

**Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change**

**National REDD+ Secretariat**

**REDD+ Learning Network Meeting**

**Minutes of the Workshop on Functionalizing the REDD+ Learning Network**

**Participants List:** See Annex 1

**Date:** December 02/2016

**Place:** Adulala Resort Hotel, Bishoftu

**Time:** 9:00a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Agenda**

**Functionalizing Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network**

1. Presentation 1 - Progress update on Ethiopia's REDD+ readiness
2. Presentation 2 - REDD+ Learning Network: An Overview
3. Presentation 3 - Draft Terms of Reference for Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network
4. Presentation 4 - Potential List of Engagements of the REDD+ Learning Network
5. General discussion and the way forward

**Opening Remarks - On Workshop schedule**

Dr. Yitebitu Moges, Coordinator of the National REDD+ Secretariat, welcomed the participants and made a brief remark on the overall objectives of the REDD+ learning Network, the workshop agenda and activity schedule for the day (see Annex 2) and invited workshop participants to introduce themselves. He then took the floor and by way of background presented an overview on the progress of Ethiopia's REDD+ readiness implementation.

In his presentation, Dr Yitebitu highlighted the following

- Strategic importance of the forestry sector in the Ethiopian landscape

- The Status of the Global REDD+ Mechanism and the National REDD+ architecture
- The phases of national REDD+ program and the requirements of REDD+ readiness phase
- The objectives and outcomes of Ethiopia's REDD+ readiness process (achievements/status on readiness implementation: FRL; National Forest Inventory; REDD+ safeguards; REDD+ Strategy; MRV system establishment process)

Following Dr. Yitebitu's presentation the following issues/comments/questions were raised/forwarded to which Dr Yitebitu and others responded.

**Issues:** In relation to the REDD+ readiness process, its objectives/goals, achievements and phases of REDD+

**Question:** How transparent is the process of generating data in the REDD+ process? What is readiness in view of the existing weak institutional setup? Why it takes so long for the REDD+ process to produce real/tangible outputs on the ground?

**Response (s):** Ethiopia's REDD+ Readiness process started in January 2013 and we have been implementing readiness activities since then. We have to note that REDD+ as a mitigation scheme, is implemented in 3 inter-related phases (Readiness, implementation and result-based payment) and countries are required to graduate from one phase to the other.

The principal *goal* of a readiness phase is

- To put in place management arrangements (Federal to lower levels in our case regional) to implement Readiness activities;
- Engage all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of Readiness activities through an inclusive consultation and participation process
- Identify drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (DD) and prioritize strategic options;
- Analyze the existing legal & institutional framework, identify the gaps and recommend frameworks for successful REDD+ implementation

- Analysis of the strategic social and environmental safeguards (SESA) and develop associated environmental and social management framework (ESMF) for REDD+ implementation;
- Set the country's Forest Reference Level (FRL, emission/removal baseline) along with the establishment of a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) of which the MRV system is a part
- The development of a national REDD+ Strategy

Therefore, with regard to these activities, we have been successful in delivering results which will qualify Ethiopia to move to the next REDD+ phase (Implementation phase) where tangible, on-ground interventions to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (DD) will be implemented in the next few years. In relation to the existing weak institutional setup, the findings of technical studies that we commissioned in the last couple of years identified gaps in the legal and institutional framework that need to be addressed for successful REDD+ implementation in the next phase. Therefore, we should note that the readiness activities that we have been engaged in are largely preparatory in nature and make us ready to move to the next phase. In short, most of the measures (including direct interventions and legal and institutional arrangements) to curb drivers of DD will be implemented in the next phase.

Overall, Ethiopia's REDD+ program is at the closing phase of the first phase (REDD+ Readiness phase) and this is by comparison a quick implementation. We are now moving to investment phase (e.g. OFLP and REDD+ Investment Proposal to be supported by Norway).

**Issue:** In reference to the new national forest cover data (15.5%) generated by FAO/MEFCC, the following were raised:

**Question:** Does this forest cover gain reflect the reality on the ground? Will this not confuse the international community (developmental partners) as the CRGE document indicated that Ethiopia's forests have been under threat?

How can we achieve an increase in forest cover in the absence of crucial enabling factors like (e.g. land use plan, strong institutional setup, tenure security) and on-going deforestation (large scale agricultural investment, farm expansion into forest areas by the increasing rural population,

illegal logging, free grazing..)? What are the assumptions in the forest inventory and how transparent is the process?

**Response (s):**

*On the forest cover data:* The preparation of a forest-non-forest map was one of the activities undertaken with the technical support from FAO. Based on this map, Ethiopia's Forest cover estimate is at about 15.5%. The preparation of this map took into account the new forest definition of 0.5 ha area, a tree height of 2m and 20% canopy cover. This forest definition is different from what has been used previously (definition used for Kyoto Protocol and the definition in WBISP). In fact, this new definition allows the inclusion of vast areas of dense woodlands of the country as forest resources (that leads to increased economic, social and environmental benefits from sustainable management of vast forest areas) as noted in Ethiopia's Forest Reference Level submission to the UNFCCC in January 2016.

*On the on-going deforestation:* I do agree with you in that deforestation is still a problem and the findings of our technical studies indicated that Ethiopia's forest sector is a net emitter with close to 92,000ha of forest being lost every year (gross deforestation). However, there are also efforts which resulted in rehabilitating 20,000 ha of degraded areas through area closure or A/R activities every year, but still the rate of deforestation (loss) far exceeds the forest gain. Thus, there is an on-going deforestation which we plan to curb (as outlined in our draft National REDD+ Strategy) through a diversity of interventions (targeted and enabling).

A forest cover of 15.5% does not mean that there is an increase in forest cover. Indeed, we are still losing natural forests by a factor of four. Further, it is not easy to compare forest statistics from the past with the new ones as the methodologies and the definition of forest might not be the same, and in some cases the methods and authors of the statistics are not clearly identified. MEFCC has now generated several baseline forest data for the forest sector using methodologies of international standards.

*On the drivers of DD and lack of enabling environment:* Yes, it is true that a range of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are currently in play across the country (including absence

of land use plan, forest tenure). The strategic interventions to address these drivers are well articulated in the draft national REDD+ strategy where both direct interventions (physical investment) and measures on improving enabling environment are planned to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. Among these, putting in place a national land use policy is one important step in addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Moreover, all the existing drivers of deforestation, which you all noted, were identified in the national assessment/technical study made recently and the plan is to address all these in the next phase of REDD+ (Implementation phase). In fact, it should be noted that efforts are made in recent years to re-institute forestry institutions in different regions.

**Questions:** What is scope of the ‘+’ in the REDD+? What is the role of this Network in ratifying the forest cover data? It appears that there is a huge gap in coordination between the different government actors (line ministries at all levels). How can you ensure that the planning at the Ministry of Agriculture (e.g. say expansion of agricultural land) does not contradict with the MEFCC’s plan of rescuing the remaining forests? What is the National REDD+ Secretariat’s plan in creating an effective coordination among the different initiatives?

**Response:** On the first question on what the scope of the ‘+’ sign in REDD+ is, it stands for three eligible activities, namely, *Conservation of forests*, *Sustainable management of forests* and *Enhancing forest carbon stocks* through activities like A/R.

On the second question, this REDD+ Learning Network is a platform where actors working on participatory forests management and forest carbon projects and other relevant interventions review lessons, identify best practices and provide guidance on the overall REDD+ process (readiness, implementation) to promote evidence-based interventions for better results. One major activity of the Network is information exchange and creates an environment for scientific deliberation. Therefore, the discussion we are engaged in (with regard to the forest cover data) is in line with the Network’s objectives and the Network is entitled to comment and provide recommendations on the process.

In relation to stakeholder coordination, I acknowledge the existing challenges in realizing effective coordination in addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as well as restoration of lost forests. In this regard, the fact that REDD+ is a key abatement lever in the CRGE strategy and the presence of a CRGE inter-ministerial committee that monitors the proper implementation of planned interventions across sectors is one key mechanism to ensure sectoral coordination to realize the CRGE goals. On top of that, a Federal REDD+ Steering Committee (FRSC) drawn from all relevant sectors (including agriculture) oversees the REDD+ program implementation.

On the other hand, following the technical studies on drivers of deforestation and gaps on legal and institutional arrangement for REDD+ implementation, an institutional and implementation arrangement is recommended in the draft National REDD+ Strategy which will greatly improve coordination among stakeholders.

### **Presentation 2 - REDD+ Learning Network: Overview (Dr Solomon Z)**

The second presentation was an *Overview of the REDD+ Learning Network*. Dr Solomon Zewdie provided an overview of the following

- The concept of Networks, their nature, role and the feature of an effective Network
- How Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network was envisaged? (its origin being Ethiopia's R-PP)
- The process in the course of initiating Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network
- The first consultative workshop conducted to lay the ground for the establishment of Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network
- The REDD+ Learning Network launching workshop in August 2015 and issues discussed, decisions and guidance made during the launching workshop

In a nut shell, Dr Solomon's presentation provided the nature of Learning Networks, on how to create effective learning networks, the background for the establishment of Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network as stated in the R-PP and the major objectives of the Learning network. He reiterated that the same presentation was done during the Establishment workshop back in August 2015. Dr Solomon's presentation was followed by a third presentation by Ato Tsegaye Tadesse. His presentation outlined the elements of the *Draft Terms of Reference for the REDD+ Learning Network*. The drafting of the Terms of Reference (he noted) was prepared by an ad-hoc (consists of 5 organizations: MEFCCC, HoAREC & N,

EWNRA, GGGI and FARM Africa) as per the guidance provided by the Network members during the Establishment workshop back in August 2015.

### **3. Presentation 3 - Draft Terms of Reference for the REDD+ Learning Network (Ato Tsegaye Tadesse)**

Ato Tsegaye highlighted the following with regard to the draft ToR

- The Objectives of Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network
- Goals of the Network
- Tasks of the Network
- Memberships and Duties
- Partners of the Network
- Working Modalities

Ato Tsegaye's presentation was followed by a fourth presentation on *Functionalizing Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network* which describes the potential list of engagements of the Learning Network.

### **Presentation 4 - Potential List of engagements of the REDD+ Learning Network (Dr Solomon Z)**

Dr Solomon Zewdie explained that a draft document on the potential engagements of the REDD+ Learning Network was drafted by the ad hoc as per the decisions of the launching workshop. He briefed the forum on the process of drafting the potential activities and the major areas of engagement. In his presentation, Dr Solomon explained that in functionalizing the Learning Network the forum may consider the following 7 areas of engagement (a proposal open for discussion) and may also think more areas of engagement.

- Develop a forum of information sharing
- Enabling integrated learning and capacity building
- Develop best practice manuals/guidelines in the area of REDD+ implementation
- Joint analysis of key REDD+ challenges
- Stimulate sharing of lessons/experiences from Ethiopia's REDD+ process
- Provide an advocacy function bridging sub-national level practitioners and national level decision makers.
- Knowledge management and communications

The presentations were followed by a discussion session during which participants forwarded comments and questions.

**Comments/questions:** What are the working modalities for the different actors in the Learning Network? What will be the role of NGOs/CSOs and the level of independence?

**Response:** The issue of working modality and actors' role in the Network is well outlined in the presentation and the objective of today's meeting is to comment on the *draft Terms of Reference of the Learning Network.*, which includes roles and responsibilities of actors.

**Comment:** The Learning Network can also serve as a coordination platform and thus should include other actors/partners such as Donors, World Bank (WB), DFID and other NGOs.

**Response:** The inclusion of Donors and other partners like the WB or Norway Embassy in the Network is acceptable as different categories of membership for different actors is proposed in the draft ToR.

**Comment:** The need to establish a data base for data stock-taking so that data can be managed and made available for users requires knowledge and effort. We should in fact take lessons from existing organizations for successful knowledge/data base management of the learning network. On the other hand, the Terms of Reference indicated that its life time is undefined but this need to be defined. A third but related to my second point is on the question of when the national REDD+ implementation will start? I think the Learning Network may continue supporting the process of REDD+ implementation beyond readiness

**Response:** The comment on the need for best practice on data management is valid and will be considered. On the issue of defining the life time of the Network, we have discussed the issue during the launching workshop (August 2015, see minutes) in length. It was noted that the Network is a voluntary association among member organizations and the fact that most of the member NGOs/CSOs have a defined lifetime (in essence tied up with the project's lifetime) will force us not to attach a definite time for the Network's life period. On the other hand, although the learning network is envisaged in the R-PP, it can serve its purpose beyond the readiness phase (implementation phase and beyond as long as it continues to serve its purpose). It is planned that the national REDD+ implementation will start sometime in 2017.

**Comment:** REDD+ is becoming a government program and the engagement of NGOs/CSOs working in the area is decreasing. With such a prospect, how NGOs/CSOs are expected to generate lessons and support the national REDD+ process. The mechanism to improve the engagement of these actors in REDD+ should be clarified.

**Response:** The prospect that the role of the government in REDD+ program will increase does not necessarily reduce the role of the non-governmental actors. The role of these actors will be crucial in the implementation phase and some of their roles is outlined in the draft REDD+ strategy. On a different angle, the network should be viewed as a learning ground for all actors (not only for the government) and is a platform for a continuous engagement of actors to deal with challenges and come up with solutions and advance successful REDD+ implementation and related endeavors.

**Comment:** First, the name of the Network should reflect its inclusiveness and I propose '*National Forest Network*' even an appropriate term for network should be '*platform*'. Second, the Network should have a management body (say a management committee) which should be represented in the National REDD+ Steering Committee (Federal REDD+ Steering Committee) so that it can reflect the Network's views and provide practical guidance for the national REDD+ program. Third, the Learning Network should have an activity plan along with the budget required for its implementation. Fourth, the Network goal should clearly indicate the benefit that can be obtained from the Network. Fifth, the government should clearly indicate in its REDD+ strategy the role of Civil Societies in supporting the REDD+ implementation.

**Response:**

With regard to the name of the Network, the forum (during the launching or Establishment workshop) deliberated on the issue in length and attempted to look into the pros and cons of different proposed names. The forum finally decided that the name of the network should be '**REDD+ Learning Network**' (see minutes of the establishment workshop). Indeed, REDD+ is more than just forest and this naming might accommodate more stakeholders. It is also a recommendation from R-PP and having the label 'REDD+' is appropriate for domestic stakeholders as well as our development partners who are keen to support the REDD+ program.

The comment that the Learning Network should be represented in the Federal REDD+ Steering Committee is acceptable.

The activity plan and budget should be worked out. However, we need to reach agreement first on the potential engagements of the Network (presentation 4) and also on the mechanisms to generate the financial sources including the role of member organizations in providing financial contributions.

On the issue of benefits of members from the Networking is, in fact, clearly indicated in the objectives of the draft Terms of Reference. We have to reiterate that the association should be viewed as an engagement of actors for a common good and where members of the network shall benefit from the

association in terms of shared knowledge and in return contribute their share as appropriate. and in turn contribute their share as appropriate.

On the role of Civil Societies in REDD+ implementation (as we noted earlier) is mentioned in the draft REDD+ strategy. However, as the draft strategy is going to be consulted with all relevant stakeholders in the coming few months, CSOs/NGOs will provide their feedbacks on how to make their engagement more meaningful.

**Comment/question:** First, among the list of engagements, the activity on *Joint Analysis of key REDD+ Challenges* should include land management/policy, biosphere reserve, PFM etc... Second, the Network can also serve as a consultative forum for other sectoral ministries as the need arises. Third, the management of the Network, as an independent body, should be thoroughly discussed and its independence should be ensured.

**Comment/question:** The activity (among the list of engagements) related to 'Gap Analysis' should include research as an important area.

**Comment/question:** The list of engagements is well structured but it is difficult for us to decide on the list and identify activities of our concern. Therefore, we need time to study the list before we provide feedbacks.

**Comment:** It is indicated in the presentation 4 (potential list of engagements) that capacity building is one activity of the Network. First, objective of the Learning Network should reflect this activity and the draft Terms of Reference of the Network should be modified accordingly.

### **Responses:**

On issues that should be included in the '*Joint Analysis of challenges*' the understanding is that the discussions within the Network will include a range of challenges pertinent or relevant to REDD+ and the issues noted can well be treated as long as they fall within the Network's area of concern.

With regard to the role of the Network as a consultative forum (for other sectors) depends on the Network's mandate which we need to define.

On the mechanism of ensuring the independence of the Network, it is everyone's conviction that the Network will independently act and provide its service with the view that it works for the common good. The fear that the Network may be biased and may serve only the interests of MEFCC misses the very

objectives of its establishment. First, it is, in fact, initiated by MEFCC in consultation with selected NGOs/CSOs (see minutes of the Consultative workshop of March 2014) with the objective of working together for advancing better approaches in sustainable forest management. Second, the association of actors in the Network is a voluntary association and all actors have equal roles and decisions should be made following agreed procedures. Moreover, the decision made during the launching workshop (see minutes of the workshop) stressed that ‘... *the Network can be legal by attaching it to a government organization who can host and lead the envisaged network. Hosting it under an NGO will have a legal complication. However, to make the association/collaboration among members of the network more effective, the CEOs of member organizations should be officially invited to join the network.*’

On the comment that research need to be included as part of the activity under ‘Gap Analysis’ is a valid comment and will be considered in refining the activity list. In the same vein, the request that members need to study the list to provide their feed backs is also valid and all relevant documents will be communicated for participant organization along with the minutes of today’s workshop. Finally, the comment that calls for modifying the objectives of the Network so that it addresses *capacity building* as part of its activity is a valid comment and will be addressed.

The question and answer session was followed by a general discussion session during which the forum deliberated in length on some outstanding issues. The session was chaired by His Excellency, Ato Kebede Yimam, State Minister of the Forest Sector of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The following is a summary of the lengthy deliberation.

## **Issues**

- a) It is clearly noted in the findings of the Technical study, *Legal and Institutional Analysis for REDD+ implementation* commissioned by MEFCC (National REDD+ Secretariat) that the legal mandate of EPA (predecessor of MEFCC) to monitor and regulate the assessment and mitigation of potential environmental impacts of project activities by different entities (including line ministries) was devolved to the line ministries themselves (where an EIA unit or department in each of the 6 ministries being delegated for the task that EPA was supposed to carry out). From a REDD+ Safeguard perspective, the technical study recommended that MEFCC has the legal mandate to re-assume its role in regulating the proper implementation of EIA by all project proponents and is the practical choice in ensuring REDD+ safeguards. Accordingly, the study recommended that the legal mandate of regulating EIA implementation which was devolved to line ministries should be revoked and MEFCC should retake its

original legal mandate. Thus, as a member of the Federal REDD+ Safeguard (SESA/ESMF) Task Force, we have been discussing on the procedures to realize this recommendation and I would like to know what MEFCC is planning to do in implementing the recommendations from the technical study.

**Response:** In response to this concern, H.E. Ato Kebede Yimam stressed that the role of line Ministries with regard to achieving the goal of zero net emissions at the national level is well articulated in the CRGE document. As government entities, we should bear in mind that each ministry has a responsibility and is expected to perform its responsibility accordingly including proper implementation of EIA of project activities. Therefore, I cannot see the need for revoking the legal mandate for EIA regulation from the line ministries. In fact the proper implementation of it should be monitored by MEFCC and an additional forum to ensure its proper implementation can be the CRGE inter-ministerial committee where we can discuss with other ministries on the implementation process.

b) On the issue of the National Forest Inventory (NFI) data that we have been discussing in the morning session, the NFI data which indicates that Ethiopia's current forest cover of 15.5% should be reconciled with the on-going deforestation rate (as noted in Ethiopia's FRL communication to the UNFCCC). The new forest cover data (NFI) may be misunderstood as a pure increase in forest cover unless the impact of the new forest definition on the NFI is properly explained.

**Response:** H.E. Ato Kebede Yimam noted that the new NFI data should not be viewed as an exaggeration of the country's forest cover. First, FAO's global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) in 2011 indicates that Ethiopia's forest cover is 11% and you all know that MEFCC was not instituted then and has no say on the data. Second, it should be noted that FRA's data (11% forest cover) is based on a forest definition of 0.5ha area, 5m tree height and 10% canopy cover. From this definition, you can see that the forest definition adopted in the current NFI rather raises the canopy cover from 10% to 20% although it lowers the tree height to 2m from 5m. Therefore, the NFI should not be considered as an exaggeration of the country's forest cover rather the 20% canopy cover (in the new forest definition) may exclude forests that would have been included had the threshold been 10%,

c) The role of Civil Society in supporting the implementation of the government's development plan need to be properly noted and a mechanism should be put in place so as to engage Civil Society.

**Response:** H.E. Ato Kebede Yimam noted that the government recognizes the role of Civil Societies in supporting the different development activities in the country. In this line, MEFCC took the initiative to engage Civil Societies as partners and we had discussions on their role some months ago in Adama. We will in fact continue to work with these actors in a number of areas including financial mobilization for

project implementation. However, the comment that the REDD+ strategy should indicate the mechanism of financial support to Civil Societies is out of place as this issue is well addressed in the CRGE Facility's procedures for accessing finance by different actors including Civil Societies.

Following the general discussion, Dr Solomon took the stage and outlined the next steps that should be followed and the agenda for the next meeting of the Network. Accordingly, the participants agreed that

- 1) The ToR should be refined based on the comments given today and comments from members of the Network and the refined ToR should be finalized during the next meeting.
- 2) Based on the comments from member organizations, the list of potential activities should be finalized and ready for approval during the next meeting.
- 3) The National REDD+ Secretariat should work out roles and responsibilities of the Working Groups identified in the draft Terms of Reference and need to be an issue for discussion on the next meeting of the Network.

The workshop was officially closed at 4:30p.m.

Annex1: Workshop Participants

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 National REDD+ Secretariat  
 Functionalizing Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network  
 December 02/2016

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Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change  
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## Annex 2: Workshop Schedule

**Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change  
National REDD+ Secretariat  
Functionalizing Ethiopia's REDD+ Learning Network  
December 02/2016**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Program Item</b>	<b>Responsible/Session facilitator</b>
8:30 – 9:00a.m.	Participant Registration	Organizers
9:00 - 9:10a.m.	Opening remarks	H.E. Ato Kebede Yimam
9:15 - 9:25a.m.	Introduction of participants	Dr Yitebitu M.
9:25 - 9:45 a.m.	Progress update on REDD+ Readiness	Dr Yitebitu M.
9:45 – 10:00 a.m.	Brief discussion	
10:00 – 10:20 a.m.	REDD+ Learning Network: Overview	Dr Solomon Z.
10:20 – 10:40a.m.	<b>Coffee Break</b>	Hotel
10:40 – 10:50a.m.	On previous decisions	Dr Solomon Z.
10:00 - 10:15a.m.	Draft Terms of Reference	Ato Tsegaye T.
10:40 -11:30a.m.	Discussions	Ato Tsegaye T.
11:30 -11:45a.m.	Potential List of Activities	Dr Solomon Z.
11:45 - 12:30 a.m.	Discussions	Dr. Yitebitu M.
12:30 - 1:30 p.m.	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>	Hotel
1:30 - 2:15p.m.	General Discussion	H.E. Ato Kebede Yimam
2:15 – 2:45p.m.	On the agenda for next meeting	Dr Solomon Z.
2:45 - 3:00p.m.	<b>Coffee Break</b>	Hotel
3:00 - 3:15 p.m.	Closing Remarks	Dr Yitebitu M
3:15p.m.	<b>Workshop closing</b>	-