High-level Dialogue Meeting on Climate Change and REDD+ Held in Naypyitaw

By Aung Kyi, Communications Officer for REDD+ Myanmar

As part of the UN-REDD Programme in Myanmar, a high-level dialogue meeting on Climate Change and REDD+ was held on 4 November 2015 in Naypyitaw, chaired by Dr Thaung Naing Oo, Director for Forest Research Institute, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.

"Deforestation and forest degradation are important contributors to climate change, but it is the activities of other sectors like agriculture, mining, and energy, including hydropower projects, that are driving deforestation and forest degradation, together with other underlying causes like infrastructure development projects," said Dr Thaung Naing Oo while delivering opening remarks at the meeting. "And so the forestry sector cannot deal alone with reducing deforestation and forest degradation across the country."

The high-level Dialogue Meeting on Climate Change and REDD+ is part of a programme to strengthen stakeholder representation and consultation, and to improve involvement of key line ministries while designing and implementing REDD+ activities in Myanmar.

Sixteen senior representatives from 15 different departments of ten different ministries, together with advisors from the UN-REDD Programme Regional Team based in Bangkok, actively participated at the meeting coordinated by the national UN-REDD programme and REDD+ team in Naypyitaw.

All key ministries of relevant sectors are called to collaborate with the forestry sector to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, and contributing to global climate change mitigation efforts.

Dr Tim Boyle, UNDP Regional Technical Advisor for the UN-REDD Programme, based in Bangkok said "Deforestation is mainly caused by demands for land for alternative land-use activities, such as infrastructure projects, agriculture expansion, mining, etc.

Therefore reducing deforestation can only happen if the relevant sectors are directly involved in identifying solutions and in the development and implementation of such policies and measures."

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) in developing countries.

"REDD+" goes beyond reducing deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Hence, actions in the forestry sector and other land-based sectors will not only significantly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but will also contribute to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services.
Meeting on Stakeholder Engagement and Safeguards for REDD+ in Myanmar

By Aung Kyi, Communications Officer for REDD+ Myanmar

The preliminary meeting of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Stakeholder Engagement and Safeguards for REDD+ in Myanmar was held in Nay Pyi Taw on 29 October, jointly organized by Forest Department of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, and coordinated by the UN-REDD Programme team in Myanmar.

Twenty-one representatives participated the meeting, including from five different departments of concerned ministries, three Civil Society Organizations (CSO), advisors from the UN-REDD Programme’s regional team based in Bangkok and the national team in Naypyitaw. This first meeting, chaired by U Ngwe Thee, Assistant Director for the Forest Department focused on the development of a preliminary work plan, engagement of all members of the TWG in future work, and planning for effective communication with all relevant REDD+ stakeholders in Myanmar.

With funding support from Norway’s Government through the UN-REDD Programme, the prioritized activities of the Myanmar REDD+ Roadmap were developed in 2013. The Forest Department is the Implementing partner of the UN-REDD Programme in Myanmar.

Both during the preparation of the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap, and as Myanmar starts to prepare for REDD+, there are three TWGs to guide the process. Besides the Stakeholder Engagement and Safeguards TWG, there are also TWGs on Strategy and Drivers, and Monitoring and Reference Levels.

The main role of the TWGs is to develop options related to the future National REDD+ Strategy and mechanisms for its implementation.

The Stakeholder Consultation and Safeguard TWG focuses on enhancing and encouraging active engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the readiness process.

An immediate task for the TWG to consider is how to promote improved collaboration on communication materials on REDD+ among all partners.

This will involve translating and revising existing communication materials and outreach to other actors involved in REDD+ and REDD+ related activities in Myanmar. This meeting discussed processes for ensuring rapid progress on these activities.

The second task of the TWG is the development of stakeholder engagement guidelines for REDD+. A third task will be the development of a Communications Strategy for REDD+ in Myanmar.

For all the above mentioned tasks, the TWG can build on the work done when developing the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap, as well as experiences from other countries, including guidance developed by the UN-REDD Programme.
National REDD+ Academy takes place in Nay Pyi Taw

By Aung Kyi, Communications Officer for REDD+ Myanmar

Twenty government officials have taken part in the National REDD+ Academy’s Training of Trainers conducted in Naypyitaw from 22 to 27 October 2015, as part of the UN-REDD Programme in Myanmar.

The National REDD+ Academy, which has been conducted in several other countries, trains participants on the principles of REDD+ implementation, so that they can play more effective role in further providing direct training to different REDD+ stakeholder groups in the country as needed.

The five-day training in Nay Pyi Taw has built understanding among key stakeholders on REDD+ development and implementation through a long-term and sustainable learning experience which can be later adapted to constitute a training curriculum on REDD+ for Myanmar.

"Environment challenges like deforestation and forest degradation, causing climate change and water pollution are major problems these days in Myanmar. Climate change is one of major issues in our age and for our people. We have no time to delay to fight against it and contribute to global climate change mitigation efforts," said Dr Nyi Nyi Kyaw, Director General for Forest Department of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry in Myanmar.

"The UN-REDD Programme recognizes the need for capacity building in countries that are preparing to implement REDD+. We need to make sure that capacity building is reaching as many stakeholders as possible. And this is the concept of the REDD+ Academy," said Dr Tim Boyle, Regional Technical Advisor for UN-REDD Programme.

With funding support from Norway’s Government through the UN-REDD Programme, the prioritized activities of the Myanmar REDD+ Roadmap have been developed since 2012. The Forestry Department of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is the Implementing partner of the UN-REDD Programme in Myanmar.

REDD+ is a mechanism proposed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to achieve significant reductions in anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases globally, thus contributing to international efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The UN-REDD Programme, which is "the United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries", was officially launched during the UN General Assembly in September 2008, with the commitment of the three participating Agencies, FAO, UNDP and UNEP.
National forest monitoring and inventory design workshop in Naypyitaw

The first National Forest Monitoring System design workshop for Myanmar was held at the Lake Garden Hotel in Naypyitaw on 21 and 22 October 2015, co-organized by the Forest Department of Myanmar and the UN-REDD programme team in Naypyitaw.

Accurate and consistent monitoring of the change dynamics of carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as well as removals resulting from national forest conservation and sustainable forest management measures are essential for countries willing to participate in any future REDD+.

The National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) will be the prime information system to produce relevant data for REDD+, UNFCCC reporting and the information necessary for independent verification.

The UNFCCC and its advisory bodies are providing a wealth of guidance for countries in developing new NFMS or improving existing ones.

The objectives of the workshop were; (1) to discuss the objectives and purposes of a new/ revised multipurpose NFMS system in the context of REDD+ and other relevant forest policy processes and decision-making requirements, (2) to discuss corresponding design options and data collection approaches for the National Forest Inventory of Myanmar as part of the NFMS system, and (3) to familiarize key stakeholders in Myanmar with concepts and approaches for NFMS systems able to fulfill the increasing reporting and monitoring requirements about forests.

The workshop was attended by more than fifty participants from different government institutions, NGOs and universities. Resource persons from Gottingen University and Forest Inventory and Remote Sensing Institute of Germany and from Bogor Agriculture University of Indonesia as well as the UN-REDD Programme in Myanmar and Bangkok were present.

During the workshop the information needs the NFMS should cover in Myanmar were discussed as well as options for data collection approaches and design alternatives to develop a system able to respond to decision-making and reporting purposes for REDD+ and other forest-related policy issues.

The NFMS design workshop followed the first national workshop on Forest Reference Emission Levels (FRELS) for REDD+, held in Naypyitaw on 21 and 22 of July, 2015.

The workshop was organized as a guided dialogue meeting for FRELS discussions among resource persons, experts and stakeholders from concerned government departments, RECOFTC, the University of Forestry, the Yezin Agricultural University and development partners such as FAO, UNDP, UNOPS, the Korea Forest Service and several NGOs implementing forest-related programmes including WCS, FRED, Eco-Dev, Point.
Open Foris Collect Earth Training

By FAO in Myanmar

Forest Department of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) jointly conducted Open Foris Collect Earth training at the Hotel Max in Naypyitaw in Myanmar from 30 September to 2 of October.

A total of 20 participants attended three-day training. And the training began with an overview on the Open Foris software suite with its five key components which can accompany the whole cycle of national forest inventory and monitoring work from the planning phase through data collection, data processing, analysis and production of reports for both field data and remote sensing data.

The training was organized through alternating slots of presentations and practical exercises with interactive dynamics of questions and answers between trainers and participants.

The objectives of the training were:

**Refresher of REDD+ Purpose and Activities**

Not all participants were fully aware of the purpose of REDD+ and tools to monitor land cover and land cover change. National forest inventories and the process of measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) as part of the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) have to be implemented.

**Demonstrate Techniques to Create Land-Use Change Statistics through Collect Earth**

Collect Earth in connection with all analysis tools is a new development which is fully implemented in other countries. One purpose of the workshop was to provide hands-on training and experience so that data collection does not require the purchase of satellite images data, does not need expensive remote sensing or GIS software, is statistically sound and – compared to other methods – very fast.

**Show the Potential and Use of a National Forest Monitoring Portal**

It is essential that the participants realise the benefit of a national portal to create transparency for their own data. It is expected that this will initiate the use of the portal by the country.

**Identify the Current Praxis of Land-Use Monitoring in the Country**

The land-cover classes, especially forest, are currently not officially defined and it is important to review the forest classification from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) perspective.

It is also important to know which current methods are used to map land use as it is good practice to build on available methods. The workshop participants were active GIS officers so they could answer questions regarding current mapping practice.

**Demonstrate Country Spatial Data infrastructure**

Information and data is often lost or misplaced. The workshop showed how to store data in a structured way, how to save data and how to carry out data inventories.

The workshop aims to convince the participants to keep a safe copy in the National Forest/Land Use Monitoring Centre and to share data.

**Show Advantage of Open Source Software**

One purpose was to demonstrate through hands-on training that Open Source software can fully cover the demand of land-cover mapping and monitoring.

The target audience was the technical forest officers who are involved in forest and land use mapping in Myanmar. They should have some GIS experience.

The use of Open Foris (Collect Earth) software can be an alternative for forest-cover changes and land-use changes and it can also be useful for assessing carbon stocks. This software can be one of the most important tools for NFMS.
Friends of Wildlife conducted REDD+ initiatives in Bago and Kachin regions

By Friends of Wildlife

In collaboration with the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), Friends of Wildlife (FoW) organization conducted REDD+ awareness raising activities in two project sites, Paukkhaung township of Bago Division, and Inndawgyi village track of Mohnyin township in Kachin State in June and August, 2015 respectively.

The FoW engaged its core staff and trained participants from sub-national level Training of Trainers (TOT) and community level training programs in the identified project sites to organize a series of education and awareness raising events for the villagers in the project area.

A variety of participatory communication tools and techniques, including participatory resource appraisals, working group discussions and public talks, were used in the events held in 15 villages of Paukkhaung township in June 2015 and 15 villages of Inndawgyi village track of Mohnyin township in August, 2015.

The education and awareness raising events came after a series of FoW’s REDD+ initiatives in Bago and Kachin regions.

The FoW also organized the following events in 2015 such as:

Initial meeting / Inception Workshop: Organized by FoW with officials from the Forest Department and relevant representatives from related departments, line agencies and authorities of communities in Paukkhaung and Inndawgyi townships in May 2015.

Sub-national Level Training of Trainers (TOT): Delivered in each township in May 2015 to build the understanding and capacity of local stakeholders through adult learning techniques on technical and social aspects of REDD+ and climate change.

Community Level Training: FoW organized community level training programs for grassroots level facilitators in Paukkhaung and Inndawgyi in May, June and July 2015. The facilitation of community level training programs involves trainers from the ToT program to give them an opportunity to practice their knowledge.

Consultation meetings (CM): To date, eight meetings have been organized to allow grassroots stakeholders air concerns about REDD+ and climate change. The results of the meetings will inform the ongoing process about REDD+ policy formulation in Myanmar.

The Beautiful Scenery in Kayah Region – Myanmar has significantly potential to reduce its forest carbon emissions, and enhance and sustainably manage its carbon stocks, by implementing REDD+ activities. Pic: Myo Thein
What is REDD+?

By Peter Iversen, UN-REDD Start-up Advisor

REDD+ is an acronym for a very long title for an initiative under the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change aimed at mitigating climate change.

The full title for REDD+ is: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), and conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

REDD+ is an initiative for developing countries that voluntarily decide to participate, can receive payments from international sources such as the Green Climate Fund for reducing emissions from the forestry sector.

This can be done by reducing deforestation or forest degradation, by the sustainable management of forests, by conserving the forest carbon through restoration of degraded forests and establishment of new forests.

All these activities will mitigate climate change by either reducing emissions or by enhancing removals of greenhouse gases.

Emissions happen when the carbon stored in forests is released as CO₂, e.g. due to forest clearing and removals happen when trees grow and absorb CO₂ from the air.

CO₂ is the most important greenhouse gas and the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has increased significantly over recent decades causing climate change.

This is both due to the burning of fossil fuels and due to the continued conversion of forests into other land uses.

Parties to the UNFCCC including Myanmar have agreed on rules and guidance for how countries can participate in REDD+ and be eligible for results-based payments.

How exactly countries will reduce emissions and enhance removals of greenhouse gases is up to countries and will depend on what underlying causes are driving the deforestation and forest degradation and what the country thinks is feasible in terms of policies and measures according to national circumstances. In some cases it can be interventions within the forest such as community forestry, reduced logging, restoration of degraded forests but it will most likely also include interventions outside the forest sector in particular land-use planning processes.

By enforcing existing rules and regulations and providing alternative livelihood opportunities for forest dependent families, many countries find that it is possible to reduce the pressure on the forests while also pursuing sustainable development goals of the country. And more careful considerations will be needed for the protection of forest areas during the planning process, for example, for infrastructure development or agriculture expansion.

REDD+ in Myanmar

Myanmar has developed in 2013 a REDD+ Readiness Roadmap, which is now under implementation, supported by a number of programmes including the UN-REDD Programme.

Through the implementation of the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap Myanmar will build the institutional capacity, analyze the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and develop the four design elements required to receive results-based payments under REDD+. These include a national REDD+ strategy, national system to monitor forests, and report on results, a Forest Reference Level, and a Safeguards Information System.

The Five REDD+ Activities:

- Reducing emissions from deforestation
- Reducing emissions from forest degradation
- Conservation of forest carbon stocks
- Sustainable Management of Forests
- Enhancement of forest carbon stocks
The National UN-REDD Programme in Myanmar

Myanmar became a partner country of the UN-REDD Programme in December 2011 and has quickly taken steps to start implementing REDD+ readiness activities. The UN-REDD National Programme will support REDD+ “Readiness” activities through bodies established by the Government of Myanmar with responsibilities for REDD+ Readiness, specifically the Myanmar REDD+ Taskforce, the Technical Working Groups, and the REDD+ Office, which is expected to be established soon.

A “REDD+ Readiness Roadmap”, setting out how Myanmar will implement its REDD+ Readiness activities, was approved by the Government of Myanmar in July 2013. It was prepared with participation from the UN-REDD Programme and other relevant stakeholder groups. The implementation of the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap constitutes the initial stage of the REDD+ process which is divided into three phases:

1. Phase 1: Preparation (“Readiness”) - Development of national strategies or action plans, policies and measures, and capacity-building

2. Phase 2: Implementation/Results-based Demonstrations - Implementation of national policies and measures and national strategies or action plans that could involve further capacity-building, technology development and transfer and results-based demonstration activities

3. Phase 3: Full implementation with Reporting and Verification - Results-based actions that should be fully measured, reported and verified

The Myanmar REDD+ Roadmap is divided into six components:

- Management of REDD+ Readiness Arrangements
- Stakeholder Consultation and Participation
- Development and Selection of REDD+ strategies
- Implementation Framework and Safeguards
- Development of a National Reference Level and/or Reference Emissions Level
- Development of a National Forest Monitoring System

The total budget calculated for implementation of these six components is US$ 23,320,650 (including administrative costs). Some initial support to the implementation of the Roadmap was provided through “Targeted Support” during 2014–2015. In early 2015, Myanmar was invited to submit an Expression of Interest for a full UN-REDD National Programme, and subsequently was approved by the UN-REDD Policy Board (PB) during its 14th meeting. A proposal for funding of a full UN-REDD National Programme was approved at the 15th meeting of the PB, in November 2015, with a budget of US$ 5.5 million.

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