

THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS

NATIONAL REDD+ POLICY & STRATEGY

NATIONAL POLICY ON REDD+

1. Preamble:

Climate change due to accelerated Green House Gases (GHGs) emission has become one of the toughest challenges of the present. Deforestation and forest degradation is a major source of CO₂ (an important Green House Gas) emission. Forests are both a source as well as the most effective carbon sink, offering great mitigation and adaptation potential. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) under UNFCCC is a global endeavour to use carbon sequestration potential of the forests to manage climate change within accepted limits of tolerance.

Carbon sequestration is one of the ecosystem services flowing from forests, in addition to biodiversity conservation; maintaining water cycle and soil fertility; livelihood supports to local communities. There is a need to recognise the carbon function of the forests and develop a fair, transparent and participatory mechanism to share the financial benefits arising out of national and international mitigation and adaptation programmes with the local communities participating in the conservation efforts.

The National REDD+ Policy aims to provide a roadmap for building comprehensive strategies for implementing REDD+ projects and programmes effectively in the country in the context of international development in this sector. The Policy alongwith the Strategies will lead to REDD+ readiness in the country and enable India to gain from international REDD+ mechanism for its pro conservation policies and efforts in future at the same time create financial incentives to local communities which are in the forefront of conservation of forests.

2. REDD+ a brief historical perspective:

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2007 estimated that the forestry sector and other sectors that impact land use through deforestation, forest degradation and other changes in forests contributes approximately 17% of GHG emissions or approximately 5.8 Gt of CO₂ equivalent per year, mainly in tropical developing countries. REDD+ as a concept has generated lot of interest and possibilities on climate change mitigation and adaptation. In **COP 11, Montreal in 2005**, a coalition of nine rainforest nations, headed by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, sought attention to the growing threat of deforestation, and introduced the concept of reducing emission from deforestation (**RED**). At **COP 12, 2006** at Nairobi, India proposed a new policy approach namely, '**Compensated Conservation**' intended to compensate the countries for maintaining and increasing carbon pools of their forests as a result of conservation and increase/improvement in forest cover backed by a verifiable monitoring system. This approach was finally recognized at **COP 13, Bali in 2007** Action Plan 1/CP (Para 1(b) (iii)).

The **COP 16, Cancun, 2010** marked the official entry of REDD as a UNFCCC-enabled mitigation mechanism linking deforestation, degradation, conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests with reduction of GHG emission. The **COP 19 at Warsaw, 2013** agreed on a Warsaw REDD+ framework. It reaffirmed that results-based new, additional and predictable finance, from a variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources, to be provided to developing countries for the

implementation of REDD+. It emphasized that the result-based progression is to occur for all phases of action and activities of REDD+ as agreed by COP16 at Cancun. The result-based actions have to be fully measured, reported and verified. This will include development and implementation of national strategies or action plans, capacity building in a phased manner. All REDD+ elements have to be in place in a developing country that undertakes result-based actions. For receiving result-based payment a country has to address safeguards and provide information on it.

REDD+ is a complex subject and is still evolving. Financing of REDD+ is still a gray area. There are many challenges for implementing REDD+ on the ground which require building technical capacities for MRV, institutional coordination, safeguards, financing and robust institutional mechanism, etc.

3. India and REDD+:

India ranks at 10th position in terms of forest area in the World as per Global Forest Resource Assessment (GFRA), 2010. Country 16 major forest types and 221 sub-forest types (Champion & Seth). India is one of the 17 Mega-diverse countries with 4 global biodiversity hotspots. Protected Area network includes 102 National Parks, 515 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 47 Conservation Reserves, 4 Community Reserves extending over 16 mha (4.9% of geographical area of the country). Some important facts are:

- i. As per India State of Forest Report, 2011, the total forest cover of the country is 69.20 mha (21.05% of the geographical area). The total forest and tree Cover constitute 78.29 m ha (23.81% of the geo. area), which includes 2.76% of Tree outside Forests (ToF). In terms of density classes, Very Dense Forest cover (VDF) is 83,471 km² (2.54%), Moderately Dense Forest cover (MDF) is 320,736 km² (9.76%) and Open Forest (OF) is 287,820 km² (8.75%). Total Growing stock of India's forest and ToF is estimated as 6,047.15 m cum with total carbon stock estimated to be 6,663 m tonnes.
- ii. There are around 300 million forest dependent people including around 87 million tribals, deriving their livelihood and substantial part of their income from forests. Joint Forest Management (JFM), a partnership between local communities and the Forest Department started in India in the nineties has been a successful model under the "Care and Share" principle with over 100 thousands JFM Committees involving around 20 million people managing over 22 million hectare of forest area.
- iii. India is world's 4th largest economy and 5th largest GHG emitter, accounting for about 5% of global emissions. Its emissions increased to 65% between 1990 and 2005 and are projected to grow another 70% by 2020. On a per capita basis, India's emissions are 70% below the world average. Forests neutralize 11% of India's GHG Emissions. India added around 3 mha of forests in the decade of 1997-2007).
- iv. There is significant scope for improving quality of forest cover by addressing drivers of degradation as a significant part of the country's forest cover falls in the open to medium categories owing to various drivers of degradation. As estimated, REDD+ programme could provide for capture of around 1 billion tonnes of additional CO₂ over the next 3 decades and significant financial incentives as carbon services under REDD+ including flow of positive incentives to local communities. REDD+ can be a part of an effective strategy and tool for mitigation and adaptation of climate change, improving ecological and environmental services, biodiversity conservation as well enhancing forest based livelihood of forest dependent communities.

4. Present Policy Framework and REDD+:

Existing policy and legislative framework which includes National Forest Policy 1988, Indian Forest Act 1927, Wild life (Protection) Act, 1972, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Biological Diversity Act, 2002 etc. and rules thereunder for guiding forest conservation and management is supportive of REDD+ elements. The goals of REDD+ are in conformity with India's National Forest Policy, 1988, which aims to ensure environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance through protecting, conserving and enhancing the existing forests of the country. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 regulates diversion of forest land for non forestry purpose and provides for compensatory afforestation. Safeguarding Rights of Local communities is also addressed in the National Forest Policy as well as in the recently enacted the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Prior consent of local communities/Gram Sabha is mandatory before the proposals for diversion of forests are approved by the Central Government. Thus the existing policy framework is supportive of implementation of REDD+.

5. Objectives of National REDD+ Policy:

Forests provide multiple benefits to the society and are vital for livelihood and sustenance of forest dependent communities. The objectives of the National REDD+ Policy are as under:

- i. to create REDD+ architecture at National and Sub-National levels to support REDD+ actions.*
- ii. to develop an appropriate REDD+ strategy and implementation frameworks at a nested level to represent the diversity of forests in the country*
- iii. to manage the forests for a bouquet of ecosystem services, including but not limited to biodiversity, that are flowing to local communities from the forests and not for carbon services only,*
- iv. to safeguard the rights and interests of local communities including improvement of their livelihood*
- v. to encourage and incentivize local communities for their role in conservation by transferring the financial benefits accrued on account of REDD+ to them based on their performance, as is reflected in monitoring, including small scale projects at JFMC/ EDC level,*
- vi. to strengthen coordination among sectors and stakeholders having direct and indirect impacts on land use and forestry.*
- vii. to lay emphasis on achieving various thematic elements of SMF by addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, afforestation of degraded areas, protection measures, etc. while implementing the REDD+ programmes,*
- viii. to improve and enhance supply of forest products and ecological and environmental services of the forests for comprehensively benefitting the society leading to increased growing stock and the stored carbon in the forest,*
- ix. to develop appropriate mechanism for channelizing REDD+ funding and transferring the accrued financial benefits to the communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner,*
- x. to provide adequate technical and financial resources to implement various phases and action plan of REDD+.*

National REDD+ Strategy:

The REDD+ Strategy guided by the National REDD+ Policy is designed to address critical gaps in the capacity and institutional framework towards creating REDD+ Readiness in the country. The important programmes areas identified for REDD+ implementation are as under:

- i. **National Forest Monitoring System:** Establishing robust and transparent national and sub-national systems to enable monitoring, reporting and nationally appropriate verification of:
 - a) Forest Carbon Stocks
 - b) Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;
 - c) Conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks;
 - d) Sustainable management of forests;
 - e) Safeguards, including governance, biodiversity and livelihood co-benefits
 - ii. **National REDD+ Architecture and Governance:** Transparency, inclusiveness and effectiveness in national REDD+ governance increased. Considering the vast diversity in forests, management issues, and drivers of degradation, the nested REDD+ approach appears most feasible;
 - iii. **Platform for Stakeholder engagement:** Forest Dependent Communities, civil society and other stakeholders effectively participate in REDD+ decision making and implementation;
 - iv. **National REDD+ information system:** Analysis of available data and capabilities amongst various institutions and build convergence of efforts and information to provide national monitoring data at least cost and high frequency. **Valuation and equitable sharing of multiple benefits of forests:** Multiple benefits of forests are valued, realized and ensured in REDD+ strategies and actions.
 - v. **Transparent, equitable and accountable management :** National fund management system, comprising of consolidation of financing from various public sources and equitable benefit sharing systems are operational for REDD+ performance based payments;
 - vi. **Capacity Building:** Strengthened national and sub-national capacities to develop sustainable REDD+ investment strategies and portfolios.
2. The REDD+ strategy is proposed for operationalising the implementation of REDD+ Policy. It is expected to support the transformation in the forestry sector and other sectors that impact forests and needs to align with broader national development strategies. The Strategy is to work for developing institutional framework and providing clear role and responsibilities for various players and stakeholders aiming at:
- i. to build a critical mass of technical and institutional capacities of various stakeholders including State Forest Departments, local communities, other related government agencies, educational institutions for implementation of REDD+ programmes including Measurement, Reporting, Verification and Monitoring.
 - ii. to carry out periodic assessment of non-carbon & carbon variables relevant to reporting and financing under REDD+;
 - iii. to have a mechanism for Stakeholder participation and engagement and to provide for a mechanism for conflict resolution and establish coordination process for local multi-stakeholders level REDD+ planning.

- iv. to enhancing cross-sectoral coordination within multiple government agencies including forestry and environmental authorities, land management authorities, finance ministries, sub-national government agencies.
- v. to analyse gaps in capacity and data by all REDD+ stakeholders and ensure that readiness activities promote a comprehensive and integrated approach and develop a transparent and accountable systems for REDD+ implementation;
- vi. to develop appropriate Management Information System (MIS) for sharing of relevant information/ data related to REDD+ with all stakeholders;

3. REDD+ FRAMEWORK: Essential elements of REDD+ Framework:

(I) National Level: Establishing **National REDD+ Authority** in the MoEF under a National Steering Committee on REDD+, serviced by REDD+ Cell;

Supporting Institutions: Government, Semi-Government and Non Government Technical & Scientific Institutions (FSI, ICFRE, IIFM, IISc, WII and others working in the field of REDD+); Concerned Ministries, Finance Ministry, MoRD, Ministry of Agriculture, MoTA, Planning Commission, MNRE, Ministry of Power Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Water Resources, MoPR, Ministry of Science & Technology.

- i. **Functions of National REDD+ Authority and REDD+ Cell:** Preparation of National Inventory and Action plan indicating (i) A National Reference Level, (ii) A National Monitoring & Reporting System, (iii) To support creation of Sub-National Level REDD+ architecture/ institutional framework with relevant stakeholders (iv) initiating REDD+ pilots for learning.
- ii. REDD+ Cell will assist the National REDD+ Authority and it will help:
 - (a) various agencies in developing & implementing policies related to implementation of REDD+ activities,
 - (b) guide & collaborate with SFDs to collect, process & manage relevant information/ data,
 - (c) guide formulation, development, funding, implementation, monitoring & evaluation of REDD+ activities in States.
 - (d) build capacity at various levels in collaboration with State Forests Departments and central forestry institutions of various stakeholders including forest dependent communities to help in implementation of REDD+.
 - (e) organize meetings of National REDD+ Authority and provide platform for various stakeholders across the country.
 - (f) Defining roles and responsibilities of institutions at the national and sub-national level for REDD+ implementation.
- iii. FSI may be designated as Nodal Agency for National Level Monitoring and Reporting for REDD+ and adequate resources to be placed with FSI.
- iv. ICFRE alongwith other scientific institutions and State Forest Departments to take up capacity building activities of various stakeholders.

(II) State (Sub National) Level: A REDD+ cell at State Level, under State Forests Departments with representation from other relevant organizations.

(III) **Local/ District Level:** Forest Divisions, other line departments, NGOs / Civil society Organizations, Gram Sabha (JFMC supported by Gram Sabha or Eco Development Committee), private sector organization, Industries etc.

3. Funding for strengthening Institutional Mechanism:

3.1. The strategy is to channelize funds from all possible sources for implementing REDD+ action through.

- i. Budgetary support for REDD+ Cell.
- ii. International funding from multilateral, bilateral, Multilateral funding agencies including Project based funding.
- iii. Projects based funding.
- iv. Domestic funding from PSUs/ corporate sector under CSR
- v. Budgetary support under climate change scheme/National Clean Energy Fund.

3.2. Develop mechanism for flow of incentives to communities.

3.3. Time Frame: REDD+ Readiness to be achieved in 3 years.

3.4.A more proactive approach to join international REDD+ Community and work with multilateral institutions like World Bank FCPF, UN REDD etc.

4. Provisions for Safeguards:

- i. Ensure safeguarding existing traditional rights of local communities with proper clarity like incentives as a bonus without compromising existing benefits.
- ii. Transparency in governance, promoting participation in implementation and monitoring of REDD+. Preparation of community-centered micro plans for sustainable management of local forest resources through active people's participation
- iii. Fair and transparent accounting and disbursement of benefits and REDD+ incentives.
- iv. Public accountability for policies and management decisions and securing equitable rights to forest utilization.

5. Strengthening stakeholders' participation for addressing forest degradation: Drivers for forest degradation vary from State to State and on different sites within a state. In a large number of cases, these drivers of degradation are outside the domain of forests and require specific action. This call for

- i. Provision of alternative cheap cooking fuel supply, promoting non-conventional energy sources, low cost permanent housing facilities, improved infrastructural facilities including health, improving agricultural and livestock productivity;
- ii. Providing education / skills to children, effective use of modern communication audio video tools for creating awareness among community;
- iii. Effective and improved silvicultural operations for improving site specific productivity with focus on local livelihoods; Assessment of site specific performance of species for better productivity & supply of forest products including small timber, fuelwood and NTFPs. increased soil and water conservation measures, etc.

- iv. Development of quick and effective insect and disease control mechanism including prediction of such outbreaks and remedial measures thereof;
- v. Building capacities of youth and women in villages in forestry activities for controlling forest fires, insect and pest damages; Forest fire prediction and control mechanism etc.
