

MINUTES OF REGIONAL REDD+ STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: 12 Apr- 2017

Venue: Karnid, Hotel, Enjibara

Participants;

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| 1 | Dr. Belayneh Ayele | Director, Environment Forest and wildlife protection and Development Authority (EFWPDA) and Chairman |
| 2 | Ato Firdie Cheru | Head, Bureau of Justice |
| 3 | Ato Alemnew Alelign | Program Manager, Organization for Rehabilitation and Development of Amhara Region (ORDA), |
| 4 | Ato Abrham Mengesha | Deputy, Bureau of Water Irrigation and Energy (BoWIE) |
| 5 | Ato Tilahun Eshetie | Deputy, Bureau of Finance and Economic development |
| 6 | Ato Tesfaye Ashinie | Bureau of Rural Land Administration and Use (BoRLAU), delegate |
| 7 | Ato Sintayehu Deresse | ARCU Coordinator,Secretary |

Agenda;

The objective of the meeting is to evaluate the 9 months implementation status of the regional REDD+ readiness activities and discuss on the draft memorandum of understanding and comment the contents of the draft MOU before it is presented to the regional Steering committee for further comment or endorsement.

Following the registration and welcoming of the steering committee members , the Amhara Region REDD+ Coordination Unit (AARCU) coordinator has presented the status of the regional REDD+ implementation. The contents of presentation include;

- Brief background about why Forest become very important in the international climate agenda, evolution of REDD+, Ethiopia's REDD+ and the CRGE Strategy.
- Implementation status of REDD+ (Physical and financial)
- Problems faced during plan implementation and measures taken

- The way forward

After presentation of the AARCU's 9 months' implementation status, Dr. Belayneh Ayele, Chair of the steering committee, briefly highlighted the CRGE strategy and the forestry sector as one of the key sectors which are boldly mentioned in the strategy. He also added that atmosphere is connected and doing activities related to REDD+ will have a positive climate impact. Owing to the relevance of the forestry sector, government is expected to strive for forest development even in the absence of REDD+ incentives. Members of the Regional REDD+ Steering committee have then raised comments/suggestions and questions for clarity. Accordingly, the following are summary of the comments and questions raised by the steering committee members:

Comments/Suggestions:

- Forest development (afforestation and reforestation) demands suitable land following land use planning exercises and without land use regulation it will certainly be very difficult to implement forest development.
- Land allocation for afforestation/reforestation will be a critical assignment for the region in near future for REDD+ program to kick off implementation.
- It is very helpful to continuously aware/update political leaders about REDD+ issues.
- In the draft MoU, AARCU shall include; threats in implementing the MoU, monitoring and evaluation system to be followed and effective date when the MOU will be endorsed and implemented. In addition, under the responsibility of Universities and research institution, adoption of new technologies shall be added. The steering committee recommended that AARCU after making some editorials shall provide the draft MOU to the Bureau of Justice for further improvement (if any) by lawyers. In addition, it is recommended that Stakeholders' reporting time should be mentioned in the MoU.
- It is necessary to properly implement the MoU, because it is evident that working on the forestry sector has a tremendous impact in climate change mitigation. Hence, forest (REDD+) is about life and each country has responsibility to take climate actions.

- With regard to stakeholders' support to the regional REDD+ program, head Bureau of Justice confirmed that his bureau is willing to support Amhara REDD+ Coordination Unit (AARCU) and environment forest and wildlife protection and Development Authority (EFWPDA) in areas such as validation of legal/institutional study and law enforcement studies. He also reminded that demarcated and mapped forest lands have a positive impact while law enforcement. He then advised EFWPDA to work on Forest land demarcation and mapping.
- Report from stakeholder institutions shall be submitted to ARCU.
- REDD+, if possible, shall be translated into a very short Amharic equivalent.

Questions and Reaction

- Considering the importance of REDD+ (the forestry sector), why all members of the steering committee are not participating in the meeting?
 - **Reaction from AARCU:** *out of the steering committee members Bureau of Agriculture (BoA) and Bureau of Women and Children (BoWC) are not represented. Each of the steering committee members has been invited with formal letter, reminded by sending text messages and again they have been reminded in person by going to each offices. In this regard the ARCU coordinator reminded the RSC members that there have been many instances where it has been found difficult to get all members while they are invited by an institution of the same status. Hence, it entails that the chairmanship to the regional chief administrator so that all members of the steering committee shall be given to the regional chief administrator to get due emphasis to the REDD+ program as well as to the RSC meeting sessions. The idea of bringing the chairmanship to regional chief administrator level is agreed equivocally by all Regional steering committee members. It is also suggested that the Chief administrator can officially delegate the chairmanship by which he can chair the RSC meeting only when the schedule will be okay for him.*

- How to balance commercial forest development and utilization with the REDD+ program?
 - **Reaction from AARCU:** *REDD+ supports development of commercial plantation and one of the eligible activities of REDD+ is sustainable management of forests which entails, among others, that forest utilization should be based on management and utilization plans for it ensures sustainability.*

- Why the Bureau of land Administration and use is not yet vitalizing land use planning and land use regulation? how can it be possible to find land for afforestation/ reforestation?
 - **Reaction from BRLAU:** *landuse planning is a prerequisite to assign land for afforestation/reforestation. However, landuse regulation in the region is challenged by ambiguous articles of the regional land administration and use proclamation. This proclamation gives right to each landholder to use their landholding for either tree planting or crop cultivation or any other use unless the landuse is determined by landuse plan. In addition, Ato Tesfaye Ashinie, delegate of the head of Bureau Rural Land Administration and Use (BRLAU), mentioned that land use planning is not an easy task for it demands trained manpower and huge budget. He added that the bureau is finalizing amendment on the proclamation and that will help simplify the existing landuse regulation problems in the region. With regard to land availability for afforestation, Ato Tesfaye, mentioned that every piece of land in the region has a landholder. The landholder for such piece of land can be an individual (private), Community, State and common landholders as stipulated in the proclamation. Hence, land for afforestation can be made available following the recommendations of the landuse plan through agreement with the landholders.*

- Do the region has the capacity to know how much is the emission/removal from each sector?
 - **Reaction from AARCU:** *the region has not yet developed MRV capacity. This is one of the key areas where the National REDD+ Secretariat/MEFCC will work on building the capacity of regions.*

- Did AARCU undertake evaluation of trainees and workshop participants at field level after training?
 - **Reaction from AARCU:** *not yet done. However, ARCU will conduct such assessment at field level if the trainees and workshop participants have been benefited.*

- Coordination of stakeholders demands budget, a stakeholder which took responsibility also demands budget, how resources can be mobilized in the future?
 - **Reaction from AARCU:** *following annual plan approval processes, stakeholder institutions may be allocated with budget equivalent to the workload for which they will be responsible. It is also noted that stakeholder institutions are advised to do their regular assignments ahead of time using available resources. For instance, land use planning should be done ahead of time to ensure that REDD+ investment can be implemented without difficulty.*

- How can benefit sharing be effected?
 - **Reaction from AARCU:** *the benefits that will be earned out of the REDD+ mechanism will be apportioned as per a benefit sharing mechanism which will be prepared at national level and regions are expected to use/adopt the benefit sharing mechanism/guideline.*

Agreed points

- In conclusion, it is agreed that a minimum commitment expected from the Regional steering committee (RSC) members is to avail themselves in meetings and pass relevant decisions.
- There is no doubt that the lowland forests are at risk of deforestation. In this regard, EFWPDA has a plan to organize stakeholders' consultation workshop at Gondar.
- Institutional issues of the forestry sector should be sorted out and it is requested that the RSC is expected to assist in this regard.
- The steering committee recommended that AARCU after making some editorials, shall provide, the draft MOU to the Bureau of Justice for further improvement (if any) by lawyers.
- It is agreed that the regional chief administrator shall be the chairman of the steering committee to ensure stakeholder's coordination and vitalization of the MoU. The Chief administrator may delegate someone in his absence.
- The physical plan implementation and budget utilization is satisfactory.
- Finally, it is advised to bring the minutes of meeting during the next meeting to check if agreed points are respected.



Partial view of RSC members (photo by AARCU, 13 Apr-2017)