

Brainstorming Workshop on the Baseline Study 29-30 September, 2010

A two day brainstorming workshop (29 -30 September, 2010) on the Baseline Study for the Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management was held at the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun. The workshop was a part of the consultative process under the World Bank led medium size project (MSP), *“Policy and Institutional Reform for Mainstreaming and Up-scaling Sustainable land and Ecosystem Management in India”*, anchored at the ICFRE. The Brainstorming Workshop was inaugurated by **Dr. G. S. Rawat, Director General, ICFRE**. Participants at the workshop included nodal officers for the SLEM projects, scientists and experts from the eight ICFRE institutes across the country. The inaugural session of the workshop was also attended by senior officers of the ICFRE.



Caption: Dr. G. S. Rawat, DG, ICFRE addressing the participants at the inaugural session of the Brainstorming Workshop on the Baseline Study

The MSP at the ICFRE is a part of the Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management – Country Partnership Programme (SLEM-CPP), a joint initiative of the MoEF, GoI and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The MoEF and the World Bank together are implementing a GEF Programmatic Approach on ‘Sustainable Land and Ecosystem

Management (SLEM)' with the objective of enhancing the institutional and policy framework for harmonization, coordination and monitoring of interventions in agricultural and natural resource management strategies that promote sustainable land management and enhance agricultural productivity while minimizing environmental impacts. This is a multi-disciplinary programmatic approach which attempts to understand and address the SLEM concerns and its linkages with agro and dry land biodiversity and climate variability issues, both at the policy and project levels.

The SLEM - CPP consists of seven projects being implemented in ten states in India with assistance from UNDP, FAO and the World Bank. The lead agency for the SLEM – CPP is the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The ICFRE and its institutes have been under the SLEM – CPP designated as the Technical Facilitation Organisation (TFO) by the MoEF.

The project anchored at the ICFRE works under the overall supervision of the DDG (Extn.). The project is headed by the Project Director, and six specialists in the areas of land degradation, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, policy and institutional reform, monitoring and evaluation and communication have been engaged for the project. One of the mandated tasks of the specialists is to carry out a Baseline Study on the status of land degradation in the country. The objective of the Baseline Study is to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes of land degradation, its impact on biodiversity and how land management is impacted by climate variability and change. The proposed baseline study aims at developing a road map for policy and institutional mainstreaming of SLEM practices at both, the national and local level.

The objective of the Brainstorming Workshop was to utilize the collective technical strengths of the ICFRE institutes and the pool of knowledge available to improve the quality of inputs into the Baseline Study. Nodal officers have been designated at each of the ICFRE institutes to assist and facilitate the TFO in collection of information both, from the project sites and beyond SLEM project sites.

Addressing the participants, Dr. Rawat said that global concerns for an ever growing population continue to be enhancement in land productivity, to offer food and fibre security, reduce poverty, and maintain a healthy environment for the present and posterity. The Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management (SLEM) he said was an innovative management approach to arrest or prevent land degradation as compared to reclamation and reversal of degraded land.

Dr. Rawat further said that the overall objective of the SLEM Programme is to contribute to poverty alleviation in India by promoting enhanced efficiency of natural resource use, improved land and ecosystem productivity, and reduced vulnerability to extreme weather events, including the effect of climate change. SLEM partnership he said seeks to create synergy among the various SLEM project partners through sharing best practices/lessons learnt, and by providing policy recommendations to scale-up the SLEM approach in India.

Dr. Rawat reminded the participants that policy and institutional analysis for assessment of gaps and barriers to implement SLEM in India is required to be documented and overcome and would be an important tool to monitor impact of mainstreaming policies in future. The ICFRE institutes he said would need to support and contribute to the success in laying a strong foundation to the baseline study on land degradation in the country. He then wished all the participants a fruitful and intensive two day discussion on various facets of the Brainstorming Workshop.

Discussions on the first day of the workshop were preceded by an address by **Dr. Rabindra Kumar, DDG (Extn.)** who reminded the participants that the two day workshop offered a unique opportunity to tap the wealth of information and expertise available with the ICFRE institutes. He said that deliberations over the duration of the workshop would help the TFO identify the specific areas of interest in consultation with the nodal officers and thematic experts from the ICFRE institutes. The vote of thanks was given by Dr. **Dharmendra Verma**, who thanked the out station participants for being present for the Brainstorming Workshop, despite inclement weather and problems of connectivity.

At the start of the session on the first day, brief presentations were made by the thematic specialists at the TFO to introduce the theme of the workshop to the participants. Following this, presentations were made by the nodal officers and thematic experts from the ICFRE institutes. The presentations made by the nodal officers covered the thematic areas of SLEM namely – land degradation, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and policy and institutional reform. The presentations also informed on the status of the thematic areas in States under the jurisdiction of the ICFRE institutes.

The second day of the workshop was devoted to the brainstorming sessions on the SLEM thematic areas. Intensive discussions were held on the SLEM thematic areas and several important insights were provided by the nodal officers and thematic experts from the ICFRE institutes which would help in refining the data collection for the Baseline Study. Inputs to the climate change component of the Baseline Study would include assistance in collection of data on minor crops at the district level, and data documented on the ‘preservation plots’ maintained earlier by the RSM Division of the ICFRE could be used as ‘control’ in studies pertaining to forest types. Similarly in the land degradation thematic component, assistance could be provided in the collection of data on land use from State department sources, on areas covered under various programmes which had a SLEM component, data on water resources from State Ground Water Boards and on major cropping patterns and yield at district and State levels.

The Brainstorming Session was followed by the Plenary Session, which was chaired by Dr. G. S. Rawat, DG, ICFRE. Discussion in the plenary session was initiated by Dr. Rawat who advised the thematic specialists at the TFO to identify gaps in the data and information required for the baseline study, and how the ICFRE institutes could help with the information collection. Dr. Rawat said that once there was clarity on the gaps, he would try

his best to facilitate the process of support in data collection by the ICFRE institutes in whichever way possible. He then asked Dr. Pratap Narain, Specialist, Land Degradation at the SLEM-PIU to give a brief overview of the discussion in the two – day brainstorming session. Dr. Narain, during his summation of the deliberations carried out over the two day workshop clarified the point that the nodal officers would primarily function as facilitators for the collection of data. He also pointed out that since the nodal officers also had other responsibilities and duties to discharge, it would be convenient to have two or more nodal officers at the ICFRE institutes to help the TFO in the collection of data. He said that pertinent data on policy had been provided by the nodal officers, but reminded the participants that since policy would play an important part in mainstreaming the SLEM approach in the country, it was vital that adequate attention be paid to this aspect of the baseline study.



Caption: Dr. G. S. Rawat addressing the participants during the Plenary Session of the Brainstorming Workshop on the Baseline Study

Dr. Rawat, towards the end reminded the participants that the SLEM Project was a very prestigious ICFRE project and all the ICFRE institutes must cooperate to make it a success. He also emphasised the fact that work pertaining to SLEM-CPP would have to be done on a

priority basis. Since consensus on the role of the nodal officers as ‘facilitators’ had been reached he expected them to contribute meaningfully to the project. He pointed out that the SLEM-CPP was an interesting and prestigious project for the ICFRE and that ICFRE institutes should contribute to the project whole heartedly. He also then assured the nodal officers that he would ensure that all problems regarding time constraints would be resolved and that issues regarding logistics and travel would also be resolved.

Dr. Rawat also reminded the participants that preliminary investigation regarding access to information would be carried out by the nodal officers and specialists from the TFO would visit the States later. To address the issue of communication, he pointed out that the facility of video conferencing which is available in the ICFRE HQs would be made use of. He also said that he would communicate with the Directors of the ICFRE institutes on the above discussion. To help the TFO communicate better with the ICFRE institutes, Dr. Rawat recommended that an e-group on SLEM be created and that Directors of the ICFRE institutes also be in this list to facilitate better communication.

List of Participants from ICFRE institutes

Institute	Participants
Forest Research Institute, Dehradun	1. Dr. A. K. Raina 2. Dr. Anup Chandra
Rain Forest Research Institute, Jorhat	1. Ms. Imtiena Ao, IFS 2. Dr. P. K. Kaushik
Arid Forest Research Institute, Jodhpur	1. Dr. G. Singh 2. Dr. D. C. Joshi
Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur	1. Dr. P. K. Khatri 2. Dr. S. K. Banerjee
Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore	1. Sh. R.S.C. Jayaraj 2. Sh. N. Ravichandran
Institute of Forest Productivity, Ranchi	1. Dr. Animesh Sinha
Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bangalore	1. Dr. G. R. S. Reddy
Himalayan Forest Research Institute, Shimla	1. Sh. Manoj Bhaik 2. Dr. R. K. Verma