

**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**BDP/EEG - MISSION REPORT SUMMARY**

Date: 25 October 2013



**Name:** Celina Yong, **Tel No.** +66879246135  
UN-REDD

**Approved Mission Itinerary:**  
BKK- Dhaka – BKK

**List of Annexes:**

**Inclusive Travel**  
21–25 Oct '13

**Key counterpart(s) in each location:**

- CO – Tarik ul-Islam, ACD and Cluster Head Climate Change, Environment & Disaster, Biplab Chakma, Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF)
- FAO CO – Mariam Akhter

**Purpose/Objectives of Mission**

- Support Pasang Dolma Sherpa in her familiarization visit.
- Support the National Consultation of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in REDD+ Readiness workshop, with a view to consolidate recommendations for the Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP) Validation Workshop prior to submission to the Policy Board.

**Context**

This mission was undertaken to support Pasang Dolma Sherpa's familiarisation visit to upcoming partner countries that will develop and submit a UN-REDD National Programme. The primary objective of her visit was to understand the challenges and issues facing IPs in the REDD+ context. Pasang is the IP representative of the Policy Board for Asia-Pacific.

Bangladesh was nominated based on her consultation with IP organisations during the Asia Caucus Meeting of IP in Bonn 13 June 2013. As Bangladesh was subsequently invited by the Policy Board in its 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting to submit a RPP, the ensuing national consultation was timed to consolidate recommendations from the IPs to be shared during the RPP Validation Workshop.

The National Consultation of IPs on REDD+ Readiness, with over 25 participants representing different segments of adivasi (IPs) from throughout Bangladesh took place from 23 to 24 October in Dhaka. Maleya Foundation, an IP organisation, led the coordination, with full support from CO. The objectives of the consultation are:

- Share general information on the process and mechanisms of UN-REDD Programme policies, activities and initiatives in relation to Indigenous Peoples;
- Be informed about the processes in the development of the Bangladesh REDD+ roadmap;
- Be familiar with the proposed next steps to develop an UN-REDD National Programme for Bangladesh;
- Provide detailed feedback and recommendations from some adivasi (Indigenous Peoples') groups in Bangladesh.

**Summary of Mission Activities/ Findings**

*1. National Consultation of IPs on REDD+ Readiness*

- The relationship between the Government of Bangladesh, in particular the Forest Department, and the adivasi is, at best, contentious. It is generally reflective of on-going international tension between statutory and customary laws in the broader context of IP rights and recognition.
- Given this scenario, the presence of Raja Devasish Roy, a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as well as Ruler of the Chakmas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), was a mediating factor. He is known and respected by both the government and the adivasi.
- While the Roadmap process involved national and regional consultations that included adivasi, there were still segments of adivasi that did not take part in the earlier process. An early criticism of this perceived lack of engagement was set aside in favour of identifying common space to engage in the REDD+ readiness phase.
- Knowledge and familiarity regarding REDD+ was minimal, and as such, the consultation could not be expected to provide detailed comments for the RPP per se.
- In consultation with the participants, it was agreed that a general set of recommendations from this group of adivasi, would, by far, serve a greater purpose. A working group of 5 members, supported by Maleya Foundation and Bangladesh IP Network of Climate Change and Biodiversity (BIPNetCCBD), was selected to draft recommendations that were presented to the Chief

Conservator of Forests, Mr Md Yunus Ali, at the conclusion of the event. These recommendations were well-received and will also be presented during the R-PP validation workshop.

2. *Key Recommendations from the National Consultation*

- Participants supported the Government of Bangladesh’s efforts for REDD+. However, they called for assurances that will enable their full and effective participation, in particular through the proposed REDD+ Stakeholder Forum and the REDD+ National Steering Committee.
- They also urged the government to respect international conventions such as UNDRIP, and a review of policies, laws and regulations that are detrimental to the adivasi. In addition, they encouraged the government to recognize customary laws that had been adopted in the CHT.
- A copy of the recommendations along with all presentations are available at [http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=3290&Itemid=53](http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=3290&Itemid=53)

3. *Steps Forward*

- It is recommended that key members from the Working Group be invited to the validation workshop to present their recommendations. Careful coordination between CO and Regional office is needed to ensure they are part of the process. Constant communication regarding progress and foreseeable delays is also important given the uncertain political situation. In this respect, the working group has nominated Maleya Foundation as the focal point.
- It is necessary to understand that neither BIPNetCCBD nor the Maleya Foundation, represents all the adivasi in the country, and should not be treated as such. While the adivasi in CHT is better organized, largely due to the Peace Accord and also UNDP CHTDF Programme, the same cannot be said for other parts of the country. The participants have been urged to broaden and strengthen their representation and network given the possibility of a REDD+ Stakeholder Forum. As such, further support; be it financial or technical may be necessary. In this respect, Regional Office has been exploring options with a regional IP network – Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Pact – to support efforts to organize national dialogues in selected countries, one of which is Bangladesh.
- It is also important to monitor the progress of a Forest (Amendment) Act 2013 that is currently stuck in Parliament. From the adivasi’s perspective, the biggest controversy is the creation of “Other Forest” category, and the accorded power to FD to classify existing forests as such without prior consultation or recognition of communities living in the forests. This has led to fears that the adivasi along with other forest-dependent communities will be ostracized from their lands without alternative sources of livelihoods.
- In a bilateral discussion with Raja Devasish Roy, he recommended that consistent and continuous avenues be provided to engage adivasi in the REDD+ process.

**Follow up actions:**

- Send invitation to working group members to attend the Validation Workshop – CO (Alamgir Hossain)
- Reach a consensus with AIPP regarding support for national dialogues – Regional (Celina Yong)

**Distribution List:**

- UNDP UN-REDD
- UNDP Bangladesh CO – Tarik ul-Islam and Alamgir Hossain