

Proceedings of the Local Level Workshops in Angul, Odisha on 12th May 2012

TERI in association with Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India and the State Forest Department, Odisha has organized two local level workshops one at Bhubaneswar and another at Jereng village of Angul district on 12th May 2012 in Odisha. The workshop organized at Bhubaneswar was chaired by Shri A. K. Bansal, Additional Director General of Forests, MoEF and coordinated by Dr. J V. Sharma and Mr. Suresh Chauhan of TERI, New Delhi, while another workshop was chaired by Shri J. K. Tiwari, ACCF, Odisha and Dr. J V Sharma, TERI, New Delhi.

The workshop for the state and local level forest officials was held in Rangers College in Angul and was attended by more than 25 forest officials, NGO activists and representatives of the corporates. Among the forest officials, Shri J. K. Tiwari, ACCF, Odisha, CCF Central, DFOs of seven different forest divisions, many ACFs, Range Officers, Foresters have attended the workshop. Dr. J V Sharma, Senior Fellow from TERI made a detail presentation on the REDD+ in context of India. He apprised the local level forest bureaucracy, local communities, NGOs and corporates on issues concerning REDD+ in general and the proposed REDD+ pilot project in Jereng village of Angul district. Shri A. K. Bansal, Dr. J. V. Sharma and Dr. Suresh Chauhan had an interactive session on REDD+ with the participants. Given the limited understanding of REDD+ by the local level forest officials, the resource persons had explained the conceptual issues of REDD+ as well as various aspects of REDD+ implementation and the proposed pilot study at Jereng Budhi Pahad VSS in Angul district in detail. The MRV issues including measurement of carbon, baseline data and activities for reduced forest dependence by local communities are also discussed in great length. The local forest officials have shared their understanding and concerns about implementation of such scheme. The issues of institutional mechanism are also discussed in the workshop.

Another workshop for the local communities was conducted in the community hall of JFM Committee (Jereng Budhi Pahad VSS) in the village Jereng, where more than 150 individuals from the village as well as the neighboring villages have participated in the workshop with great enthusiasm. Most of the individual participants present in the meeting are the members and leaders of the local JFM committees. The field level forest officials and the activist of local NGO – NEWS also participated in this workshop. The workshop started with deliberations on REDD+

by Dr. J. V. Sharma and Mr. Suresh Chauhan from TERI, New Delhi on the conceptual issues on REDD+, local livelihood concerns and its impact on the forest quality and local forest management. The local NGO representatives have translated the deliberations in local language - Odia for more clarity and better understanding of the local community. The local forest officials and NGOs have also highlighted the issues concerning forest conservation, participation of the local communities in the forest management and the relevance of REDD+. The issues of alternative livelihood and The JFM leaders have also discussed about the positive change in forest after implementation of the JFM, the benefits for the local community and also the challenges they face in mobilizing people for collective activities to conserve forest. The members and leaders of JFM as well as the local NGOs have expressed optimism for implementation of REDD+ pilot in the region and viewed that REDD+ would further incentivize the local community's interest in conserving the forest. Representatives from TERI, New Delhi explained that the pilot REDD+ project in Odisha will be implemented in Angul district. The site selected for the pilot is part of the forest located in Jarapada beat of Durgapur range in Angul forest division.

The forest officials from the state forest department said that the forest beat under study is currently being managed by the Jereng Budhipahad VSS along with the state forest department. The forest under protection by the VSS is northern deciduous mixed forest with Sal being the dominant tree species. The forest provides a range of NTFPs which the local community collects for their own use and sells to earn their livelihood. The JFM (Jereng Budhipahad VSS) in Jereng village was registered in March 2008 although the local community started protection sometime around 2001. The VSS manages 200 ha of reserve forest. Jereng Budhipahad VSS is an active JFM group with 12 executive committee members that includes 2 women members and is part of the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP) funded by JICA. The president, secretary and executive committee members meet 15th of every month to discuss issues concerning protection.

Further the villagers and the PNGO informed that the village Jereng is located in Chendipada Block of Angul district with approximate 130 households. As the socio-economic composition of the village is concerned, one fourth of the households belong to scheduled caste with others from general caste of Hindu households. All the households in the village are the member of the VSS.

The total population of the village is around 700. Almost all the households are poor with around 60 percent households having Below Poverty Line cards issued by the government of India. With no irrigation system, people practice subsistence farming. Farmers grow paddy and pulses for their own use and also grow seasonal vegetables and cash crops like onion, groundnut which fetches some income to sustain their livelihood. Cultivation is the major occupation for the villagers along with farm and non-farm labour being the secondary options. The landless and small farmers depend more on wage (farm and non-farm) labour and also collect marketable NTFPs like tendu leaves, sal leaves, mushroom and other medicinal plants from the forest on seasonal basis. With few industries coming up in the region, the opportunity for non-farm employment has increased in the recent years.

The members of the JFM protect forest through rotational patrolling (locally called thengapali) with 8 members going for patrolling every day. With OFSDP assistance, they have also taken up commercial plantation in 2008-09 and 2009-10. A village community hall and one water harvesting structure have been built with assistance from OFSDP as entry point activities in the village. There are also several SHGs supported by OFSDP grant through the VSS. These SHGs also take up activities like trading of groundnut, onion, mahua etc to generate income for the members.

Based on the discussions in these two workshops following recommendations have made.

1. There is need to have State Level Workshop in each State to apprise the importance of the REDD+ for conservation, protection and sustainable management of forests. The States will organize district level workshops in which members of JFMC/VSSC may also be invited along with forest official. Further DFOs shall organize such workshops at each JFM village.
2. The mandate of Green India Mission and REDD+ are more or less similar except the fact that carbon may be traded under REDD+. The State Governments may assign the responsibility of REDD+ to the cell dealing with Green India Mission in the state. The programmes of the Green India Mission may be dovetailed with REDD+ project.
3. The projects under REDD+ may be taken at JFMC/VSSC level, particularly for the assessment of baseline, additionality of carbon and leakages. The methodology should be

as simple as possible, so that JFMC/VSSC and forest officials could be able to understand and execute it at the local level.

4. The schemes of rural development such as MNREGA etc. may be linked with JFMCs/VSSCs to strengthen their efforts and reduce the dependency on forests and its resources.
5. Assessment of carbon may be taken as a chapter in the working plans as well as micro plans to understand it in more detail.