Consultation Meeting on Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines for REDD+

By Min Soe, Stakeholder Engagement Officer

The National Consultation Meeting on Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines for REDD+ Myanmar was attended by 17 representatives from government agencies and two representatives from NGOs on 19 May 2016 in Naypyitaw.

From 12 to 17 May 2016, the Myanmar UN-REDD National Programme met with 14 stakeholder groups representing women, youth, Ethnic Nationalities, private sector and environment in Yangon to learn from their experiences in engaging with stakeholders.

The objectives of the meetings were to: 1) discuss key aspects of stakeholder engagement in REDD+ taking into account both the international requirements (UNFCCC) and national experience in order to make the REDD+ process in Myanmar as inclusive, participatory and transparent as possible; 2) ensure that the stakeholder engagement mechanisms to be developed based on the guidelines adhere to the principles of participatory governance and decision making; and 3) discuss and differentiate if and when consent is required, and how provisions should be made to ensure consent can be freely given or withheld.

The Programme, assisted by an international consultant, Mr. Lawrence Lachmansigh, presented the draft structure of the guidelines and key elements to be developed for stakeholder engagement in REDD+ in Myanmar.

The guidelines are expected to provide practical and operational guidance for those in charge of designing and steering the participation of all relevant stakeholders in all phases of REDD+ and beyond in the country.

During the meeting, participants were divided into five groups: a) forest-dependent communities; b) private sector; c) women and youth; d) sub-national government; and e) self-administered area. Participants discussed the major obstacles to the effective participation in REDD+ development and implementation and suggested options for overcoming these obstacles.

Cultural constraints, language barriers owing to the diverse ethnic groups, insufficient information sharing, lack of engagement mechanism and trust building among the stakeholders are the main obstacles in the engagement process.

Among the many ways to overcome some of these obstacles are to analyse and better understand the interests of each stakeholder group; develop a clear communication strategy for targeted stakeholders; develop a clear communication and feedback channel; and ensure legitimate representation of affected local communities.
Save Forests to Sustain Water Resources

By Dr. Thaung Naing Oo, Director for Forest Research Institute

According to the theme of the 2016 International Day of Forests, “Forests and Water”, more efforts should be devoted to improving the management of watersheds and wetlands in Myanmar, from the northernmost Hkakabo Razi mountain range to the southernmost Thanithayi coastal area, from the Shan mountains in the east to the Chin and Rakhine mountains, and from Bago to the Ayeyarwaddy delta area and the dry zone.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) has been implementing the 30-year National Forest Master Plan (2001-2031) for sustainable management of forest and biodiversity in forest reserves, protected public forest and natural reserved forests. In addition, reforestation has also been carried out in deforested areas.

According to the Master Plan, the permanent forest estate covers around 41.3 million acres, or 24.79 percent of the country area.

The protected natural forest area amounts to over 9.6 million acres, or 5.75 percent of the country area.

In the future, the permanent forest estate is to reach 30 percent of the country area, and the protected natural forest area will be extended by up to 10 percent.

At the same time, the quality of the forests will be improved. As one of the community-centered work plans, community forests now cover around 300,000 acres.

According to Master Plan, forests under this category are to be expanded to more than 2 million acres by 2030.

The watershed forest areas of Ayeyarwaddy, Chindwin, Thanlwin, Sittaung rivers, inland lakes like Inntawgyi and Inle, dams, streams and lakes will also be managed sustainably.

Some 2.18 million acres of forests have been established in collaboration with the private sectors and local communities through sustainable forest management, and establishment of forest plantations. Planting trees outside forests is also being encouraged.

Sustainable forest management requires the coordination among relevant stakeholders, beyond the forest sector, and public participation.

Effective policies and their implementation, law enforcement, and political commitment are also needed to enhance the management of Myanmar’s watersheds and wetlands.

We have to plant millions of trees and conserve our forests to maintain water resources and green environments all over the country and enhance environmental services for the benefit of all.

For us, for our future generations, for our environment and earth, for the living world, for the sustainability of water resources, we all have to collaborate, in honour of the “International Day of Forest”, on 21 March 2016.
The Myanmar National Forest Policy was developed and announced in 1995, in accordance with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Forest Principles, with inclusions of addressing people’s needs, participation and awareness. The 30-year National Forest Master Plan (2001-2031) for sustainable management of forest and biodiversity is already underway.

The Forest Department is also implementing the 10-year plan for district forest management in 68 districts as a long-term plan in accordance with existing circumstances including current forest cover, forest resources and present situations.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) organized a workshop on sustainability of forest resources in Yangon on 14 and 15 May 2016.

The objectives of the workshop were to discuss about different logging plans in accordance with forest management plans, to increase production of value-added forest products, to campaign anti-corruptions, and to fight against illegal logging and trafficking of forest products.

The workshop was held with the participation of 235 representatives from MONREC, relevant departments under the Ministry, respective Ministries, Non-government Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and special guests, forest-based entrepreneurs and media.

“The extraction of natural resources, for social, economic and development purposes, should be aligned with sustainable management of resources to inherit for future generations by avoiding doing harms. Despite efforts being made for conservation of forest resources, to fight against illegal logging, bribery and corruptions against the law, rules and regulations, Myanmar has been ranked as the third-worst for deforestation. Thus, it is one of the reasons why the workshop on Sustainability of Forest Resources is being held,” said the Union Minister U Ohn Win from MONREC.

On the first day of the workshop, questions and answers sessions took place after the respective presentations by Deputy General Director U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin for Forest Department (Policy/Planning), Manager U Nay San Linn for Myanma Timber Enterprise, General Manager U Winn Naing for Wood-based Industry Department of Myanma Timber Enterprise, Patron U Thein Win for Myanmar Wood-based Entrepreneurs Association, U Kyaw Thu for Myanmar Rattan and Bamboo Entrepreneurs Association, Deputy Director U Kyaw Zayya for Forest Department (Inspection) and Director U Myo Min for Forest Department (Natural Forest and Plantation).

On the second day of the workshop, discussions were held in respective groups for 1) potential ways to resolve issues concerning trafficking of forest resources and released regulations for anti-corruption, 2) the pros and cons of suspension or reduction of logging for sustainability of forest resources, 3) ways to increase production of value-added products in wood-based industry for sustainability of forest resources.

With local and international support, projects for improvements will be implemented in accordance with consultations from various aspects and results from the workshops for sustainable management of forest resources.
ADB and MONREC prepare project to enhance ecosystem services in Central Dry Zone

By Aung Kyi, Communications Officer for REDD+ Myanmar

Asia Development Bank’s Senior Environment Specialist, International Consultant Mr. Arunkumar Abraham, visited Myanmar in May to work with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) and other stakeholder agencies in preparing for the project on “Rural Productivity and Ecosystems Services Enhanced in Central Dry Zone Forest Reserves”.

ADB’s international consultant met Forest Department’s senior officials on 24 May 2016. Pic: Forest Department

The project will be funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with MONREC as Executing Partner, particularly the Dry Zone Greening Department (DZGD), Forest Department and Environmental Conservation Department. In addition, an ADB loan will co-finance the “Irrigated Agriculture for Inclusive Development Project”, which will be implemented by the Irrigation Department in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

“The project is important because it will address water stress in parts of Myanmar, which has led to serious food and nutritional security issues,” Mr. Abraham stated, “where 43 percent of people live below the poverty line.”

Mr. Abraham also met with the UN-REDD Programme technical team on 24 May, to learn more about how the GEF project might coordinate with the REDD+ preparation activities. It was agreed that the GEF project would ensure continued participation of the DZGD in REDD+ readiness activities and seek advice from the UN-REDD Programme team on development of a sub-national GHG inventory for the Central Dry Zone (CDZ). It is hoped that this would form part of the national forest inventory.

“Given the challenges with data collection, validation and management, it will be important to encourage cooperation and coordination across the various donor-funded initiatives,” said Mr. Abraham.

The overall objective of the GEF project is to enhance rural productivity and ecosystems services in the CDZ forest reserves through integrated natural resource management. The project aims to address severe agro-climatic conditions like intense drought and extreme temperatures, unsustainable land- and water-use patterns, a number of overlapping mandates and institutional barriers across government agencies, governance challenges and threats to biodiversity. Preparation of the detailed technical and financial GEF proposal, called a Request for CEO Endorsement, is expected to be completed in late July. In addition to government departments, consultations will also be undertaken with village leaders, community stakeholders, international and domestic NGOs and various multilateral and bilateral donors.

The main project site will be the Mae Nyo Taung forest reserve, based in Meikhtila district of Mandalay region. It will cover about 5,500 hectares (13,591 acres), with 3,900 households in surrounding villages covering an additional 5,000 hectares.

Work at this site will focus on developing and testing approaches to integrated soil and water conservation, mainstreaming biodiversity into forest management plans and sustainable forest management on 750 hectares of afforestation and 1,000 hectares under natural regeneration. After the development and testing phase in the forest reserve, the project will scale up the suite of training and capacity development packages across five to seven other forest reserves and permanent public forests in the CDZ, covering about 50,000 hectares.

A forest reserve area in Meikhtila district of Mandalay region, Pic: Aung Kyi—Forest Reserves (FRs) are zoned in order to manage village fuel wood supply and non-timber forest products for surrounding communities, as well as identify areas for conservation. There are 23 FRs in the CDZ covering about 920,000 hectares. A key priority will be to strengthen forest management planning and implementation. The GEF Project will contribute to: a) increased availability of water and improved soil moisture retention to support multiple cropping; b) avoided greenhouse gas emissions; c) reduced vulnerability of agro-ecosystems and forest ecosystems to climate change and other human-induced impacts; d) improved management of dryland biodiversity by making this central in water- and land-use planning; e) more effective gender mainstreaming; and f) policy-related discussions on land and water use.
Forest Department and RECOFTC Myanmar workshops and training

By RECOFTC Myanmar

Community-Based Forestry Reflection Workshop

A reflection workshop on Community-Based Forestry Assessment Framework was jointly organized by the Forest Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) and the Center for People and Forests - RECOFTC Myanmar in Naypyitaw on 13 May.

Some twenty participants from the Forest Department, Civil Society Organizations and RECOFTC attended the workshop. This workshop built on a series of meetings carried out jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and RECOFTC on community-based forestry assessment.

The workshop in May followed a three-day training on Community-Based Forestry (CBF) carried out in February 2016. Participants of the training were requested to carry out assessments at their respective duty stations by using FAO’s assessment formats. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the assessment results.

The objectives of the CBF Reflection Workshop were to collect feedback on the practical application of CBF assessment tools based on the field testing, to identify practical options to use the data and information at township, state/region and national levels, and to document the learning from the field testing for future improvements.

Training on Communication Skills for Community Forestry

With the support of the Norwegian Embassy in Myanmar, a training on communication skills for community forestry was jointly organized by the Forest Department and RECOFTC in Naypyitaw from 10 to 12 May.

As part of RECOFTC Myanmar’s Scaling Up Community Forestry Project (SUComFor), the objectives of the training were to: 1) provide an understanding of basic strategic communication concepts; 2) develop a basic communication strategy aimed at raising stakeholder awareness on issues being addressed by SUComFor; 3) and understand the steps involved in producing communication materials.

Grassroots Capacity Building

RECOFTC’s Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ Project” in Myanmar, will be completed by the end of June 2016.

Experiences from and lessons learned during the project implementation were shared at the workshop, “Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ and Results Sharing on Implemented Project” organized in Naypyitaw on 31 May 2016. Some 50 participants actively participated in the discussions on potential ways of support for future REDD+ implementation.

With the Forest Department’s technical support, RECOFTC has been implementing the project with its partners in different regions, including with the Wildlife Conservation Society in Layshee and Khantee township of Sagaing region, with the Friends of Wildlife in Yateshe and Pauk Khaung townships of Bago Region, and with the Forest Resource Environment and Development Association in Bogalay and Phyarpon townships of Ayeyarwaddy Region.
What is causing the forest loss in Myanmar?

By Keiko Nomura, UNEP Regional Officer

The Cancun Agreements of 2010 requested “developing country Parties, when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plans, to address, inter alia, drivers of deforestation and forest degradation”.

Without a clear understanding of the direct and indirect drivers, it is obvious that it will be impossible to develop and implement REDD+ policies and measures effectively.

In recent years, several studies have been undertaken to look into what is causing deforestation and forest degradation in Myanmar. Among those are 1) “Legally and Illegally Logged out,” 2) “Achieving Environmental Sustainability in Myanmar,” and 3) “Drivers of Forest Change in the Greater Mekong Subregion, Myanmar Country Report”.

While these studies have provided valuable insights, the focus was predominantly on the past and present. But the future of Myanmar’s landscapes will not be like its past. The UN-REDD Programme has therefore initiated a new study to fill the gap by trying to understand and build a consensus on the potential future conditions of and underlying pressures on the forests.

Between 16 and 24 May, a series of meetings were held in Yangon and Naypyitaw to collect information and views for the study. The study team, consisting of Phyu Phyu San, Gabrielle Kissinger and Keiko Nomura, was able to discuss with representatives of 14 line ministries and 11 CSOs, who shared their insights on current and future drivers. The short- and long-term plans of relevant sectors of the economy (e.g. agriculture, mining, export and hydropower) were obtained along with their strategies, policies and targets. During the same period, various ministries presented their 100-day plans to the media.

One of the key questions for the study was how integrated land-use planning and decision making can be refined and implemented under the new government. It is essential for Myanmar’s forest sector to find compatibility and reduce conflict with other sectors. The future land law and the new committee on land resource management hold great potential to address the natural resource governance challenges. Yet, expectations are high to deliver development outcomes, including the need to meet urban and rural energy demand and achieve better crop yields in agriculture.

The 2nd TWG meeting on Drivers and Strategy Development held in Naypyitaw on 4 April 2016, Pic: Aung Kyi

The findings from the meetings will be shared with the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Strategies and Drivers. The TWG will then further discuss with stakeholders the data and information related to drivers for the study. The final report, expected to be completed in August, will be a critical input for the development of Myanmar’s national REDD+ strategy.

3) “Drivers of Forest Change in the Greater Mekong Subregion, Myanmar Country Report”:
Shedding some light on safeguards in REDD+

By Thomas Enters and Steve Swan (UNEP)

In 2010, Parties to the UNFCCC agreed on seven broad principles constituting a set of safeguards for REDD+, which are known as the ‘Cancun safeguards’.

The term “safeguard” is frequently poorly understood and the English term, quite often, does not have an equivalent in other languages.

Safeguards are generally understood as measures taken to protect someone or something or to prevent something undesirable.

In the REDD+ context, safeguards refer to technical or policy measures put in place to avoid, mitigate and manage potentially adverse social and environmental impacts, and enhance potential social and environmental benefits, arising from a specific REDD+ action.

The Cancun safeguards, like other safeguards, help to ensure that REDD+ actions ‘do no harm’ to people or the environment, but, unlike other safeguards they also aim to ‘do good’ and enhance social and environmental benefits.

**Box 1: The Cancun safeguards**

“When undertaking [REDD+] activities, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:

a) Actions complements or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;

b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;

c) 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, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities;

e) That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the [REDD+] actions 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;

f) Actions to address the risks of reversals;

g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.”

*Source: UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I, paragraph 2*

Why do we need safeguards in REDD+? The answer is at least threefold. Safeguards are expected to:

- strengthen the quality and sustainability of REDD+ implementation;

- contribute to broader national development goals; and

- ensure confidence that REDD+ is delivering benefits and avoiding or minimizing risks.

To meet these expectations, reduce the risks, enhance the benefits and be eligible for results-based payments, Parties have agreed on the following safeguard requirements for REDD+ countries:

- Promote and support the Cancun Safeguards throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions;

- Develop a safeguard information system (SIS) to provide information on how the country is addressing and respecting the Cancun safeguards; and

- Provide summaries of information on how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected, to be submitted to the UNFCCC before results-based payments are made.

And here, we come across some other confusing terminology, i.e. safeguards should be “addressed” and “respected” in implementing REDD+ actions. Now what does this mean? The COP decisions do not provide a definition, but general working definitions have emerged around which there is growing consensus.

“Address” is understood to mean ensuring that a coherent body of policies, laws, regulations (PLRs), and associated institutional arrangements, are in place, on paper, to deal with the potential benefits and risks associated with REDD+ actions. “Respect” is understood to mean that these PLRs are effectively implemented and enforced, in practice, through relevant institutional capacities and effect real and positive outcomes on the ground.
REDD+ Knowledge

An SIS is generally recognized by REDD+ countries, donors and civil society alike as a domestic institutional arrangement, and sometimes technological solution (e.g. a web platform), built on existing information systems and sources. It is used to gather, compile and provide information as to how the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected. The UNFCCC provides some outline guidance on SIS, which includes, among other things, the requirements for these systems to: provide regularly updated information that is accessible to all stakeholders; be flexible to allow for improvements over time; be country driven and implemented at the national level; and build on existing systems as appropriate.

Many countries have identified that their SIS should meet national objectives first and foremost, in addition to UNFCCC requirements. Aligning SIS objectives with national policy agenda goals related to forest management, environment and sustainable development has been essential for a number of countries in their justification of SIS development and operational costs. The SIS is a national system that should provide the inputs for summaries of information.

Summaries of information are the means by which REDD+ countries will communicate internationally to the UNFCCC how they are addressing and respecting the safeguards throughout the implementation of REDD+ actions. Summaries are to be provided through National Communications to UNFCCC (every four years) or voluntarily at any time, via UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform (http://redd.unfccc.int/). The UNFCCC also provides guidance on contents of summaries of information as well as frequency and means of submission. By mid-2016, only Brazil had submitted a summary of information (http://redd.unfccc.int/submissions.html?topic=9), but a number of countries are preparing their first summaries for immanent submission.

The primary purpose of summaries of information is to ensure confidence in the international community, particularly those entities that might invest in REDD+ actions or make payments for results, that REDD+ is delivering benefits and avoiding or minimizing risks. This expectation of international financers, together with the domestic value of safeguards, is highlighted, for example, in Norway’s 2014 submission on the topic of summaries of information to the UNFCCC:

‘Being able to provide information on how these [Cancun] safeguards are addressed and respected will increase the confidence of the international community in REDD+ and thereby help attract long-term investments and payments for performance. Providing information on safeguards could in addition have an intrinsic value for developing country Parties by informing national policy making and strengthening the credibility of REDD+ among domestic constituents.’

This brief article on the Cancun safeguards and the UNFCCC safeguards requirements is not sufficient to provide an in-depth introduction to all matters related to safeguards. For the readers with an appetite for more information, we recommend to:

- Visit the UNFCCC REDD+ Web Platform and look up what you can find under the topic “Safeguards” (http://redd.unfccc.int/submissions.html?topic=9).
- Visit the UN-REDD Programme’s Collaborative Online Workspace page on safeguards (http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_unsubjects&view=unsubject&id=1&Itemid=491).

Myanmar REDD+ Programme
Dr. Thaung Naing Do, REDD+ Alternate Focal Point
Forest Research Institute, Yezin, Nay Pyi Taw
Phone: +95 067 416524 Fax: + 95 067 416521
E-mail: thaungnaingdo@myanmar-redd.org; tnoo71@gmail.com
Website: www.myanmar-redd.org

SUPPORTED BY UN-REDD NATIONAL PROGRAMME
Forest Research Institute, Yezin, Nay Pyi Taw
Phone: +95 9 440540159 / + 95 9 973600937
E-mail: reddprogramme@myanmar-redd.org; aung.kyi@undp.org