should also be prioritized as key drivers to green growth in ASEAN countries.*** Indigenous peoples and local communities of ASEAN draw livelihood from the forest while protecting it. They are the most vulnerable from climatic and economic changes. Livelihoods and local economy solutions should consider cultural and social dimensions including appropriate sustainable initiatives. This should be considered by economic planners based on effective participatory mechanisms of affected communities. It is also hoped that the AEC would support, at an equal level, the community forestry enterprises (CFEs) and indigenous peoples enterprises (IPEs) as all SMEs. This would be through capacity building, including skills development, technology support, market access -especially promotion of regional markets for indigenous and local products under fair trade mechanisms, and policies that promote preferential rights over Non -Timber Forest Product (NTFP) harvest and management to indigenous or local communities. Cost effective, alternative certification mechanisms for timber, NTFPs and other forest and farm products should also be promoted so as not to place undue burden on CFEs and IPEs. An ASEAN-wide mechanism and campaign on supporting NTFP value chain development is imperative to give primacy to the sustainable livelihoods of the forest peoples of ASEAN. Effectively linking Indigenous peoples and other local forest peoples with the Creative and Cultural Industries of ASEAN and its member states would enhance industries

where ASEAN already has competitive advantage.

3. *In the support of economic development goals, culturally appropriate and holistic food security programs should also not be compromised by the AEC.*

The ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) has recently approved of nutrition as an important part of the ASEAN food security plan. AEC also supports food security goals and wants to make sure economic development does not affect food security objectives. While well documented in science, it is not sufficiently recognized in policy, that forests themselves provide vitamins, minerals and protein that provide necessary inputs for a human's healthy diet. Deforestation and lack of access to forests can severely hamper a forest family's food security. Thus it is important that more research and investment on food from the forest as source of nutrition is supported. More research and investment in smallholder, organic and diversified production systems are also imperative. Rotational farming/shifting cultivation should also be recognized, and not demonized, as a farming system with high diversity and increased nutritional value, often superior in many ways to commercial mono-cropping. A promotion and information campaign on smallholder diversified production systems including rotational farming should be commenced by ASEAN and its member states. The proliferation of large-scale commercial mono-cropping models/ systems should on the other hand be regulated.

By and large, the ASFN CSO Forum seeks an ASEAN Economic Community that is grounded in cooperation, transparency, accountability, complementarities, genuine and meaningful participation and engagement at all levels with CSOs, indigenous peoples, and local communities.

On behalf of the CSO Forum:

Regional

Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme – Asia (NTFP-EP Asia)
Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)
EarthRights International

Cambodia

Non-Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) - Cambodia
NGO Forum on Cambodia
Action for Development (AFD), Cambodia
Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Cambodia
NTFP Organization Cambodia
Cambodia Federation for Bee Conservation and Community-based Honey Enterprises (CBHE)
Prey Lang Community Network (PLN)

Indonesia

Non Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) Indonesia
Ecosystems Alliance Indonesia
Indonesian Conservation Community (KKI WARSI)
Perkumpulan untuk Pembaharuan Hukum Berbasis Masyarakat dan Ekologis (HuMa)

Laos

Community Knowledge Support Association (CKSA)
Green Community Alliance (GCA)
Development Environment Community Association (DECA)

Malaysia

Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (JOAS), Malaysia
PACOS Trust, Malaysia

Myanmar

Promotion of Indigenous and Nature Together (POINT), Myanmar
Agriculture and Farmers Federation of Myanmar (AFFM)
The Northern Green Lights (TNGL), Myanmar

Philippines

Non Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) Philippines
National Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) Peoples Organization
Federation of the Philippines
Institute for the Development of Educational and Ecological Alternatives Inc. (IDEAS)
Biodiversity, Innovation, Trade, and Society (BITS) Policy Center

Thailand

Indigenous People's Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF), Thailand

Vietnam

Center for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas (CSDM)
People and Nature Reconciliation (PAN Nature)
Vietnamese Thai Indigenous Knowledge Network (VTIK)