

Proceedings of the workshop “Preparedness of REDD+ Project in India” held at India Habitat Centre on 23rd March 2012

**Prepared for
Ministry of Environment & Forests
New Delhi**

For more information

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Proceedings of the workshop “Preparedness of REDD+ Project in India” held at India Habitat Centre on 23rd March 2012

REDD means reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and + means enhancing carbon through sustainable forest management, without sacrificing the ecosystem services, livelihood and biodiversity. Thus, REDD+ is sustainable forest management through conserving forest and enhancing carbon stock. REDD+ primarily is about emission reduction and nations or communities that are willing and able to reduce emission from deforestation should be financially compensated. REDD+ refers to a broad set of approaches and actions to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

REDD+ although is a simple idea, but implementing it at the ground is much complex. Concerns such as social, environmental and economical at national, sub-national and local level are the key issues for critical examination. The idea of organizing this workshop was to get aware forest officials from different states about the REDD+ and its preparedness in the country. The key issues of REDD+ in context of India are forest governance, baseline reference, methodologies for assessing carbon, biodiversity conservation, maintenance of ecosystem services, livelihood and identification of carbon market for trading. The agenda for the workshop have been designed in such a way that all these critical issues should be discussed in details among the senior forest officials of various states, NGOs and researchers. The outcome of this workshop will benefit the state government officials from various states in understanding the key issues of REDD+ in India and officials from the central government in preparing the REDD+ project and climate negotiation at the International level.

The major objectives of the workshop are:

1. To apprise state forest department officials with respect to the concept of REDD+ and its preparedness within the country.
2. To seek views of the various state forest officials on various key elements of REDD+ such as forest governance, forest and livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, working plans and International architect on REDD+.
3. To understand and develop methodology for the baseline carbon assessment, leakages and additionality.

To achieve the above mentioned objectives, the agenda of the workshop was designed to have theme on forest governance, forest management and working plans, forest and livelihoods, methodology for carbon assessment and International architect on REDD+. The agenda of the workshop is enclosed.

The workshop started with the introductory remarks of Dr. Jagdish Kishwan, ADG (WL) and Mr. A.K. Bansal, ADG (FC). Dr Kishwan emphasized that REDD+ is an ecosystem services based approach of forest management to enhance carbon without sacrificing the biodiversity and livelihood of the people. He mentioned that five sectors namely Power, Industries, Habitation, Agriculture and Forestry have mitigation potential. REDD+ is an incentive for positive action and forests being central to holistic climate change mitigation option. The country has to meet its international and domestic commitments. 8 national

Mission on Climate Change have been initiated, one of these being National Mission for Green India.

He impressed on the participant to deliberate on the issues such as (i) whether there is a clear understanding of REDD+ in the country; (ii) Whether we have necessary administrative and managerial capabilities and matching policy & legal frame work in place in the country for SMF and Conservation of Biodiversity; do we have proper institutional framework for carrying forward REDD+. There is also a need to firm up methodologies for national carbon accounting. He suggested that first task before us is to fix reference level/ benchmark for forest carbon stock (FCS). The question before us is whether it should be historical/ fixed reference level or a dynamic or a mix of both historical and dynamic by embedding development parameters. There are also issues about procedure. The role of State Forest Departments is very important and therefore SFDs must have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities as well as in building of capacities of civil societies so that they can play active role in implementation of REDD+. Not only the carbon but other Ecosystem Services from forests are also very important. Therefore not only improving FCS but enhancing the Environmental and Ecosystem services should be the aim of implementation strategy. Therefore focus should be on checking the drivers of deforestation and forests degradation by providing alternative clean energy to rural and forest dependent communities. He clarified that the financial benefits of REDD+ will be passed on to communities.

Mr. Bansal, ADGF, FC informed that this is the first ever workshop to sensitize states on REDD+ issues. He highlighted the objectives of the workshop to seek views of state government officials and other stakeholders to finalize national strategy on REDD+ preparedness in India. He stressed for a important role for the State forest Department since, state governments are directly involved in implementing REDD+ projects in India. Thus it is necessary that state forest officials have proper understanding about the concept of REDD+. He mentioned that MoEF has initiated a USAID Project recently which will also supplement and strengthen capacities of SFDs and other stakeholders. Mr. Bansal emphasized that implementation strategy for REDD+ should follow “simple and easy to do approach” with focus on saving existing carbon and adding additional carbon stocks and that foresters are already doing this in various afforestation and conservation schemes. The focus should be on enhancing forest resources to meet the demands as not fulfilling demands for forest produce will lead to further degradation of forests. It will require multipronged strategies from wood substitution to better forest products processing supported by R&D and appropriate technologies. There is urgent need to standardise methods of reliable estimation of carbon including protocol for MRV.

He suggested that JFM+ model needs to be evolved for taking care of livelihood needs and rights of local communities. Readiness in REDD+ require proper strategy and action for deriving benefits from REDD+. He also highlighted Green India Mission as the recent major initiative of the MoEF towards climate change mitigation.

The proceedings of the workshop on various themes are as under:

1. REDD+ and its relevance to India

(Chair: Mr Jagdish Kishwan, Additional Director General of Forests, Wildlife, MoEF, GoI)

Mr Subhash Chandra, Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Forest Policy), MoEF, GoI made a presentation on REDD+ and its relevance for India.

Mr. Chandra introduced the topic of REDD+. He mentioned, REDD+ means reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and ‘+’ means enhancing carbon through sustainable management of forests, without sacrificing the ecosystem services, livelihood and biodiversity which are mandated in the National Forest Policy, 1988. The only additional element is trading of enhanced carbon.

He further went on giving introduction to key drivers of deforestation and means to reduce direct dependence of communities on forest resources. He elaborated on India’s approach to REDD+ and potential impacts of REDD+ Program on tribals and local communities. He concluded by highlighting the national institutional mechanism for REDD+ and underlying methodological issues in Forest Carbon Stock estimation. REDD+ is a window of opportunity for foresters as well as forest dependent communities for getting benefits by ensuring sustainable management of forests. This can bring the forestry into the mainstream of developmental agenda of the nation as enhanced ecosystem services together with greater forest resources will not only benefit livelihoods and supplement income of local communities but will have a positive impact on national economy.

The following were the key outcomes of the session:

- a) There is need to build capacity of carbon assessment and project formulation under REDD+ at various levels, so that forest dependent communities who are involved in the conservation of forests could be benefitted with finances, generated from the trading of enhanced carbon.
- b) The state governments are requested to apprise forest officials down the line and JFMCs regarding the concept of REDD+. Ministry of Environment and Forests should provide training to the forest officials and JFMCs on REDD+ concept, and assessment of carbon, and also project formulation.
- c) There is urgent need to have regular capacity building workshops of stakeholders at national and regional level on REDD+.
- d) A simple, easy and step by step approach for implementation needs to be worked out for implementation of REDD+ so that each stakeholder can easily understand their role and responsibilities and make appropriate contribution.
- e) Developing REDD+ architecture and sound financing mechanism in the country with clear benefit sharing arrangements.
- f) Focus on the Biodiversity Conservation, cultivation of Medicinal Plants and better management of MFPs will significantly strengthen REDD+ action.
- g) The role of other concerned Ministries/ Department/ Institutions and private sector also needs to be worked out to supplement REDD+ implementation. There is a great scope of convergence of developmental programme in areas within forest and fringe forest areas from Rural Development, Tribal and Social Welfare, Health &

Education, Power Department for holistic development of forest dependent communities.

2. Forest Governance

(Chair: Mr Jagdish Kishwan, Additional Director General of Forests, Wildlife, MoEF, GoI)

Dr. J.V. Sharma made a comprehensive presentation on Forest Governance in India in the context of REDD+ by delineating various aspects including the conceptual issues of governance and key stages of forest governance in India. Forest governance is a complex issue due to the fact that it involves diverse stakeholders with more diversified interests across the scales i.e, global, national and local. The global concerns for forests are centered on biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration objectives. The national priorities are flow of ecosystem services, meeting the demand for forest products and conservation of biodiversity. At local level, the concerns over forests revolve around the minor forest produce for the livelihood of the forest dependent communities and the cultural aspects like sacred groves. There have been several efforts towards integrating these diverse interests into forest governance through national policies and laws. Dr. Sharma reiterated the need for revamping JFMCs as well as FDAs through appropriate legal backup and defining their roles and responsibilities in implementing the REDD+. This new institutions may be termed as JFM+. It's important to define the role of the state forest departments as well as the Gram Sabhas for REDD+ activities. He has discussed this in details in the context of three different governance regime in the country i.e., FRA and PESA areas, Non-PESA and FRA areas and North Eastern states. The key points that emerged from the session are:

- a) Gram Sabha will be core centric body to constitute committee for conservation, management and protection of forests with the benefit sharing from forests on the principle of sustainable harvest as laid down in the management plan of the respective area within their jurisdiction.
- b) The Gram Sabha will constitute the Joint Forest Management Committee or a Committee for the conservation, protection and management of forests in respective jurisdiction.
- c) Forest department will provide the technical guidance to the Gram Sabha, and also monitor the implementation of management plan.
- d) The implementation of forest legislations will be done by the forest department till authority is provided to Gram Sabha.
- e) Since, States have diversity with respect to land tenure and social and cultural dependence on forests, state governments are requested to institutionalize Gram Sabha based forest governance.
- f) The state governments need to evolve Gram Sabha based forest governance model and bring appropriate legislative reforms or administrative orders to empower Gram Sabhas to initiate JFM.

3. Forest and Livelihood

(Chair: Mr Irshad Khan, IFS (Retd.), Former PCCF, J&K)

Dr Rekha Pai, Chief Project Director, Watershed Management Directorate, Dehradun, made her presentation on “Forest and Livelihood issues in the context of REDD+”. Topics related to importance of forests as a source of livelihood for the forest dependent communities, climate change related challenges and their impact on local communities, and the increasing vulnerability of these people, etc. were focused on in her presentation. She stressed on the importance of focusing on sustainable livelihood, defining it to be resilient, unaffected by natural capital, and not based on external support. She concluded that community dependence on forest would continue, and hence efforts to reduce this dependence were required which included replacing fuel wood by alternative energy sources (e.g. increasing use of pine briquettes, biogas, in Uttarakhand, etc.). She felt that value chain concept should be internalized to ensure sustainable natural resource management and remuneration for harvest, and also create alternative job opportunities concentrating on niche and high value products (citing the success of agribusiness in Uttarakhand state).

After the presentation, there was an open discussion during which comments on the following were made: (i) Transparency, accountability, etc. taking a back seat whereas expenses spiraling upwards; (ii) Declining quality of forest staff; (iii) Returns expected out of REDD+ for communities; (iv) Empowering communities, implementing large scale projects despite of vacancies in the forest department; (v) REDD+ being money-centric; (vi) Aspects important under the REDD+ national strategy for countries – benefit sharing mechanism, policy; (vii) The extent to which livelihood aspect can be addressed.

The following conclusions were arrived at after the discussion:

- a) There is a need to quantify benefits derived by forest dependent communities from forests.
- b) Forests, on their own, cannot sustain the load of unemployment of FDCs, hence, other sectors should be explored to divert the pressure.
- c) Employment for sustainable livelihood can be based on
 - i. Forest resource and other natural resource based, only to the extent which does not exceed sustained yield.
 - ii. Non-natural resource based.

4. Forest Management and Working Plans

(Chair: Mr Irshad Khan, IFS (Retd.), Former PCCF, J&K)

Dr R N Saxena, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Madhya Pradesh, made a presentation on “Forest Management (SFM) and Working Plans”. He showed evidences of climate related changes in various parts of Madhya Pradesh State forests through GIS maps, including insignificant regeneration of trees. He suggested efforts that should be made to address these issues should include incorporating long term climate change concerns to long term forest policies, conserving forests and minimizing forest fragmentation, expanding protected areas, promote mixed species forests to decrease vulnerability, etc. Among the action points suggested for adaptation and development of REDD+, replacing National Working Plan Code, 2004 by a new code; considering economic rotation v/s carbon rotation

for forest management in vulnerable regions; replacing forest crops with species more likely to adapt to climate change; creating capacity and baseline data for carbon management in forest crops were the crucial ones. Dr Saxena also highlighted some key issues involving development of the REDD+ market – need for security for REDD+ mechanism to work; legal instrument for trading REDD+ credits (on the lines of SEBI); the risk attached to loss of forest carbon post selling of REDD+ credits etc.

This was followed by an open house discussion during which the following issues were raised: (i) Clubbing SEBI with climate change as unacceptable; (ii) How to implement REDD+ project. Dr Saxena addressed each question with conviction, replying that SEBI working principles was required for mobilization of resources. He was of the opinion that it would not be possible to generate huge funds without mobilizing market related mechanisms. As for implementing REDD+, he believed that an agency would be required to take care of REDD+ securities.

With the end of the discussions, the panel members and participants of the workshop arrived at the following conclusions:

- a) There is a need to address mechanisms for sustainable harvest and methods for regeneration of minor forest produce including scientific and traditional knowledge in the working plans to avoid the extinction of species.
- b) Since there is loss of biodiversity in forest areas, it is important to inventorize the species and its regeneration status.
- c) A separate chapter in the working plans for monitoring of the plant species at the time of preparation of working plan is needed to know the status of the species in the area. Status of implementation of silvicultural practices should also be reflected in the working plans.
- d) Training programmes of forest officials is also required for familiarizing them with the concept of REDD+.

5. Methodology for Carbon Assessment

(Chair: Mr K D Singh, President, Academy of Forests & Environment Science)

Dr Alok Saxena, Additional Director, IGNFA, Dehradun, began his presentation on “Methodologies for Baseline Carbon Assessment, Leakages and Additionality of carbon”. The key objectives of the present REDD+ study, as highlighted by Dr Saxena, were:

1. To assess baseline carbon in the identified sites with reference to a baseline year.
2. To assess additionality (gains) in carbon stock in the sites as a result of SMF (Sustainable Management of Forests) and other good practices.
3. To assess leakage (loss) of carbon from the identified sites as a result of unsustainable practices.
4. To apply the methodology for monitoring success of REDD+ at National level.

He proposed a methodology of carbon assessment for a REDD+ project which entails deciding upon a baseline year (1990 or 1994), identifying small size project sites, using satellite data, a sampling strategy (stratified, judgmental/random sampling), and inventory parameters.

This was followed by a presentation on “Methodological issues – Scale, Baseline reference and Monitoring.” by Mr Suresh Chauhan, Fellow, TERI. Mr. Chauhan explained that there are three scales for the REDD+ project i.e. National, Sub national and Hybrid (combine of both). He further explains the pros and cons of all the three approaches. He elaborate that India suggest a reference year of 1990, whereas other nations like Brazil and Latin American favour average of historical 10 years period. He further explained key issues in monitoring of REDD+ project such as there is no uniform standards for defining various terms such as forests, deforestation, and degradation at global level. There is variation in the density classifications across the nations. There is lack of historical data availability in most of the developing and under developed nations. There is lack of technical skills such as field measurements, carbon calculations, interpretation of satellite imageries etc in most of the developing nations and finally the expenses that would need to be incurred for monitoring. Dr. Rajesh Kumar, FSI, Dehradun, added further with his presentation on “Forest Carbon Accounting”. He urged the need for a new definition of forests under REDD+ for better accounting of carbon under the mechanism, giving considerable importance to below ground biomass and increasing the scope of REDD+, and following methodological guidance for REDD+ resulting from the COPs (Conference of Parties).

The following were the outcomes of the discussion on methodology of carbon assessment:

- a) Village forests, Community Forest Resource, Forest area assigned to JFM and areas of similar nature may be under taken as a unit for a implementing the project under REDD+
- b) The base line year may be taken 1990 depending upon availability of data.
- c) The carbon will be assessed by adding above ground and below ground carbon. Above as well as below ground biomass will be calculated according to IPCC guideline.
- d) Since there is no mechanism to transfer the money generated from carbon trading to the community, it would be appropriate to have small areas as project area for REDD+.
- e) There is a need to organize capacity building programmes at national, sub-national/state level on methodologies of carbon assessment to ensure minimal transaction cost for the preparation of REDD+ projects.

6. Biodiversity Conservation and REDD+

(Chair: Mr A K Bansal, Additional Director General of Forests, Forest Conservation, MoEF, GoI)

The discussion on biodiversity conservation and REDD+ was started with the presentation by Dr. Yogesh Gokhale. He emphasized the critical linkage between the carbon sequestration and biological diversity of a forest landscape. This linkage implies that both the objectives can be go hand in hand and hence REDD+ provides an opportunity to conserve the biodiversity of India’s forests. Implementation of REDD+ in the country would also provide an opportunity to define the sustainable harvesting limits and evaluate ecosystem services. He discussed the concerns of the International community on biodiversity in the context of REDD+ at length and the need for appropriate safeguards to address these concerns. Dr. Gokhale has reflected upon the policy and legal framework in India for enabling the safeguards of biodiversity conservation and also identified the gap.

The key points emerged from the discussion are:

- a) There is need to maintain habitat for wildlife and wetlands for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. REDD+ could be an opportunity for the conservation of forest biodiversity.
- b) Biodiversity should not be sacrificed for carbon and there should be adequate safeguards for the implementation of REDD+.
- c) There is a need to make efforts to protect the species by sustainable harvest practices and traditional regeneration techniques and REDD+ is again an opportunity to do so.
- d) Traditional knowledge is the key for the sustainable management of forest biodiversity. It is to be documented and should be made part of the management plan.

7. International REDD+ Architecture

(Chair: Mr A K Bansal, Additional Director General of Forests, Forest Conservation, MoEF, GoI)

The session began with a brief introduction by Dr. J V Sharma on the history and evolution negotiations in forest related International instruments. He mentioned that forests have been an issue of priority for International and national policy and a subject of much debate and discussion for the past 20 years. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) saw the adoption of the “Forest Principles” as well as Chapter 11 of Agenda 21: Combating Deforestation. He further discussed forest policy have progressed since UNCED and the key milestones achieved including consensus for international cooperation on four Global Objectives on Forests.

This was followed by a presentation by Ms. Ridhima Sud wherein she discussed in detail the REDD+ negotiations under the UNFCCC and synergies with negotiations on International forest policy. She further elaborated upon India’s position on REDD+ in International negotiations and how India stands to gain from a global agreement on REDD+. She concluded her presentation by emphasizing that REDD+ would not only contribute to emission reductions but also help in strengthen SFM at local and national level. She further added that that REDD+ can be a ‘Win-win’ solution for communities to generate additional financial resources from trading of enhanced carbon while ensuring continued delivery of the full range of goods and ecosystem services from maintenance and enhancement of carbon stocks.

The following were the key outcome of the session:

- a) Government of India should fund at least one pilot study on REDD+ in each state of the country.
- b) Though International policies with respect to REDD+ are still under negotiation stage but India has to prepare itself for implementation of REDD+ project and make use of the funds available through carbon trading. Few voluntary mechanism and Forest carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) are the windows available for carbon trading and preparedness for REDD+. India has not joined this facility yet. Ministry of Environment and Forest should make effort to join this FCPF.

- c) Since there is no regulatory market operational for REDD plus, Government of India should avail the funding from voluntary markets for preparedness activities including undertaking research and pilot projects.

8. Presentations by SFDs

Dr. A.K. Raha, PCCF, West Bengal made a presentation on forest and livelihood linkages with case study of Sundarbans where the Forest department has implemented livelihood improvement programme of local communities. As a result the communities have come closure to forest department and contributed in forest conservation especially in rehabilitation of mangroves.

9. Presentation by ICFRE

Mr MP Singh, head Climate Change Division of ICFRE made a presentation on programmes of ICFRE related to REDD+. He emphasized that we should learn from CDM projects where the procedure is quite complex and heavily dependent on experts and consultant. Therefore REDD+ implementation mechanism should be simple as communities are important stakeholders and they should easily understand their role responsibilities and play an important role in MRV.

10. Concluding Remarks

Mr A K Bansal, Additional Director General of Forests, Forest Conservation, MoEF, GoI, highlighted the importance of REDD Plus for the sustainable development of forests in the country. He specifically mentioned that this workshop is a beginning of the preparedness of REDD Plus in India but more workshops at the regional and the state level are required to be organized to build the capacity of forest officials. The capacity of the community is also important to implement the elements of REDD Plus. The key outcomes of this workshop are emergence of JFM Plus, methodology for the carbon assessment, possible markets for carbon trading under REDD Plus and importance of the ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation. The State Forest Departments are requested to nominate focal point for REDD Plus and MoEF may initiate more workshops at the State and Regional level.

Participants

Senior forest officials from various States and UTs, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Researchers from International Organizations, NGOs have participated in the workshop. Agenda and the list of participants is enclosed at Annexure I & II.

Annexure I Agenda

NATIONAL LEVEL CONSULTATION ON PREPAREDNESS FOR REDD PLUS IN INDIA

Organized by:

MOEF, GoI and TERI

Date: 23rd March, 2012

Venue: Gulmohar, India Habitat Center, New Delhi

Agenda

0930-1000	Registration
1000-1005	<i>Welcome address</i> Dr J V Sharma, Senior Fellow, TERI
1005-1015	<i>Introductory remarks</i> Mr Jagdish Kishwan, Additional Director General of Forests, Wildlife, MoEF, GoI
1015-1025	<i>Opening remarks</i> Mr A K Bansal, Additional Director General of Forests, Forest Conservation, MoEF, GoI
1025- 1040	<i>REDD+ and its relevance to India</i> Mr Subhash Chandra, Deputy Inspector General of Forests, Forest Policy, MoEF, GoI
1040-1055	<i>Forest Governance in India & REDD+</i> Dr J V Sharma, Senior Fellow, TERI
1055-1115	Discussions
1115-1130	Tea Break
1130-1145	<i>Forest and Livelihood issues in the context of REDD+</i> Dr Rekha Pai, Chief Project Director, Watershed Management Directorate, Dehradun
1145-1215	Discussions
1215-1230	Forest Management (SFM) and Working Plans by Dr R N Saxena, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Madhya Pradesh

1230-1300	Discussions
1300-1400	Lunch
1400-1430	<p><i>Methodologies for Carbon Assessment, Leakages and Additionality of carbon</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Abk Saxena, Additional Director, IGNFA, Dehradun • Mr Suresh Chauhan, Fellow, TERI
1430-1500	<p><i>Discussion on setting of Baseline Data, Reference Levels for carbon assessment</i></p> <p>Facilitated by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Survey of India (FSI) • Dr Abk Saxena, Additional Director, IGNFA, Dehradun • Mr Suresh Chauhan, Fellow, TERI
1500-1530	<p><i>International Architecture on REDD+</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr J V Sharma, Senior Fellow, TERI • Ms Ridhima.Sud, Associate Fellow, TERI
1530-1545	Tea Break
1545-1615	<p><i>Biodiversity Conservation in the context of REDD+</i></p> <p>Dr Yogesh Gokhale, Fellow, TERI</p>
1615-1715	Presentation by the Representatives of State/UT Governments
1715-1745	Discussion
1745-1800	<p><i>Closing remarks</i></p> <p>Mr A K Bansal, Additional Director General of Forests, Forest Conservation, MoEF, GoI</p>
1830-2100	Dinner at the Terrace of Dilli-O-Dilli, IHC

Annexure II List of Participants

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Annexure III Photographs of the Event





