

Report on
**State Level Multi-Stakeholders Workshop on
Community Forestry & REDD+**

Dt: 30. 06.2012

Venue: DRTC – CYSD, Bhubaneswar, Odisha



Supported by :



Community Forestry International (CFI)

Organized by :



Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC)
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State Level Multi-stakeholders Workshop on Community Forestry & REDD+

Background:

Climate change is considered one of the major threats for sustainable development and use of natural resources. Forest plays a multiple role in regard to climate change. Forest degradation and the current land use patterns are contributing 30% to the total Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. REDD+ is a proposed mechanism that aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, maintain and enhance carbon stocks, sustainably manage forests, and suitably compensate the countries for their sustainable actions.

There are three distinctly divided schools of thoughts on REDD+. The first recognises REDD+ as having potential benefits for forest dwelling indigenous people and local communities; the second treads a cautious line and maintains that while it may have some benefit it may infringe upon some rights and accesses of people dependent on forest resources; while the third school rejects REDD+ as a transgression on the rights of people and local resources and a business idea of the corporate. Indigenous peoples are likely to benefit more from REDD+ and other sustainable land management activities for mitigation where they own their lands; where there is the principle of free, prior and informed consent; and where their identities and cultural practices are recognised and they have space to participate in policy-making processes.



UNFCCC COP 16 therefore affirms that the implementation of REDD+ activities should include the promotion and support of, and respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities and the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, indigenous peoples and local communities in particular.

There is a lack of productive dialogue among different stakeholders including local/ forest dwelling communities on benefit, risk, and impact of REDD+. The benefit sharing mechanism needs to be debated among all the stakeholders (involvement of local community is very important) and appropriately finalised. There are certain issues and risks associated with the mechanism which need appropriate attention. These are issues ranging from sources of finance to community's right to manage, control and govern their forest.

There are fears that forests may now become very lucrative and powerful stakeholders might take over the rights (livelihood, socio-cultural, and religious) of the forest dependent communities. There are also fears that the REDD+ mechanism may lead to a very carbon-centric forest management approach. One of the key concerns in the ensuing debate to the REDD+ approach is its impact on women as their access to forest for fuel and fodder could get seriously impaired in the case of an uneven negotiation.

In this backdrop, a state level multi stakeholder workshop on community forestry and REDD+ was organised by Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC), Bhubaneswar, with support from Community Forestry International (CFI) at DRTC-CYSD, Bhubaneswar, on 30th June 2012 to discuss the issues and challenges in management of community forest, focusing specially on REDD+.

Objectives:

As evident, the specific objectives of the workshop were:

- To identify issues relating to community forestry in the context of REDD+ in state and take stock of initiatives taken to address these issues by the forest department, research institutions, NGOs etc
- To develop strategies and approaches for sustainable management of community forestry with the roles of various stakeholders clearly defined and focusing especially on REDD+.

Summary:

The one day workshop on Community Forestry and REDD+ was inaugurated by the Chief Guest of the occasion Sri R.K. Sharma, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government of Odisha, Department of Forest and Environment. The other guests were Sri Sidhant Das, IFS, Member Secretary, Odisha State Pollution Control Board and Dr Ambika Prasad Nanda, State Programme Officer, UNDP. Sri Soumitri Das, Forestry Specialist, US Aid, New Delhi, Dr J. Sharma, IFS, Senior Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi and Sri S. Palit, IFS (Retd), Forestry Consultant, Community Forestry International attended as resource persons. A total of 63 participants from different walk of life i.e. community leaders, representatives from civil society, district forestry federation and state federation, NGOs, media etc participated in the consultation. Sri Ghasiram Panda, Programme Manager of RCDC moderated the programme.

Inauguration:

Mr. Kailash Chandra Dash, Executive Director of RCDC welcomed all the dignitaries, participants and guests and requested them to formally inaugurate the workshop by pouring water on the tree. He then shared



the objectives of the workshop and briefed on the activities taken by RCDC with the support of CFI.

Setting the context, **Mr. Soumitri Das, Forestry Specialist from US AID, New Delhi** presented on the global context and developments of REDD+. He shared that, till date the perspective on REDD is not crystal clear and efforts are being made to bring consensus among various stakeholders, countries with regard to REDD+. However, he voiced his concern that due to anthropogenic activities the atmospheric pollution is increasing at an alarming rate. Unless and until it is regulated and controlled, it will result in dangerous consequences. The land use pattern and fossil fuel use are the major reasons for generation of Green House Gases (GHGs). Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane and Nitrous Oxide are generated and its concentration in our atmosphere is increasing. Hence, mechanisms should be developed to lower the concentration for balancing. Therefore, the answer is to conserve and enhance all the sinks and reservoirs of GHGs. The Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) collects and assesses for the use of decision makers the best available scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant to understanding the risk of climate change, potential impacts and response options. It also provides scientific technical and methodological advice to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

India signed the UNFCCC on 10th June 1992 and ratified it on 1st November 1993. Under the UNFCCC, developing countries such as India do not have binding GHG mitigation commitments in recognition of their small contribution to the greenhouse problem as well as low financial and technical capacities. The Ministry of Environment and Forests is the nodal agency for climate change issues in India. It has constituted Working Groups on the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol. Work is currently in progress on India's initial National Communication (NATCOM) to the UNFCCC.



Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) was agreed upon under the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC). Kyoto Protocol is based on the dual objectives of reducing emissions and contributing to sustainable development. In some areas A/R CDM was implemented but the issue is the baseline and addtionality. So, no clear strategy has been developed to measure the same.

Reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries refers to:

- Reducing emissions from deforestation
- Reducing emissions from forest degradation

- Conservation of forest carbon stocks
- Sustainable Forest Management
- Enhancement of Forest carbon stocks

In the above context, now in India the objectives are:

- To develop a national strategy or action plan
- To develop a national forest reference level
- National Monitoring system
- Information on safeguard.
- Mitigation options available
- Adaptation options available

At the end, Mr. Das shared the timeline of the various conventions held on Climate Change. He emphasised that the REDD concept is still evolving. Initially, it was only RED, later on it becomes REDD, and now it is REDD+.

He summed up on a positive note that the world is debating and thinking to accelerate the development process on the one hand and is also trying to safeguard the earth/climate on the other. The polluters and the protectors are now sitting across the table deciding everything in the interest of all the stakeholders.

Dr Ambika Prasad Nanda, State Programme Officer, UNDP highlighted the fact that Odisha ranks low according to Human Development Index (HDI). UNDP is associated with the poverty groups so far as their health, education and livelihoods is concerned. Generally, the poverty groups are dependent upon the commons land, water, forest and other natural resources. The common property resources are depleting and dwindling at a very faster rate day by day. Forest resources are a common property resource and the people depending upon it for their livelihood needs are the appropriate decision makers regarding its sustainable use. The poor should have access to technology and market system for better livelihood options, health and education.

1997	Kyoto Protocol
2001	Synthesis report on IPCC
2005	Montreal Climate Change Conference
2007	Bali International Conference
2008	Poznań Climate Change Conference - December 2008
2009	Convention on Climate Change at Copenhegen
2010	United Nations Climate Change Conference met in Cancun
2011	UN Framework convention Durban
2012	Doha Climate Change Conference

Dr. Sidhanta Dash, IFS, Member Secretary, Odisha State Pollution Control Board was of the opinion that we should understand the basic phenomena of our atmosphere. The atmosphere is like a blanket that encompasses our earth. It keeps the earth warm. Life on earth is possible due to the presence of atmosphere. Without the atmosphere, it is too hot by the day time and too cold in the night. The composition of the atmosphere is unique. It consists of nitrogen (78%), Oxygen (21%), Carbon dioxide (0.03%), water vapours, dust particles and other gases. Due to increase of GHGs in the atmosphere, the global warming is experienced. According to him, within the last decade there is an enhancement of half degree concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere which has resulted in severe warmth and other natural calamities. So, it is high time to prepare the carbon dioxide sinks and to reduce GHG emissions. Humus in forests are very good sinks. They are the maximum absorbers of CO₂. We must protect the natural forests as they are rich in humus. The per-capita emission in Australia, Europe and India is compared in terms of population density and presence of forests. We have very good amount of forest resources and we have to maintain the same. The indigenous communities who are instrumental in keeping the forest resources and protecting the biodiversity must demand for themselves.

Sri R.K Sharma, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government of Odisha, Environment and Forest Dept. contextualised his concerns, "what should be our response to the global crisis?" He cited the case study from Argentina. According to him, we have to reduce the emissions as it is a global concern. But again here the equity issue comes. The answer is burden of environmental protection should be borne by everybody. Forests are carbon sinks. In India, we have more than 33% forest cover. The report of the Forest Survey of India said that the coverage of forest has been enhanced by 48 square kilometer in Odisha. Not only the Forest Department but also the community has a greater role in forest protection and management. He emphasised that Odisha is the first state that has distributed more than three lakh individual forest rights titles under the Forest Rights Act though we have distributed lesser Community Forest Rights (CFRs). The rate of CFR filing is also very low. Odisha has come out with JFM resolution 2011 which has provided ample scope for the communities to exercise their rights over forest and forest resources.



Then the floor was opened for open discussion. The following questions were raised by the audience:

- Q1. When FRA is being implemented from 2006, why Govt come out with JFM Resolution 2011?
- Q2. Public hearings are done clandestinely out of the reach of the people. Community voice is not recorded. Why is the Govt resorting to such methods?
- Q3. REDD+ is intended to compensate the communities. It will create a tendency to acquire money. Common property resources like forests should be governed by the communities. Then what is the relevance of REDD?
- Q4. Everyone is confused with regard to REDD. Tenurial Rights is given under FRA. Hence community consent is needed for any forestry development or operation. What more is REDD offering to the communities?

Sri R.K. Sharma, Sri Ambika Nanda and Sri Sidhant Das responded to the queries of the participants.

First Session

Community Rights, REDD+ and Forest Governance

Dr J. Sharma, IFS, Senior Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi

Dr. J. Sharma from TERI presented on REDD+ and Forest Governance focusing on Forest Rights Act, 2006. According him, REDD+ is an Indian position. Forests are seen from the perspective of sustenance need and livelihood security. Commercial aspect is another perspective of the forests. Ecology, social need fulfillment and commercial use of forest should confluence together to get sustained yield from the forests. But, nowhere in the FRA, is Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) defined.

In case of REDD+ mechanism, sustainable harvesting of forest resources are there and similarly both natural regeneration, plantations are to be carried out to maintain the forest health. The Village Forest Protection Committees (VFPCs), Vana Smrakshyana Samitis (VSS) and other Community Based Organisations (CBO) can take up forest conservation activities with other silvicultural operations in their traditionally accessed forests. REDD+ should be community centric and it is not carbon centric.



Forest conservation, biodiversity conservation, wildlife conservation, following the sustainable harvesting protocols, grazing and fire control are the measures that the community practices traditionally and in return it gets the livelihood support from it.

But the question is how to measure the amount of carbon sequestration and on what basis the payment will be made to the community? What will be the process and strategy of REDD governance? Legality, legitimacy and acceptance of governance are still to be explored. For implementation of REDD+ political commitment is needed. Since forest is in concurrent list, both the state government and central government should come out with clear guideline on the above matter.

He said that REDD+ is an incentive mechanism for the services rendered in the form of forest conservation. It is not legally binding rather it is optional. It is not hindering SFM.

Then the floor was open for discussion.

Participants asked regarding the technology of carbon measuring. Questions on the role of Gramsbha in forest governance after the FRA, 2006 were also raised.

In response Mr. Sharma shared on the technology and informed that a staff below the Range Officer level and community members can do this. He shared that TERI has developed five policy briefs on REDD+ and shared these briefs with Government of India. A calendar has been developed to conduct consultations starting from regional level to district level.

Second Session

REDD+ and the scope for livelihood; areas of concern

Sri S. Palit, IFS (Retd), Forestry Consultant, Community Forestry International

Describing on Community Forestry & REDD Sri Palit told that forests are both a source of carbon dioxide (CO₂) when they are destroyed or degraded and a sink when conserved, managed, or planted sustainably. Forest vegetation and soils currently hold almost 40% of all carbon stored in terrestrial ecosystems. However, in the tropics, forest clearance and degradation are together acting as a "net source" of carbon emissions. There are also



significant opportunities to develop innovative carbon sequestration forestry projects that generate positive synergies between forest restoration, mitigation of climate change and livelihood improvements for the poor.

Highlighting India's forest and tree cover he narrated that India is one of the 12 "megadiverse" countries in the world and forests are the repository of most of India's rich biodiversity. Nearly 200 million people in the country also depend on them for their livelihood, partly or fully. Forestry is at the centre-stage of global climate change negotiations. This is because forests have the potential to be a carbon sink as well as a source of carbon emission. India's view is that we need an agreement on a comprehensive framework for compensation and positive incentives for forestry as part of the ongoing climate change negotiations. Such agreement provides for incentives not only for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), but also for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Afforestation and Reforestation (A&R).

Describing the policy approach he said that the proposed range of actions that have emerged so far to address the issue of REDD are:

- Compensation for reducing deforestation
- Compensation for stabilising forest cover
- Compensation for conserving and increasing forest cover
- Protection and sustainable management of forests need to be treated as positive practices to avoid deforestation.

With the technological advancements in forest resource mapping, it is now possible to measure at the national/sub national level increase / decrease in forest cover with a fair degree of accuracy and hence also GHG capture or emission respectively he added.

Giving importance to the sustainable management he told that it is only possible by providing the forest dependent communities with the means of securing their livelihood. Sustainable management of forests involves:

- More than technical matters embracing human issues
- Participation of a broad cross-section of people
- Drawing upon community knowledge & experience

The house was then open for discussion. Participants raised questions on different dimensions of REDD+ and its impact on livelihood of the local community. Sri Palit responded to all the queries.

Third Session

Assessment of community readiness; presentation of the perception study report

Sri Pradeep Kumar Mishra, Consultant

Sri Pradeep Mishra, conducting a study on assessment of community readiness on REDD+, presented the draft study report in the workshop. Sharing the study objective he informed that Reduction of Emission from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) is a much contested topic in



India and elsewhere now after its recommendations in the 16 Conference of Parties. Since then the matter is besieged with lot of apprehension, confusion, and speculation with opinion holding from its complete rejection to qualified acceptance with cautious optimism. While both the views are extended keeping the interest of the forest and forest dependent community at the centre yet not much engagement with the community and other stake holders have taken place. Considering the intricate nature of the process, possible opportunities and disaster it might result in, a recording of perception of the various stake holders involving the REDD+ is a considered need. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To record the awareness, information and readiness of stake holders like - communities, PRI representatives, Forest Officials, NGOs, and development practitioners,
- To capture the views of the community and other stake holders on areas like threat and risk involving the larger question of access, occupation, management, and governance of forest.
- To record the response of stake holders on the issues of benefit sharing and distribution of goods and services following the implementation of REDD+.
- To capture the views of stake holders on the implications of REDD+ in the context of such empowering acts like Forest Right Act, Biodiversity Act and Wild Life Protection Act.

He also described the methodology, tools used for the study along with the limitations.

Sharing the broad findings he told that *REDD+ is still a techno-bureaucratic concept with little or no discussion in the public domain*. People at the community levels have not heard of REDD+ before. Apparently the preparatory exercises like the preparation of the coherent national strategy, legal compatibility, talk of a base line survey; community preparedness and ground proofing have been confined at the federal level without much diffusion to other stake holders at the sub national and sub-sub-national level. The forest bureaucracy in the state has not conducted much brain storming on the issue and the mitigation and adaptation to climate change plan is based on plantation and afforestation. The opinion at this point of time is divided and majority views comprising the community members, NGOs, development practitioners, PRI representative say a big **NO** to the REDD+.

Opposed to the above view, another view favours India to go the REDD+ way. The argument is grounded on the question why the countries (beneficiaries) who are benefitted from the forest conservation will not be given the cost. This they feel would go to enhance the livelihood prospect and help the betterment of the poor forest dwellers and sustainable management of forest. The fund flow will help the better quality of life, forest management, and conservation of the forest. A guarded opinion asks if the opposition is as a result of scanty information, insight and awareness on the topic. It suggests for more debate, further engagement with the stake holders and building an enabling and favourable climate for pro community advocacy on REDD+. It suggests not quitting the opportunity till the mechanism is made community friendly.

View saying no to REDD+ questions the efficacy of the instrument in reduction of carbon as it is just a payment in exchange of perpetuation of carbon emission by the powerful. The anti REDD+ view believes it to be another drive at land grabbing, destruction of food sufficiency, land use, mono culture, and massive displacement of people from their land and forest. The deal it says would generates conflict with taking the entire approach of forest conservation from environmental approach to a carbon approach.

The biggest challenge from the implementations of REDD+ flows from the fact of its monitoring, complexities and carbon credit. The community fears the REDD+ in view of the dilly dallying in the implementations Forest Right Act. In this backdrop it is questioned by the anti REDD+ opinion that if right under FRA is still a far cry how the same can be ensured in complex and less legally binding system envisaged under the REDD+. The opinion is very sceptical on the model of benefit sharing and risk management. It also calls in to question the interest of parties and countries to flout money on REDD+ while the mechanism has not become fully operational.

Fourth Session

Relevance of REDD+ in Odisha; Views and over views (open house discussion)



After all the presentations, the house went for a discussion on the relevance of REDD+ in Odisha. Participants presented their views both through oral presentation as well as by writing their views. The overall outcome of the views and over views on the relevance of REDD+ in Odisha was to give more emphasis on the existing pro community legislation like Panchyat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA), Biological Diversity Act and Forest Rights Act, 2006. The provision for ensuring recognition of traditional rights of the forest dwelling communities should be given priority. Information on REDD+ is yet to reach up to the community level, hence the implementation of REDD+ at this point of time may create complexity. Free, prior, informed consent from the Pallisabha should be mandatory for any kind of activities within the forest area depended upon by the local community.

Wrap up and Valediction

At the end of the discussion, it was felt that the need for sincere sharing of critical information, particularly with communities, is very great. It is natural for these communities, and those who champion for their cause, to be wary of any new development that can affect their rights in any way. Keeping in mind the continuing and heated debate on various aspects of REDD+ on many national and international forums, it is clear that there is genuine need for concern. The overall need is to protect the forests in their natural habitat, and also to protect the lives of communities who depend on them for their existence.

Can harming the interests at one level be really compensated by action at another level? The question becomes very important as there is still no clarity about the method and quantum of such compensation, and there probably cannot be as the importance and value of forests and the ecosystems dependent on them at any particular spot are difficult to quantify. This leaves

ample room for manipulation. There are ethical concerns as well that need to be addressed at a global level because it is felt that the voices of those who are being harmed in the process are not being heard. Nature, incidentally, has no voice but simply makes its displeasure felt by disrupting life on earth. Are we really ready for such challenges in the long run? Is REDD+ simply a tool for the powerful to continue plundering the natural resources of the planet? A holistic and unbiased view is needed to accept or reject the concept.

It was decided to share the report of the workshop in public domain for wider dissemination of the information. It was also discussed to share this report with the state administration, REDD Cell of Government of India and all the agencies working on the issues of REDD. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the guests, resource persons, and participants.

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A G E N D A

State Level Multi-Stakeholders Workshop on Community Forestry and REDD+

Date: 30th June, 2012

Venue: DRTC – CYSD, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Time	Activities	Responsibility
9.30 - 10.00 am	Registration	
10.00 – 11.45	Inauguration	
	Welcome address and Sharing of Objective	Kailash Chandra Dash Executive Director, RCDC
	Context setting REDD+:Global context and developments	Mr. Soumitri Das Forestry Specialist USAID, New Delhi
	Speeches of the Guests Dr. Ambika Prasad Nanda , State Programme Officer, UNDP Sri Siddhant Dash , IFS, Member Secretary, State Pollution Control Board, Odisha Sri P.N. Padhi , IFS, PCCF, Odisha Sri R. K. Sharma , IAS, Principal Secretary to Govt. Deptt of Forest and Environment, Govt of Odisha	
11.45 – 12.00	Interactions with guests	
12.00 – 12.15	Tea Break	
12.15 – 12.40	Community Rights, REDD+ and Forest Governance.	Dr J. Sharma ,Senior Fellow The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi
12.40 – 1.00	Question and answer	
1.00 – 1.15 pm	REDD+ and the scope for livelihood; areas of concern	Sri S.Palit , IFS (Retd) Forestry Consultant Ex- Chief Conservator of Forest, Govt of West bengal
1.15 – 1.30	Question and answer	
1.30 – 2.30	Lunch Break	
2.30 – 3.00	Assessment of community readiness; presentation of the perception study report	Pradeep Mishra , Consultant
3.00 – 3.15	Question and answer	
3.15 – 3.30	Tea Break	
3.30 – 4.30	Relevance of REDD+ in Odisha; Views and over views (open house discussion)	
4.30 -5.00 pm	Wrap up and Valediction	Ghasiram Panda , Programme Manager, RCDC

List of Participants

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