

Proceedings of Workshop
on
Safeguards Information System (SIS)
for REDD+

5th November 2020

Organized by
Institute of Forest Productivity, Ranchi
Ranchi Gumla N.H-23, Lalgutwa, Ranchi 835303 (Jharkhand)

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The Institute of Forest Productivity (IFP), Ranchi organized consultative workshop on Safeguards Information System (SIS) for REDD+ on 5th November 2020 through virtual media. The workshop was conducted to discuss the implementation of Safeguards Information System (SIS) for REDD+ in the States of Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. Sh. Arun Singh Rawat, *IFS*, Director General (DG), Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun and Chancellor FRI Deemed University presided over the workshop.

On this occasion, esteemed dignitaries Sh. Ravi Kant Sinha, *IFS*, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, West Bengal, Sh. A. K. Pandey, *IFS*, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, Bihar, Dr. Jose T. Mathew, *IFS*, PCCF(Res. & Monitoring), West Bengal, Dr. Sanjay Srivastava, *IFS*, APCCF (CAMP), State Forest Department, Jharkhand, Sh. A. K. PRASAD, *IFS*, APCCF (WP, Res. & Trg.), Bihar, Dr. Sangeeta Dubey, *IFS*, APCCF(Res& Mon), West Bengal, Sri Sanjay Kumar Sinha, *IFS*, Director, Hariyali Mission, Bihar, Dr. K. L. Ghosh, *IFS*, CCF (Res & Mon), West Bengal, Sh. Satyajeet Singh, *IFS*, CCF (Research), Jharkhand, Dr. R. K. Jha, Professor Cum Chief Scientist, Rajendra Agricultural University, Pusa, Bihar, Dr. Kailash Chandra, Director, Institute of Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, Dr. T. H. Mahto, Assistant Director, Ministry of Environment & Forest and Climate Change, Regional Office (ECZ), Ranchi, Jharkhand, Dr. Benukar Biswas, OIC-AICRP on Agroforestry, BCKV, Jhargram, West Bengal, Sh. Malla Srinivasu, DGM, SAIL, Kolkata, West Bengal, Dr. Prasanjit Mukherjee, Head, Dept. of Botany, S.K.M College, Pakur, Jharkhand, Dr. J. P. Pandey, Central Tasar Research & Training Institute, Ranchi, Jharkhand, Dr. Purabi Saikia, Asst. Prof., Department of Environmental Science, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, DFOs of States, academicians, representatives of colleges, universities, NGOs, dignitaries from industrial sector and scientists of various research institutions in Ranchi were also present in the workshop. From ICFRE, Dehradun, Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj, *IFS*, Director (International Cooperation), Dr. V. S. Senthil Kumar, Assistant Director General (Edu&RB), Dr. V. R. S. Rawat, Scientist, BCC Division, Dr. Shilpa Gautam, Scientist-E, BCC Division, Dr. Sanjay Singh, Scientist-D, BCC Division, Dr. R. S. Rawat, Scientist-D, BCC Division and other officials also actively participated in the deliberations of the REDD+ SIS workshop.

At the outset, **Dr. Nitin Kulkarni, Director, IFP, Ranchi** extended a warm welcome to all esteemed dignitaries. He introduced the purpose of the REDD+ consultation meeting and informed that REDD+ is a climate change mitigation option under UNFCCC and our country being a signatory, has commitment towards it. He informed that national REDD+ strategy was drafted in August 2018 and was submitted to the UNFCCC in April 2019. He said that the major responsibility for execution of REDD+ activities involved the State Forest Departments. Speaking on REDD+, he informed that the proposed strategy is expected to support youth cadres as community foresters and they will be engaged in effectively assisting natural regeneration, soil and moisture conservation, harvesting, thinning, development of forest nurseries and raising of quality planting stocks and prevention and control of forest fires, pests and diseases and spread of alien invasive species. He said that a lot of responsibility falls on local communities too. He said that national REDD+ strategy also impresses upon development of road map, in consultation with the stakeholders and thus, the Govt. of India has assigned a task on execution of REDD+ readiness in India to the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE). He informed that Safeguard Information System for REDD+ has already been drafted and welcomed interaction among the dignitaries for further improvement. He invited suggestions and comments from the stakeholders for further compilation of the draft before final submission to the Ministry.

Dr. Sanjay Srivastava, IFS, APCCF (CAMP), Jharkhand State Forest Department informed that in 2011 in the Cancun agreement came into being and they decided that the REDD+ activity should be contributing towards the stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions. He said that this programme will be providing the opportunities and livelihood support to the stakeholders at field level. He explained that the Cancun agreement decided that the developing countries will require to work on four parameters, i.e.:

1. To devise national strategy for REDD+, which has already been submitted to UNFCCC in 2019.
2. National REDD+ emission reference levels, which has been completed and submitted to UNFCCC.
3. National Forest Accounting System which has been done by Forest Survey of India, Dehradun
4. To develop Safeguard Information System to be developed by ICFRE, Dehradun.

He also explained the seven safeguards known as 'Cancun safeguards' and said that the whole purpose of making these safeguards was to ensure that negative impacts of anything,

which will be implemented during the implementation of REDD+ action plan, would be avoided. He said that the execution mechanism of REDD+ involves Ministry at the apex national level which will be assisted by three technical institutions of the country, i.e, ICFRE, FSI and NBA. He also said that all States are required to prepare the REDD+ action plan. Explaining the safeguards, he said that all States are required to first constitute a REDD+ Cell which will develop projects and submit them for funding support. He discussed the seven Cancun safeguards agreed under the UNFCCC that included:

1. That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
2. Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
3. Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws,
4. The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities;
5. That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits, taking into account the need for sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities and their interdependence on forests in most countries;
6. Actions to address the risks of reversals;
7. Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.

He said that the safeguards are to be ensured while implementing the Safeguard Information System. Speaking on behalf of the Jharkhand State Forest Department, Dr. Srivastava said that before implementation of SIS, some issues were required to be addressed, like:

- i. To organize capacity building workshops to tackle lack of awareness among the officials in the States while preparing action plans and activities of REDD+.
- ii. Institutional capacity building exercises should be incorporated in the draft SIS.
- iii. He requested ICFRE to organize capacity building workshops in due course of time and also help the States to prepare REDD+ action plan.
- iv. He said that since the data has to be analyzed and showcased, it is also important that none of the safeguards are violated and ICFRE should assist in collection and compilation of data.

- v. He added that data collection templates may be designed so that there is uniformity in collection of data and submission of data to ICFRE.
- vi. He also said that each stakeholder is accountable and there is a need to define accountability at each level and to ensure participation of every stakeholder.

Sh. A. S. Rawat, IFS, Director General, ICFRE, Dehradun welcomed the dignitaries and informed that this is the seventh consultation meeting of REDD+. He he hoped to get good and innovative suggestions and feedback from the officers of the forest departments of Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. He informed that during meeting with the Ministry it was decided to consult all stakeholders to get relevant feedback about the SIS document. He appraised that the criteria and indicators that have been proposed in the document clearly say that there is a provision of reporting. So until the officers at field level understand what has to be reported, based on that informations a clear picture can be obtained about the effects of this REDD+ action plan in field. He informed about the four elements of REDD+, i.e., National REDD+ strategy, National forest reference level, National Forest Monitoring System and Safeguard Information System.

The National REDD+ strategy was prepared by ICFRE and has been approved by UNFCC, National forest reference level was prepared by FSI, Dehradun and has been approved by UNFCC, National Forest Monitoring System is being done by FSI and is presented in the form of Forest Report and preparation of Safeguard Information System is to be done by ICFRE. He said that the purpose of the SIS document was to implement the REDD+ action plan by the States. He said that during implementation there may be risks involved related to society and environment. Risks related to society may be infringement of the rights of the society and risks related to environment may involve loss of biodiversity, conversion of natural forest to plantation and/or displacement of deforestation and degradation. So, to avoid the risks involved, the SIS document has been prepared to reduce potential societal and environmental risks from REDD+ implementation and enhance potential benefit. So the safeguards are basically the tools to ensure effective implementation of REDD+ actions and to avoid and minimize negative governance, social and environmental risks of REDD+ implementation. He said that implementation of SIS is a mandatory exercise to get the funds under REDD+. The DG ensured that capacity building will be done for SFDs for preparation of the REDD+ action plan. But due to COVID, the trainings have not yet started. He asked the SFDs to nominate Nodal Officers so that activities could be started. He reiterated that the REDD+ consultative meeting would be fruitful and would pave way for improvement in the SIS document.

Sh. A. K. Pandey, IFS, PCCF & HoFF, Bihar State Forest Department said that the State occupies 2.86% of country's geographical area and 12.06% of forest cover with huge population and tremendous pressure on forests, which are degraded. He informed that plantations have been done for extension of tree cover, mostly outside the forests and

inside the forests too, but there is a huge gap of 2000 sq.Km inside recorded forest area in FSI reports. He added that forests are under huge pressure by people residing in forest fringe villages. Removals are more than what is being supplemented. He informed that State REDD+ cell has been created but there is lack of awareness among the members about REDD+. He called for capacity building programmes to be conducted by ICFRE. He said that past experiences have not been good, as Sal forests have been converted to Teak forests. So, he said that it was necessary to think about biodiversity of the area and selection of species was important.

Sh. Ravi Kant Sinha, IFS, PCCF and HoFF, West Bengal Forest Department was concerned about lack of awareness at local level and the action plan or the way forward is to have more stakeholders' conferences, more stakeholders' awareness campaigns. He suggested that ICFRE should partner with institutions who can translate the technical benefits to local way of lives, so that local people can participate in a more meaningful manner. He said that the main focus of REDD+ was to prevent forest degradation and preserve our natural wealth. He pointed out that in the SIS document only targets trees and forest ecosystems, whereas the animals and wildlife are the best indicators of forest degradation. He also suggested for inclusion of funding pattern in the document format.

TECHNICAL SESSION:

Dr. V. R. S. Rawat, Former ADG (Biodiversity & Climate Change) and Member, Expert Committee on REDD+, ICFRE, Dehradun delivered a detailed presentation on "REDD+ Readiness in India". He talked about CDM as laid down by Kyoto protocol of the UNFCCC and its lacuna in not giving credit to standing forests. He talked about the various IPCC assessment reports and presented the background of negotiations that led to development of agenda for REDD+ proposal and to provide incentives from deforestation and forest degradation. He elaborated on the efforts of the country and contribution of ICFRE in biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stock in REDD+. He informed about the Cancun safeguards and its importance to implement it in a phased manner to achieve measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV) results. He discussed in detail about the elements of National REDD+ strategy, the National Forest Monitoring System in India in accordance with the UNFCCC and the Forest Reference emission levels as being done by FSI. Lastly, he highlighted the importance of Safeguards Information System (SIS) in reducing the risks of implementation of REDD+ which is yet to be submitted to UNFCCC. He talked in detail about the REDD+ activities to be considered, i.e., reducing emissions through deforestation, reducing emissions through forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. He also elaborated upon

the REDD+ strategy that includes capacity building and creating a cadre of community youth, green skill development programmes and financial support for all actions involved. He also briefed about the expected actions of various agencies and concluded by appreciating the development of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES).

Dr. Sanjay Srivastava, IFS, APCCF (CAMPA), Jharkhand State Forest Department enquired about funding support and was of the opinion that funds are difficult to get from GCF. He also informed that funds from CAMPA were to be used as per specific Ministry acts and rules. He added that the funds from CAMPA cannot be supplemented to any other scheme. He queried about capacity building and technical support that could be provided by ICFRE before implementation of the action plan.

Dr. V. R. S. Rawat replied that GCF funds can be availed by State governments citing REDD+ strategy action plan. Regarding capacity building, Dr. Rawat replied that ICFRE has supported in preparation of REDD+ action plan for the States of Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim.

Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj, IFS, Director (International Cooperation), ICFRE, Dehradun supplemented that with regard to the capacity building issue, ICFRE has supported in preparation of REDD+ action plan for the States of Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim as a part of ICIMOD funded project. He also said that the REDD+ manual has been prepared and would be shared to all which would be very helpful in preparation of REDD+ action plan. He said that due to COVID, training programmes have not been able to be started, but assured that focused capacity building programmes would be taken up shortly. He said that the SFDs need to liaise with some experts and NGOs working on CDM and REDD+ as part of their REDD+ cell, who can assist the SFDs in preparation of REDD+ action plan.

Dr. R. S. Rawat, Scientist, Biodiversity & Climate Change, ICFRE, Dehradun presented the Draft Safeguards Information System for REDD+. He informed that REDD+ has the potential to yield carbon and non-carbon benefits, but its implementation may have some environmental and social risks. He informed that the REDD+ activities needed to be implemented in a phased manner that involved capacity building, results-based demonstration activities and developing results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified. He discussed about the Cancun safeguards agreed under the UNFCCC, that should be promoted and supported in implementation of REDD+ activities. He elaborated on the Safeguards Information System as per the Durban Guidance that aims to provide information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed. He described that SIS should provide transparent and consistent information which should be available to all stakeholders and should be updated regularly and should have scope of improvements. He talked about the processes, structure, approach, goal, scope, scale,

functions, objectives, existing policies and laws, institutional framework and arrangements that are involved in developing the SIS. Dr. Rawat also discussed in detail about the principles, 16 criteria and their underlying 40 indicators for all seven safeguards that have been identified and proposed for getting data from the field. He concluded by informing about the grievance redressal mechanism related to safeguards and showcased the outline of web based application for SIS.

Discussion and Interaction Session by Stakeholders:

This session was chaired by Dr. Jose Mathews and co-chaired by Dr. Subrat Mohapatra, DG, MoEFCC Central Office, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

Dr. Jose Mathews said that the SFDs will be collecting data and ICFRE will be coordinating. He said that DFOs are already under tremendous pressure and creation of REDD+ cell will be an added responsibility. He enquired about the responsibilities of the assessments, whether the State Govt., the ICFRE or the Govt. of India level?

Answering the queries put forth by Dr. Mathews, **Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj** said that activities of REDD+ will be project based activities. He said that ICFRE and GoI are building capacities of the State Governments so that they can develop the projects. These are facilitating mechanisms that are being done and it is not mandatory for the States. He informed that ICFRE is implementing the World Bank funded project and it is to be ensured that any plantation work being undertaken by State Governments should adhere to the REDD+ safeguards and the criteria that are prescribed is the reporting mechanism. He informed that capacity building will be done to enable the SFDs to develop their own projects related REDD+ and will be funded exclusively under REDD+ scheme.

Regarding benefit sharing of the REDD+ scheme **Dr. R. S. Rawat** said that as per our national REDD+ strategy it is clearly mentioned about the flow of incentives through REDD+ activities and the national governing council of REDD+ will be responsible for formulating the guidelines for international as well as national incentives in a transparent manner. There shall be guidelines regarding flow of incentives from GoI to State Governments and further to local communities.

Dr. Kailash Chandra, Director, ZSI, West Bengal said that after the REDD+ activity, there can be a periodic data to have a futuristic approach and a clear understanding about the status of forests.

Dr. J. P. Pandey, Scientist, Central Tasar Research and Training Institute, Ranchi informed that their organization wanted to set up a tasar silk sanctuary in various parts of the country. In response to Dr. Pandey, Dr. Kulkarni said that relevant projects may

be drafted in lines of the REDD+ safeguards system. Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj said that funding under REDD+ safeguards system would be possible only after all components of REDD+ are functional.

Sh. Rajnish Kumar, DFO, Saranda Forest Division, Jharkhand informed that there was excess dependence of local people on forest in terms of food, like NTFPs and fuel because they do not have other livelihood options. He queried about how REDD+ can help Saranda Forest Division in Jharkhand on reduction of pressure on forest from people who are residing in the vicinity.

In response to Sh. Rajnish Kumar, **Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj** said that REDD+ is a project to devise a strategy for reducing emissions through reduction in deforestation. He said that in due course of time when the capacity building programme for REDD+ starts and the projects are formulated, the DFO should identify the drivers/indicators of deforestation, like fuel wood collection, illicit felling or degradation because of fire incidences etc. He explained that the whole gamut of activities is more akin to the activities taken up under eco-development projects. So the project document that is framed will address all the drivers of deforestation. He also added that it is necessary to involve the local communities and ensure that their interests are not hurt. Regarding CAMPA funding, Sh. Bhardwaj said that specific guidelines may be sought from the Ministry on how to incorporate these REDD+ project activities in CAMPA. He also assured that data collection templates will be drafted and circulated to maintain uniformity.

Dr. Purabi Saikia, Assistant Professor, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi said that REDD+ policy is committed to safeguard and ensure respect for the rights of indigenous people and local communities as stated in the constitution of India. She added that Jharkhand is a State where forest dwelling communities are high and their dependency on forests is very high, so if the REDD+ policy draft is prepared in the same way for both tribal dominated and non-tribal dominated States, then there will be difficulty in adoption of REDD+ policy. So, she added that there must be special provisions for the tribal dominated States or areas, where most of the tribals are highly dependent on forests and forest products.

She highlighted that rate of adoption of the policy depended on socio-economic condition of the people. So, for implementing the REDD+ policy she suggested to identify some undisturbed forest areas in each forest division that will be dedicated for carbon storage without any further disturbances. And for that it is required to increase forest landscape restoration, ecosystem based adaptations and ecological restoration. She questioned whether the number of protected areas throughout our country can be enhanced so that the contribution towards climate change mitigation through the REDD+ policy can be increased.

Referring to the BBC News item (<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-53138178>) related to climate change which stated that planting new forests can do more harm than good; she said that financial incentives to plant trees can backfire and reduce biodiversity with little impact on carbon emissions. She also added that our country is a part of the “Bonn Challenge” which endorses the global goal to bring 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030. Quoting the news, she said, “If policies to incentivize tree plantations are poorly designed or poorly enforced, there is a high risk of not only wasting public money but also releasing more carbon and losing biodiversity”. She said that when we are enforcing a certain restoration programme, in terms of plantation activity, there should be very careful selection of tree species, because in natural forest at least 30% of forest tree species can contribute to 90% of carbon storage. So, it is important to identify which species play a significant functional role in the ecosystem. While taking up plantation activities our consideration towards selection of tree species is of utmost importance. She also added that during formulation of State REDD+ cell, there must be representations from academic institutions, NGOs and local communities.

Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj replying to Dr. Saikia said that according to UNFCCC guidelines, REDD+, national strategy document and SIS document specifically mentions and emphasizes to promote local indigenous species. He assured that the mandate of the SIS includes involvement of local communities, safeguarding and incorporating their traditional knowledge base.

In response to Dr. Saikia, **Dr. V. R. S. Rawat** replied that there is a strong safeguard that natural forest shall not be converted into plantations. While developing State REDD+ action plans specific to the States, the problems will come from stakeholders and they will also suggest solutions.

Sh. Srikant Verma, IFS said that soil health card system can be developed through existing laboratories for soil carbon measurement.

Dr. Prasanjit Mukherjee, Head, Dept. of Botany, S.K.M College, Pakur, Jharkhand enquired about collaboration avenues with universities during data collection and awareness campaigns while implementing the REDD+ SIS activities. Replying to Dr. Mukherjee, Dr. V. R. S. Rawat said that during development of State specific REDD+ action plan, the collaborations with institutions, universities, NGOs, JFMCs, local communities etc will be taken care of.

Sh. Anurag Bhardwaj, IFS, Director (International Cooperation), ICFRE, Dehradun while concluding the day long deliberations praised the interactions and active participation. He summarized by saying that SIS is a mandatory reporting system and not a project formulation guideline system. The SIS exercise would help us in ensuring that we

incorporate all the key probable risks of the project that is formulated under REDD+ mechanism and it is important to have the SIS system in place. He requested all the SFDs to formulate the REDD+ cell and involve academic institutions, NGOs and local communities who can further serve as key trainers and subsequently can help in developing capacities. At the last, Sh. Bhardwaj assured trainings and capacity building exercises by ICFRE, Dehradun to enable the States in implementing the REDD+ SIS system.

The webinar REDD+ workshop concluded with presentation of formal vote of thanks by Dr. Yogeshwar Mishra, Scientist-F & Group Coordinator (Research), Institute of Forest Productivity, Ranchi.

Annexure I

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GLIMPSES OF CONSULATATION MEET

