

Minutes of 2nd meeting of the Governing Body, APFBC Society, 22nd January, 2013

The 2nd meeting of the Governing Body of the Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation Society was held on 22nd January, 2013 in the Conference Hall of the Chief Secretary, Government of Assam.

In chair: - The Chief Secretary, Government of Assam and Chairperson, GB.

Members present: - List is appended and marked Annexure-1

Proceedings of the meeting:

On behalf of the Chairperson, the Member Secretary welcomed all members, invitees and special invitees to the 2nd meeting of the GB of the APFBC Society. He briefly explained the purpose of the meeting and its agenda.

With permission of the Chair issues listed in Agenda were taken up for discussion:

Agenda item- 1: Review of Progress made since 1st meeting of the GB

- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that fund, as per APFBC Society's Work Plan for the FY 2012-13 amounting to 28.50 crores is yet to be received from the State Government.
- It was also brought to the notice of the GB that AFD's Supervision Mission visited Assam from November 26th to December 3^r, 2012 and had discussion with the Principal Secretary, Finance Department and with the Principal Secretary, Environment and Forest Department with respect to 2nd Draw Down. The AFD's Mission proposed direct payment of basic price of goods including vehicles for effecting Draw Down and made a formal request in the matter vide their letter No.2012/IND/CSD/JW n^o 493 dt. 04.12.2012.

The AFD has made direct payment of Euro equivalent of INR 2,66,76,437.99 to various dealers/suppliers of goods to be procured details of which would be put up for seeking post- facto approval under Agenda-3.

- The Chairperson wanted to know why there was delay in release of fund?
- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that proposal for release of fund was submitted to the Administrative Department vide letter dated 2nd November, 2012 and it was examined by the Finance Department. Queries raised by the Finance Department were communicated by the

Administrative Department vide letter dated 21st January, 2013 and will replied to shortly.

- The Commissioner and Secretary, Finance Department stated that permission for procurement of vehicles needs to be obtained from hon'ble CM and technical approval for all other works need to be furnished along with the proposal.
- The Chairperson advised the Principal Secretary, Environment and Forest Department to get in touch with the CM's office for getting permission for procurement of vehicles. He also directed the PD to follow laid down procedures while putting proposal up for release of fund to avoid delay.
- Sh. Jagpreet Walia, AFD wanted to know the time limit for the release of fund as long delay can severely impede implementation of activities particularly plantation activities.
- The Commissioner and Secretary, Finance Department stated that if queries raised by the Finance Department are appropriately responded, it will take few days to order release of fund.

Agenda item- 2: Approval of AWP and budget for the FY 2013-14.

The Member Secretary proceeded to present the Annual Work Plan and budget for the FY 2013-14 in which activities under each component proposed to be undertaken and estimated fund requirement for the same in FY 2013-14 was outlined. The Member Secretary informed that the Work Plan was discussed in a meeting of senior forest officers held on 04th January, 2013. Issues discussed on activities under various components are summarized below:

Component -1:

- The Chairperson wanted to know the nature of training proposed to be imparted to field staff.

The Member Secretary stated that the forest personnel at the lower level (A.C.F. and below) need to be imparted training on new and emerging issues like climate change, bio- diversity conservation and management, eco- tourism, man- animal conflict mitigation etc. to equip them to cope with the changing role of forestry sector. Besides, they also need to be equipped well in dealing with their traditional role through better understanding of forest law, silviculture, plantation and modern nursery raising techniques etc. Therefore, the training module will be structured in

line with training module framed by the MoEF with added emphasis on issues concerning state of Assam.

The Chairperson observed that training is a critical input and hence it calls for putting in place an efficient system to cater to the training needs of staff and officials. The Member Secretary submitted that the PMU has taken note of chair's observation and appraise the chair and the GB of the measures taken to implement this activity in conformity.

- With respect to construction/ repair of roads, buildings, heritage buildings etc. in various Divisions DFOs have been asked to submit proposals through Circle Conservators stating justification and Division wise allotment of work will be done in consultation with the PCCF & Hoff. All the works will be executed in conformity with procedure laid down for procurement of works in the Procurement Procedure Manual.
- Procurement of goods including vehicles, boats, motor cycles, computers and accessories, field equipments-GPS, Total Station, Digital GPS etc. will be done as per the procedure prescribed in the Procurement Procedure Manual for procurement of goods.

Component-2

The member Secretary appraised the GB that under this component comprehensive biophysical, socio-economic survey will be undertaken. The data generated will be used to frame landscape level planning for achieving uniformly integrated management practices for a given landscape irrespective of territorial jurisdiction of administrative units. A Master Plan will also be prepared which will be a vision document.

The GB was also appraised that during discussion with AFD's Appraisal Mission it was felt that a workshop needs to be held to work out the parameters and protocol as well as to assess role national institutions/organizations like FSI, C-DAC, National Remote Sensing Agency etc. can play in implementation and capacity building. Involvement and capacity building of Departmental Officers is necessary to undertake data updating beyond project period.

Component-3

This component is the largest one supporting activities ranging from preparation of micro plans for the JFMCs and the EDCs, working plans for management



of forest resources in all the territorial divisions, revision of management plans for the PAs, mitigation of man-animal conflict and habitat improvement, research, biodiversity conservation, wet land management in the forest and protected area, rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forest, raising firewood plantation and providing domestic renewable energy alternatives, increasing tree cover outside forest through agro-forestry and growing trees on private and community land etc.

- Updating of Working Plans drew attention of the GB and the Chairperson wanted to know how the project will assist in preparation/revision of Working Plans.

The Gb was appraised that significant volume of data will be generated under Component-2 e.g. total and species wise growing stock, stock density, species wise and girth class wise estimated number of trees and volume, status of plantations, extent of degraded forest area etc. which will have use in preparation of working Plans. In addition, logistics and support will also be provided for revision/preparation of working plans subject to release of monitory assistance under 13th Finance Commission award.

The project also proposes to procure services of expert for assisting Working Plan Officers in making Working Plans fully compliant with Working Plan Code and Criteria and Indicators for SFM to the extent possible for getting approval of the Government of India.

- Identification of JFMCs and EDCs for the project will be completed soon and preparation of Micro- Plans for all of them will be undertaken in FY 2013-14 so that Micro-plan prescriptions are incorporated in the Working Plans of the respective Division(s)

The Chairperson emphasized urgent revision/ preparation of Working Plans and for deployment of adequate manpower for the same so that this essential requirement for forest management is taken care for future developmental activities in forest and for smooth flow of monetary assistance from the Central Government.

- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that the project will also provide monetary assistance as well as expert's input in revision of Management Plans for PAs to incorporate "Good Practices" from across the globe to the extent implementable in our conditions.
- The GB was appraised that:

- a. physical target for raising plantation under the project is expected to be will be achieved fully by 2013-14.
 - b. of the total fuel wood plantation target under the project 50% is proposed to be achieved in the FY 2013-14 through JFMCs.
 - c. under habitat improvement in PAs earth moving equipment is proposed to be procured for de-siltation of water bodies during this financial year. Earth moving equipment will be used for multi-tasks like restoration of highlands for flood shelter, speedy road clearance etc. The project will keep synergy with other schemes having proposal for procurement of such equipment.
 - d. The project will equip RRTs for quick response to mitigate situation arising out of straying of wild animals in civilian area and 16 such teams are planned.
 - e. physical eradication of obnoxious weeds plaguing PAs is proposed to be attempted this financial year . However, the project will focus on integrated weed control in coming years through research input for minimizing the problem.
 - f. Ground level assessment and implementation of various activities like fuel wood alternatives, dairy development, agro-forestry, grassland management, man-animal conflict etc. will be undertaken.
- The Principal Secretary, Rural Development Department raised the issue of sustainability of JFMCs and EDCs
- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that Component -4 of the project is fully devoted to provide forest and non forest product based activities for JFMC and EDC members for their livelihood security in post project phase. Other Components too have some activities from which livelihood sustenance can be derived e.g.
- creation of nurseries by each JFMC for which financial support will be extended by the project. The proceeds from sale of seedlings from these nurseries will accrue to the JFMCs. Also, the firewood plantations will provide recurring monetary benefits through of shared usufructs as per JFMC rules in force in the State.
 - With respect to wetland improvement and management the Member Secretary appraised the GB that though the project proposes to take up improvement of wetlands located both within and outside forest however, activities have to be in conformity with Central Government approved management plan as required under Frame Work Rules for Conservation

and Management of Wetlands notified by the Central Government. Thus, in the FY 2013-14 the project proposes to undertake improvement of wetlands in located only in PAs and RFs in accordance with approved Management plan/ Working Plan prescriptions.

- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that for Biodiversity Conservation related activities like preparation of Biodiversity Register, identification of Biodiversity Heritage sites, ethno-botanical survey, developing criteria for benefit sharing etc. fund earmarked may be transferred to the Assam State Biodiversity Board, for ASBB is mandated to undertake these activities under Assam Biodiversity Rules, 2010.

The GB was further informed that the ASBB in its 6th meeting has taken a decision that, “Regarding implementation of certain biodiversity components of the Assam French Project by the Board, it was decided that the fund for those components of works that fit into priority areas of the Board, for example constitution of BMCs and preparation of PBRs, may be taken up by the Board. For implementation of other components e.g. award of consultancy etc., the forest department may involve the Board only as a partner rather than the sole implementer.”

The GB was appraised that as biodiversity conservation will include biodiversity in its all manifestations within and outside forest and hence in fitness of things it may be more appropriate if the ASBB undertakes implementation of biodiversity related all activities including hiring of consultants to avoid duality in control, dichotomy in perception and for achieving systematic coordinated implementation and the APFBC will facilitate the ASBB in its endeavour will transfer earmarked fund to the Board.

1. The GB approved the proposal that earmarked fund related to biodiversity conservation be provided to the ASBB and ASBB will incur expenditure as per procedure laid down under various manuals and submit monthly accounts as per accounting procedure to be followed by the APFBC Society. The Chairperson also directed the Member Secretary to bring the decision of the GB to the notice of the ASBB
- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that as long term measure, the project will fund statewide study on causes for rise in man-animal conflict



and measures for its mitigation and implement them to the extent funds are earmarked.

While appreciating the initiatives the project has taken in the matter; the chairperson emphasized accelerated implementation of the measures as man animal conflict is gradually assuming serious proportion and successful implementation of mitigation measures will not only bring laurels to the department but also bring relief to the people.

Component-4

The Member Secretary appraised the GB that this component aims primarily to provide sustainable livelihood options to JFMCs and EDCs targeted under the projects and for achieving component objectives the project proposes to;

- a. indentify forest as well as non forest products having market demand;
 - b. skill up-gradation, if needed for producing value added forest and non forest based products;
 - c. Innovation of new products/ process;
 - d. Branding and certification of products, providing market access and market linkage for effective marketing;
 - e. Impart training to boost employability of target population in hospitality management, retail trade, carpentry/plumbing, doll making, tailoring, as massion, beautician, trained security guard, trained house keeper etc.;
 - f. Consultants/ experts will be hired, as required to accomplish the task and emphasis will be put on proper skill development/ training rather than on numbers.
- The chairperson wanted to know how the project plans to impart necessary training and skill development.

The CCF (RE & WP) explained that training institutes already identified by NSDC will be preferred for imparting training/ skill development and help of other institutes will be taken if required.

- The Chairperson suggested that the project should establish synergy with NRLM to broaden target base and support to the targeted population.
- The CEO, NRLM described various activities which the NRLM is supporting in different parts of the state and assured full cooperation to the project in taking livelihood activities under NRLM to JFMCs/ EDCs.

The Member secretary also stated that the project proposes to develop 30 eco- tourism sites in the state through eco-friendly, non- intrusive, low cost interventions for up-scaling tourism potential as well as for providing livelihood support to the neighboring population .

Agenda item 3: Post facto approval for goods to be procured through direct payment of basic price by AFD to effect Draw Down.

- The Member Secretary appraised the GB that AFD's Supervision Mission (Nov.26-Dec.3, 2012) had discussion with the Principal Secretary, Finance Department and with the Principal Secretary, Environment and Forest Department with respect to 2nd Draw Down. The AFD's Mission proposed direct payment of basic price of goods including vehicles and impressed that all the formalities need to be completed before 10th of December,2012and bills/invoices be submitted to the CAAA, Government of India. A formal communication too was made by the AFD in the matter vide their letter No.2012/IND/CSD/JW n^o 493 dt. 04.12.2012.To complete the task within the stipulated time the AFD in their communication suggested "Shopping" method to be followed for procurement and effected one time waiver of Euro 50,000.00 cap prescribed for "Shopping " in the Procurement Procedure Manual.

Accordingly, price list/quotations were collected for vehicles (car, jeep, motorcycle) cycles, computers and accessories etc.were collected. From dealers in Guwahati. For motor cycles quotations under DGS & D rates were also collected.

Comparative statement were prepared and approval of the Chairperson, Governing Body as well as the Chairperson of the Executive committee was obtained. All documents well mailed to the AFD and after receipt of AFD's "No objection" the documents and copy of invoice were sent to the CAAA both in electronic and physical form for taking necessary action. Till this date direct payment of basic price has been credited to the bank account of dealers/ suppliers except for two.

The Member Secretary requested the GB to accord post facto sanction to the procurement done under the circumstances.

The Member Secretary also informed that since VAT and other taxes, as applicable has not been paid the goods including vehicles have not been delivered by the dealers/ suppliers.

The GB accorded post facto approval to the procurement for which direct payment of basic price was made by the AFD. Summary of procurement is enclosed and marked Annexure-2

Agenda item No. 4.

- The Member Secretary presented to the GB proposal received from Mr. T. Ekande for engagement as Single Source Consultant. The AFD Supervision Mission also approved his engagement after discussion with him in Delhi.

The Member Secretary informed that financial package offered by Mr. Ekande can be reduced if he can be provided with a vehicle by the project for his field tours and actual fuel cost is re-imbursed.

The Member Secretary also appraised the GB that Mr. Ekande's engagement was approved for 3 month's in the 1st meeting. However, after discussion with the AFD Mission, new activities like capacity building of officer and staff in maintenance of accounts, various procedures etc. were added and therefore; time range of his engagement is increased to four months. Consequently the GB may accord fresh approval as required.

- The Commissioner and Secretary Finance Department wanted to know if the project intends to engage individual consultants or firms.

The Member Secretary stated that individual consultants will be cost effective but it can create problem if consultant quit midway or does not perform up to expectation. Consulting Firms will be costly to hire but can always provide substitute. Therefore, decision will be taken in consultation with the EC on case to case basis and best option will be exercised.

- Sh. J. Walia, stated that AFD will re-look the works to be assigned to make Mr. Ekande's engagement more productive
- The GB approved engagement of Sh. Ekande for a period of 4 months and the chairperson directed the Member Secretary to appraise him of the final cost package.

Agenda item no. 5.

The Member Secretary explained that in the MOA correction in nomenclature, i.e. substituting **Steering Committee** with **Governing Body** and **Governing Body** with **Executive Committee** is required at few places and it will be done.

Agenda item no. 6

The Member Secretary further stated that the Supervision Mission of the AFD has suggested revisiting certain clauses in the Financial Management Manual and also suggested some modifications in the Operational Manual.

He further stated that the suggestions will be incorporated to the extent they are appropriate in content and context and the GB will be appraised for approval.

The Chairperson was of the opinion that the task should be completed expeditiously preferably within a fortnight's time.

Agenda item no. 7

- a. The GB approved inclusion of ASBB as Accounting Centre for operating fund received from APFBC.
- b. The GB also accorded its consent to organize workshop on component-2.
- c. The GB was appraised that Social Forestry Divisions may also have to be included as Accounting Centers(ACs) for implementation of activities under the project. The AFD has consented to this proposal. Proposal to include Social Forestry Divisions which will be undertaking implementation of activities under APFBC as ACs got approval of the GB.
- d. The GB also approved the proposal that money earmarked for road work can be utilize for renovation of existing roads to the extent it is not needed for new construction work in any division. However, repair proposal have to give full justification.
- e. The GB felt that insertion of a new clause in the By-Laws of the APFBC Society proposed by the Member Secretary is not warranted.

With conclusion of all the matters listed in the Agenda the meeting ended with vote of thanks from the chair to all members, invitees and special invitees.

Annual Work Plan approved by the GB is enclosed and marked Annexure-

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(N.K.Das, I.A.S.)

Chief Secretary, Assam

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Chairperson, APFBC Society