



# REDD+ and Perspectives of Community Forestry Stakeholders in India

Highlights from the dialogues at different levels and the National Consultation





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## ABOUT CPF

Centre for People's Forestry (CPF) is a Civil Society Organisation registered in August 2002. CPF works for the rights and livelihoods of forest dependent communities with due regard to conservation. It believes that the claim to conservation, control and management of the forest resources belongs to the forest dwelling and dependent communities and their livelihoods should be the primary concern of all forestry programmes.

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# INTRODUCTION

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of forests) programme aims at reducing green house gas emissions from the forests. It puts financial value on the carbon stored in forests and offers incentives to the developing countries to reduce emissions from forest lands and invests in low carbon paths for sustainable development. The plus in REDD+ programme (apart from the deforestation and degradation), includes the role of – conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of carbon stocks in the forest.

As per UNFCCC conference of parties held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009, the three issues on which consensus was reached on REDD+ were - Scope, Safeguards and Phased implementation. Under phased implementation, each country (signatories of Kyoto Protocol, including India) has to prepare a national REDD+ strategy, through participatory consultations.

Since the mechanisms for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) are in the process of evolution at international, national and sub-national levels, it opens discussion on how lessons from community forestry<sup>1</sup> might be applied to further its development, considering that Community Forestry is a significant connect in the overall processes of the REDD+ implementation.



<sup>1</sup> Which is operational in various forms in most of the developing countries. In India the Joint Forest Management programme (JFM) in the country, the Community Forest Management (CFM) programme of Andhra Pradesh and various forms of community forestry initiatives in Odisha, Jharkhand etc.





In this backdrop, CPF took initiative, with the support of Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG India), Oxfam India and Oxfam-Novib-KICS, for organising dialogues with community forestry stakeholders. In these dialogues, awareness creation (on forestry & climate change including the ongoing discourse on REDD+) on one hand and eliciting their response based on the experiences of involvement in community forest management, on the other were taken up. It is felt that it will be good to involve communities proactively in consultations and provide feedback to the government, rather than wait and react after the policy is formulated.

Owing to the strong base with regard to community forest management and physical presence of CPF, the state of Andhra Pradesh was chosen for the State and field level dialogues. The outcomes of these dialogues were compiled and shared in a National Consultation. The process steps are shown below:

S.No	Process Steps (from June 2010 to April 2012)
1	<p><b>Development of resource material in English (June 2010 – May 2011)</b></p> <p>The topics covered are - Introduction to Climate Change, Forestry and Climate Change, REDD &amp; REDD+ history, current scenario and issues, REDD in India, issues and Green India Mission, Relevance of REDD+ to community and Concerns &amp; Challenges in REDD+ implementation.</p> <p>This booklet is meant for use by the resource persons in the field level workshops.</p>
2	<p><b>Development of communication material (June/July 2011)</b></p> <p>Pamphlets and posters in Telugu (local language) were prepared. For use during field level workshops to enable the participants understand effectively.</p>
3	<p><b>Organising State level workshop (June 2011)</b></p> <p>31 participants- 18 (7 women) from community, 3 Senior officials of Forest Department and 10 NGOs. NGO and community representatives were invited from the proposed six divisions.</p> <p>Half a day was devoted for sharing about REDD using the power point presentations made from the resource material and the other half was devoted for group discussions on the questions. The meeting ended with group presentations.</p>
4	<p><b>Training of Trainers (September 2011)</b></p> <p>35 persons (8 women) were trained and 14 (1 woman) of them contributed as resource persons.</p>
5	<p><b>Division level dialogues (6, two divisions from each of the three regions of the State) (October 2011)</b></p> <p>235 participants of whom community representatives are 105 (26 women), Forest officials are 49, local NGOs are 66 and others 15.</p> <p>First half is devoted for explaining about REDD and the second half for group discussions. Meeting ended with group presentations. All the participants are drawn from the proposed ranges in each of the divisions.</p>
6	<p><b>Range level dialogues (11) (October/November 2011)</b></p> <p>460 participants of whom 333 (73 women) are from community, 69 are from Forest department, 36 are from local NGOs and 16 others.</p> <p>First half is devoted for explaining about REDD and the second half for group discussions. Meeting ended with group presentations.</p>
7	<p><b>Compilation of reports of State and field level dialogues (December 2012)</b></p> <p>The compilation report was shared with the participants of the National consultation.</p>

S.No	Process Steps (from June 2010 to April 2012)
8	<p><b>National Consultation (28th December 2012)</b></p> <p>51 participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 are from CPF</li> <li>• 22 are from Forest officials, NGOs and communities participated in the field level workshops</li> <li>• NGOs from other states (FES of Gujarat, SPWD of Rajasthan, RCDC of Odisha, Mawphlang welfare society and Bethany society of Meghalaya and GRASP of Maharashtra)</li> <li>• NGOs from Delhi (TERI, Winrock India)</li> <li>• Additional PCCFs of APFD</li> <li>• Convenor of National REDD Cell from MOEF</li> <li>• Academic (Andhra University) and Research Institutions (CESS)</li> <li>• NABARD</li> </ul> <p>First half was devoted for presentations on field level workshops and the responses as well as sharing of experiences by people from Meghalaya on their REDD projects. Second half was devoted to discussion on the questions and formulation of recommendations.</p>
9	<p><b>Documentation of proceedings and circulation to participants (January/ February 2012)</b></p>
10	<p><b>Preparation and printing of the present booklet summarising the responses and recommendations (March/April 2012)</b></p>

The questions that were developed to examine the relationship between community forestry and REDD+ and discussed in the Asia experts meeting<sup>2</sup> held in Bangkok, in June 2011, were felt relevant for these workshops and hence most of the questions were drawn from the same questionnaire, to facilitate discussions. We sincerely thank them for allowing us to do so.

This booklet summarises the responses and recommendations of the key stakeholders participated in the dialogues at different levels and the National consultation.

<sup>2</sup> In order to examine the relationship between community forestry and REDD+, the Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG), with support from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), REDD-Net, the Climate Development and knowledge Network (CDKN), the Norad Grassroots Capacity Building Project for REDD+, and REDCOFTC-The Center for People and forests, Invited 12 experts from India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Vietnam and the UN-REDD Programme to convene in Bangkok 'Asia Experts Meeting on REDD+, governance and Community Forestry' to reflect on emerging issues.



# DISCUSSION ON QUESTIONS

## **Q1: What is the potential for Community Forestry (CF) to contribute to REDD+?**

The experiences and skills acquired under Community Forestry Management (CFM) in – formulation of people-friendly policies including benefit sharing mechanisms in consultation with stakeholders, planning, rapport established between communities and forest department can positively contribute towards implementation of REDD+, since both have similar objectives. CFM guidelines (of Andhra Pradesh) such as sharing equal benefits among Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) members, along with equity in participation and sharing of responsibilities will help formulation of suitable policies for REDD+.

## **Q2: How can Community Forestry approaches strengthen benefits to local communities under REDD+?**

In Andhra Pradesh, the Government Order (GO) on CFM clearly specified the benefits that go to communities, the responsibilities of the managing committee and also automatic enrollment of vulnerable community (SC & ST) members in the VSS. Such approaches can be used in REDD+ projects including the carbon benefits, with due elaboration on the modalities. The existing community forestry institutions and their functioning can provide insights for further interventions.

*The processes proposed under REDD+ are already in practice in Community Forest Management.*

*At present, the pressure on forests for wood is high. There is a need to promote alternate technologies to reduce dependence on forests.*

*Forest land belongs to the Government. The community has always been involved in the protection and conservation. The benefits from REDD+ must be shared equally between the government and community, so that regeneration and livelihood activities can be taken up.*

*Along with forest protection programmes, village development programmes with specific focus on individual household development should be incorporated.*

**- Views of Field functionaries of Forest Department**



### **Q3: Can REDD+ promote and strengthen Community Forestry?**

REDD+ will serve the dual purpose of giving scope to safeguard the forests and provide long-term tenure security to communities. Implementation of REDD+ would result in achieving increased forest coverage and benefit the community members in terms of increasing the income from collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and thereby promote sustainable livelihoods. They would also gain from the various programmes and schemes implemented from time to time through possible convergence in forests and thereby increase their livelihood opportunities. Enhanced forest growth entails increase in income on account of benefits garnered from carbon trading, directly to community.

REDD+ shows the way in consolidating the strength of community members. The incentive that community would be able to meet its own requirements from the developed forests and promote sustainable livelihoods is instrumental in enhancing their well-being.

*We are not sure about the REDD+ benefits reaching us, as the Forest Department does not show any interest to pass on the promised benefits to us. Is it possible for any institution/ VSS to directly access benefits from carbon credits, without the involvement of Forest department?*

#### **-Some representatives from the community**

*The concept of REDD+ has to be developed as 'Community-centric' rather than carbon-centric.*

#### **- Dr. Urmila Pingle**

*There are problems regarding certifications of carbon stocks in the present scenario. There needs to be a standardisation of certification and baseline data needs to be determined.*

#### **- Dr. Kinsuk Mitra**

**Q4: What risks does REDD+ pose and how can the rights and interests of local communities be ensured in the context of REDD+?**

It is feared that REDD+ may bluntly deny access to forest dependent communities and prove detrimental to the aspirations of the community. In order to safeguard local communities' rights there is a need to organise consultation meetings with the community and take feedback before the policy is drafted. The recommendations have to be incorporated in the policy. Biodiversity has to be promoted instead of laying emphasis on monoculture species. NGOs services shall be used in developing shared perspective and building the capacities of the communities on REDD+.

Though policy document provides for pro-people measures, much depends upon proper implementation of REDD+ as far as the problems of negative impacts are concerned. The conflicts and issues may be minimised by prioritising community aspirations and needs during implementation.

*Discussions on the pros and cons of REDD+ would serve the purpose of reinforcing the goals of CFM realisable as both CFM and REDD+ share a common running thread with a thin line of demarcation.*

**-Ramesh Kalaghatgi**

*There is an urgent need to implement the REDD+ pilot projects to take the initiative forward. It is better to try some wild experimentation, so that our answers to REDD+ can be extracted.*

**- Yugandhar Mandavkar**

*It is necessary that the responses derived from the grassroots level be incorporated in National Policy so that their fears are allayed. The REDD+ process has to be deftly handled to accommodate the views of all stakeholders.*

**- Irshad Khan**







*There is a need to include the urban community in the process of REDD+ for they stand to gain from the expected environmental services.*

**- Subhash Chandra**

*The lessons learnt from the JFM experience shall be useful in REDD+ processes. Research studies in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere in India reveal that essentially it is the bureaucracy that is responsible for the issue of governance and functioning, as far as CFM and its interests are concerned.*

**- Dr. Gopinath Reddy**

*Will Forest Governance be passed on to the market through REDD+? There is a serious lapse in the existing governance model.*

**- Jagdish Rao**

### **Q5: How the capacities acquired and lessons learned by communities in Community Forestry, contribute directly in REDD+ implementation?**

The rich traditional knowledge, experience and skills of community members gained through participation in community forest management in - inventory, forest protection and forest monitoring will help REDD+ implementation towards sustainable management of forests.

In spite of several efforts, some differences still exist within the stakeholders of community forestry and there is a need to work towards better understanding between communities and forest department. Community members are yet to get their rightful share, which has either been denied or delayed, like timely harvesting permissions, benefit-sharing etc. These would make sure that benefits reach communities under REDD+. With little oversight, lessons learnt from the community's involvement in forestry works such as raising plantation, watershed development in VSSs areas need to be incorporated to promote sustainable livelihood opportunities. Along with forest and village

development plans, individual development plans should be included in REDD+, in order to reduce the dependency on the forests either for livelihoods or for other needs.

**Q 6: What specific and concrete governance lessons emerge from Community Forestry to communicate to policy makers in order to ensure that REDD+ strengthens Community Forestry (and vice versa) and at the same time provides an opportunity for secured rights and more benefits to local people?**

The decision-making processes involve the community members through necessary platforms such as - general body meetings and overseeing the REDD+ implementation (involving women) at all stages. The equality in sharing of benefits should be the cardinal principle in determining the benefit-sharing mechanism with equal pay for all individuals. Similar to the spirit of CFM, reinvestment proportion of funds for planting trees should also be incorporated in REDD+. Joint responsibility should be taken by the FD and VSS for protection as well as in other activities in the forest, during REDD+ implementation.

*There is need to explore the uncharted terrain of using alternate fuel technologies in households.*

**- Satish**

*The community should be the major stakeholder in determining the processes of REDD+ policy.*

**- Dr.Kameswara Rao**

*The current phase of transformation in community forestry is likened to a transitory stage in the evolution of REDD+. It is now an established fact that JFM committees have large expanses of land at their disposal. One of the key parameters could be that the JFM committees shall have control over the forest in implementation of REDD+.*

**- J V Sharma**

*Keeping in view the interests of pastoralists as well as small VSSs it is important to follow a landscape approach.*

**- Viren Lobo**





*The policy on sharing benefits in Andhra Pradesh has got an edge over other states. There is a need to issue common guidelines at the central level for uniform benefit-sharing mechanisms across states. There are issues at practice level which need to be resolved and the procedures streamlined.*

**- Dr. D. Suryakumari**

*REDD+ implementation is a part of sustainable forestry management, which promises to enhance the carbon.*

*Many things are involved while implementing REDD+ and it is always linked to other things, but it should be mainly about conservation of the forests. There are some constraints in the form of gaps, say the biggest constraints are – money and certification methods available/applicable.*

**-Tambor Lyngdoh**

*The case of North East presents a favourable terrain to implement REDD+.*

**- J V Sharma**

VSSs could be entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the forest cover thereby awarding them a suitable role in the implementation of REDD+. This would go a long way in giving credibility to the VSSs being involved in conservation and protection of forests. In a bid to establish closer ties with community institutions, REDD+ implementation processes could also incorporate direct transfer of benefits to VSS and forest-dependent community member's accounts. The priority of implementing of REDD+ should be vested with community institutions such as VSSs and participation of private sector must be discouraged. At the same time, the issue of diversion of forests for developmental activities needs to be addressed.

**Q 7: What are the roles of government agencies at various levels to ensure REDD+ implementation is well-coordinated with relevant stakeholders and benefit local communities?**

Government agencies comprising of line and nodal department agencies along with other NGOs, CBOs should work in implementing REDD+. This could be done through incentivising the basic amenities for the members of community institutions. Provisions for easy transfer of funds could be ensured through pro-people fund flow system, developed in convergence with line departments. Regular multi-stakeholder platform meetings involving all concerned will be helpful in resolving issues.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The composition and rules and regulations (guidelines) related to Forest protection committees formed under JFM, differ from state to state. The studies have shown that the performance of JFM institutions varies across the country. There is a need to have uniform guidelines across the Nation, in order to ensure that composition of the FPC (Forest Protection Committee) ensures equity in participation along with fair benefit-sharing to communities.
- Reforms to JFM/CFM institutions and capacity building on the lines of SHGs (Self-Help Groups of women) model of Andhra Pradesh, is essential for making J/CFM committee sustainable as well as self-sufficient for the success of REDD+. Governance issues have to be resolved and in that direction capacity building should also be taken up along with institutional strengthening. Transfer of governance to community institutions has to be a continuous process.
- The “Vanasamakhya” (VSS Network) of Andhra Pradesh has proved to be very successful not only in strengthening the VSSs but also in achieving success through pressure building on the government for equitable, participatory and efficient benefit sharing distribution. This model of networking has to be promoted throughout the country and a separate autonomous body has to be created to support and strengthen them.
- Promoting para workers (as licensed community foresters), training, capacity building and payment of honorarium from funds generated locally has to be taken up with the technical support of Forest department.



- International level agreements on safeguards need to reach local level through proper awareness.
- Stress needs to be laid on indigenous knowledge of the communities and biodiversity conservation and promoting it using local know-how.
- Legal framework for convergence of all those acts and programmes, which have either direct or cross-cutting relationship with forestry such as Forest Rights Act,-2006, PESA, MNREGA and the learnings out of these programmes, has to be put in place.
- Exploration for converging government schemes into the forestry sector so that forests could be better managed through the combined efforts of forest department and community. A case in point is that of the MNREGA being implemented in forest areas and watershed development works through a tie-up with Panchayati Raj department. Such type of convergence will go a long way in



replenishing the forests and providing benefits such as increase in water table, increased vegetation, and enhanced Biodiversity.

- Landscape Approach: Keeping in view of the interests of pastoralists as well as small VSS it is important to think of a landscape approach.
- Forest dependent communities and indigenous communities must have access to the necessary knowledge and skills in order to implement REDD+ and thus fulfill their role within REDD+ implementation and access the benefits. Such a capacity building can also help to address many of their genuine concerns and common misconceptions about REDD+.
- Awareness creation, regular consultation, improved coordination and communication among all concerned stakeholders by creating and nurturing suitable platforms, has to be an integral part of REDD+ projects.
- Amendments to Indian Forest Act, as well as State Forest Acts have to be taken up in order to make them compliant with the Forest Rights Act and PESA.
- Necessary legislation and procedures are needed to find a solution to the problems of pastoralist communities.
- Mechanisms for addressing and safeguarding the rights of the communities in case of Natural Disasters and calamities have to be evolved through consultation meetings with communities.
- Discussions on certification of the carbon stock in the forest based upon the baseline data should be built, using sound and tested methodology. There is a need to evolve a mechanism, that is suitable to Indian context.
- The REDD+ policy evolved shall be forest conservation-centric rather than being carbon-centric.

- While framing the REDD+ policy, care has to be taken such that market mechanisms do not take the lead.
- India is lagging behind in the REDD+ preparedness, there is a need to generate awareness programmes regarding this, so that field level staff as well as the communities are well aware about this and contribute in policy making and thereby play key roles in implementation.



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