

Second National Stakeholder Consultation Workshop

Bangladesh REDD+ Readiness Roadmap, Bangladesh
17th January 2012, Dhaka

Minutes

Introduction

The second national stakeholder consultation workshop on the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap for Bangladesh took place on 17th January 2012 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Dhaka. The objective of this workshop was to share and discuss national and local perspectives on issues relating to Strategies, Safeguards and MRV (Measurement, Reporting and Verification), as they relate to the forest sector and potential approaches of a REDD+ programme. A total of 80 participants attended the workshop, from government bodies and NGO/CSOs. The participant list is attached.

The workshop was divided into an inaugural session and a technical session. The sessions were chaired by the Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. Ishtiaq Uddin Ahmad, and Mr. Yunus Ali (Deputy CCF) respectively. Dr. Nasir Uddin, Joint Secretary, MoEF gave the welcome address. The chief guest, Mr. Mesbahul Alam, Secretary MoEF, gave a speech during the inaugural session, alongside UNDP country director Mr. Stefan Priesner and FAO representative Mr. Dominique Burgeon. The session also included a briefing by the technical advisory team (represented by Ben Vickers and Dr. Ansarul Karim) on progress with the Roadmap, and the challenges, opportunities and benefits of REDD+ for Bangladesh.

Technical session: summary of presentations

In the technical session, the technical advisory team presented more details on Roadmap progress. Ben Vickers and Dr. Matieu Henry began with an outline of the Roadmap sections and contents and illustrations of Roadmap development in other countries in the Asia-Pacific region and the lessons for Bangladesh.

Dr. Karim gave a summary of the drivers of deforestation and degradation, and the key issues facing the forest sector around the country, based on the outcomes of sub-national workshops in Rangamati and Cox's Bazar and meetings of the Strategy Working Group.

Dr. Henry and Dr. Mariam Akhter outlined the activities of the MRV Working Group to date, and the work that will lead towards an Action Plan for MRV under the Roadmap. This presentation covered the importance of the phased approach to REDD+, the National Forest Monitoring System and Inventory.

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Mr. Vickers summarized the issues to be covered under the Safeguards Working Group, including the development of a consultation process in accordance with the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the development of national-level indicators for Social and Environmental Standards within a future REDD+ programme.

Issues raised by the participants, and the responses of the technical team were as follows:

Strategy:

- The participants agreed with the general assessment of drivers of deforestation and potential strategic interventions outlined by the technical advisory team.
- Representative from Chittagong University agreed that obtaining the correct rate of deforestation in Bangladesh is not currently possible. He also inquired about the methods of carbon stock calculation. *Response: The MRV section of the Roadmap will outline activities to test appropriate measurement methods in Bangladesh.*
- Arannayk Foundation highlighted the exceptional regenerative capacity of the soil in Bangladesh, and suggested that the country therefore has the potential to recover from much of the environmental degradation it has suffered in recent years. There may therefore be more cause for hope than is assumed by some other participants and REDD+ stands a chance of demonstrating swift positive results.
- Arannayk further proposed that independent private organizations with appropriate capacity could potentially serve as the REDD+ accounting hub, as another option besides the Forest Dept.
- Deputy Secretary, MoEF, opined that existing Unclassified State Forests (USF) should also be considered in formulating REDD+ Readiness roadmap. *Response: They must be considered.*
- Forest Department officials highlighted two major issues that must be addressed within the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap; land tenure clarification and capacity building for all sectors.
- Government sponsored settlement is a major driver of deforestation.
- Trans-boundary issues have, in the past, impeded forest area survey by aerial photos because of alleged national security issues. Satellite imagery does not face this problem.
- Representative from Coastal Land Zoning System (CLZS) informed that the drivers of deforestation should also include the increasing salinity of water and suggested that there should be a plan to control the flow of water in the rivers. He also offered to share the updated aerial images captured by the CLZS for future reference.
- Participant from Dhaka University requested to consider the impacts of growing eco-tourism industry in Bangladesh. Establishment of Bagan Baris (Farm House) in several forest areas by influential elites was flagged and attention has been sought in this particular regard.
- Another some seasonal species.

Safeguards:

- Existing policies and legislation must be reviewed before the REDD+ programme is fully developed. This may require the creation of formal links between village courts and the formal Judiciary systems – both lower and higher courts. Environmental disputes should be dealt with under a dedicated dispute resolution system. *Response: Review of existing policies is a key part*

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of Roadmap development. The development of a Grievance Mechanism for REDD+ must indeed include clear links between dispute resolution mechanisms at local and national levels.

- Officials from the Bangladesh Water Development Board enquired whether individually owned forest lands can be included under the REDD+ programme in Bangladesh. *Response: the programme should be developed so that actions on private lands can be included in a national REDD+ accounting system.*
- Raising awareness within the Forest Department itself is very important. The department needs to be very clear about the scope and limitations of REDD+ so that expectations do not get out of hand. Public expectations must also be managed through targeted awareness programmes.
- Representatives from the Department of Environment noted that the second national communication report made by the department on Inventory of Emissions has already been made, and highlighted the need for progress on REDD+ to be included in the upcoming third national communication so that duplication of effort can be avoided.
- Participants from POUSH (NGO) reiterated the need for community-based organisations to have a central role in dealing with deforestation and forest degradation.

MRV:

- A question was raised regarding the appropriate government ministry for dealing with the MRV related aspects of a REDD+ programme in Bangladesh. It was recommended that MoEF could take the lead in initial stages but in due course some responsibilities may be shared with other ministries e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Land.
- Forest Department officials suggested more inclusion of local people in decision making and policy analysis and also enquired about the probable mechanism to ensure participation in MRV. They also focused on setting up of a dedicated institutional framework, distinct from the current FD structure, to look after the MRV related aspects and communication with UNFCCC.
- It was recommended that a new permanent forest inventory unit should ensure continuity with the work done by FD units in the past.
- Representatives from SPARRSO recommended the use of GIS and other recent technological developments in the REDD+ programme for Bangladesh.

Conclusion:

During the workshop, support and enthusiasm for the REDD+ programme in Bangladesh was evident. It was also agreed, in principle, that the comments and recommendations from the participants recorded in this workshop will be incorporated in the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap, as appropriate. Mr. Yunus Ali, DCCF, FD concluded the technical session and expressed his gratitude towards UNDP and FAO in supporting the national REDD+ Readiness Roadmap process.