

ADB RETA 6115: Poverty Reduction in Upland Communities in the Mekong Region through Improved Community and Industrial Forestry

NPRS-PRF Status Report, January - December 2004

I. Introduction

1. Work on the RETA was launched with an initial team meeting at FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok between 3rd and 5th March 2004. Meeting attendants included the ADB Mission Leader, RETA team members, including representatives of the collaborating institutions, FAO and CIFOR, and representatives of UNESCAP, UNEP, WWF and IUCN. Tasking amongst TA consultants, scheduling for field visits and the timing of the project inception workshop were also discussed at the meeting and duration for the RETA of 15-18 months was agreed. TA completion is scheduled for October 2005.

2. The project Regional Consultation was held in Bangkok on 1st and 2nd September 2004. The consultation was attended by 70 participants. The main findings of the RETA workshop were that poverty and forestry are strongly linked geographically with much of the poverty in the remoter and more upland areas within the region where a high proportion of the remaining forest resources also occur. There is therefore a strong case for expecting that investment in the forestry sector could have a significant impact on poverty alleviation. However, there is insufficient information and evidence about the conditions that determine the success and failure of community and industrial forestry as a sustainable forest resource management and/or poverty reduction strategy. RETA case studies are to provide such policy and operational information and evidence.

3. National consultants in all countries were mobilized in October 2004 to coincide with the field work season. An ethnic minority consultant was also recruited and recruitment procedures for the gender consultant are in hand.

II. Poverty Reduction Through Community Forestry

4. A first list of tasks was issued by William Sunderlin (CIFOR, Community Forestry TA) to the national consultants in all three project countries. Major activities included making an inventory of community forestry sites, assembling written resources on community forestry, and forming advisory committees. Upon completion of the first list of tasks, a second list of tasks have been issued in Lao PDR and Cambodia which include activities such as hiring data collectors/enumerators, as well as examining and translating technical guidelines and survey forms.

5. During December 2004, Christina Shakya, an independent consultant hired by the project, trained the national consultant and four field assistants in community survey techniques in project countries.

III. Poverty Reduction Through Industrial Forestry

6. Field visits were made by Adrian Whiteman (FAO, Industrial forestry TA) to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam in September 2004. These visits allowed for the discussion of the approach and timing for case studies with national consultants and stakeholders. The field visits

revealed the skepticism about the potential for forestry to contribute to poverty alleviation by the government in Cambodia, but also their interest in NTFPs and the impact of 'traditional' forest concession activities on local people. Implementation of the case-study on NTFP development in Cambodia began on 4 October 2004 and is expected to be completed by 10 Jan 2005. The 3 NTFPs chosen for the study are wood fuel, rattan, and handicrafts. Case study Implementation in Lao PDR and Vietnam is scheduled for January to May 2005 (dry working. season).

IV. Poverty Reduction Through Forest Products Trade and Markets

7. Field visits were made by William Hyde (Forest products trade specialist) to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in September 2004. Data collection is close to completion in Lao PDR and Vietnam. The data sheets for Cambodia are expected to be completed by 10 Jan 2005. Data from Lao PDR and Vietnam is currently being reviewed and further tasks will be detailed during January-February 2005.

V. Work Plan

8. January - June 2005 key project milestones are:

- Mobilization of the national consultants to begin research in 4 intensive sites and 40 extensive sites for community forestry study (Jan - April 2005)
- Execution of case-studies for industrial forestry component (Jan-March 2005)
- Data analysis and writing national reports (March - June 2005)
- Mid-term workshop in Bangkok (April 2005)

VI. Fund Disbursement

9. Funds committed and disbursed as of 9 December 2004 have amounted to \$578,201 and \$166,381, respectively. The total uncommitted TA balance is \$221,799.