

Convergence meeting on

Sikkim Jurisdictional REDD+ Program

22nd January 2016, Dengzong Regency Hotel, Gangtok, Sikkim

Press Note

The first meeting of the REDD+ steering committee of Sikkim was held in Hotel Denzong Regency, Gangtok today. The Jurisdictional REDD+ program which is being implemented by Sikkim is a first of its kind in India. Sikkim is expected to benefit from emerging national and international financial instruments that reward the state's communities for forest conservation and enhancement through valuation of increase and sustained management of carbon stocks in the state's forests. The REDD+ mechanism has gained considerable momentum since it was recognized as a priority climate change mitigation instrument in the recent Paris Agreement, launched at the 21st Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC, December 2016.

The meeting was attended by the steering committee consisting of Secretaries of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences, Commerce and Industry, Land Revenue, Science and Technology and Climate Change, Rural Management and Development, Building and Housing Departments and senior officers from Urban Development, Food Security and Agriculture, Horticulture and Ecclesiastical Departments. The steering committee deliberated on ways of convergence of programs and policies of different departments that contribute to forest conservation and which could be incorporated in the REDD+ program.

A presentation was made by Shri Swapan Mehra of IORA Ecological Solutions on Forest PLUS activities which has mapped the forest areas, forest cover and forest types across three time lines, namely for 2002, 2009 and 2013, derived from IRS LISS-III and LANDSAT data sets. Also the programme has developed a mobile based application that has been developed to validate the remote sensing data with ground based observations. He also presented a preliminary mapping of

government programs of various government departments that can be converged with the goals and objectives of the Sikkim REDD+ programs.

A lively discussion followed the presentation, which indicated that all programs and policies of the government implemented by the departments represented in the steering committee need to be studied using the REDD+ lens to understand which of these programs can be projected as a REDD+ item. Notable opportunities for convergence of REDD+ goals with schemes and activities of Animal husbandry department, Horticulture Department, RMDD and the forestry department were also identified. Mr. Christopher Kernan, Chief of Party of Forest-PLUS emphasized the need for including green infrastructure in the REDD+ portfolio of Sikkim. Further Mr. Varghese Paul, Senior Forestry Advisor, USAID India also mentioned that capitalizing on the rich biodiversity of the State may add value to the Carbon that might be credited in the future. Further Forest-PLUS will organize an international workshop inviting the leading REDD+ Jurisdictions from around the world, where Sikkim will be featured prominently.

The Jurisdictional approach will allow the state to mainstream green initiatives through policies. The Sikkim REDD+ program is being supported by Forest PLUS program of the USAID. IORA Ecological Solutions is providing the technical support to this program.