

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the GB, APFBC society held on 18.11.2013

In the chair- Chief Secretary, Government of Assam.

Members/ invitees present as per List appended

Record of proceedings:

At the onset the chairperson welcomed members of the Governing Body and invitees present in the meeting. After a brief round of self introduction by members and invitees the Chairperson requested Member Secretary to proceed and make presentation on issues listed in the agenda for deliberation.

Validation of minutes of the 2nd GB meeting: The Member secretary informed that minutes of the 2nd meeting of the GB was circulated to all members and invitees and the same needs to be validated. The Chairperson enquired if any comments were received from anyone. The MS informed the GB that no comment was received from any quarter.

Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the GB was validated.

The Chairperson opined that the meeting of the GB should be held at more frequent interval as the 2nd meeting was held in the month of March, 2013 and the 3rd meeting is being held after a gap of months. The MS submitted that as per provision made in the MOA of the APFBC Society meeting of the GB is to be held at half yearly interval and that of the Executive Committee at quarterly interval. The 3rd meeting of the GB was delayed as the Procurement Plan for the AWP 12-13 and AWP 13-14 was not ready.

The Agenda wise discussions and decisions are given below:

Agenda item- 1: Review of Progress made in implementation of activities under APFBC after 2nd Meeting of the GB.

- i. The MS presented statement of progress made till date w.r.t implementation of activities under APFBC against AWP 12-13. Copy of the same is enclosed and marked Annexure-1
- ii. Implementation of activities viz. procurement of TA consultants etc., Strategic Planning, JFMC/EDC related activities will be undertaken after approval of the Procurement Plan and related TOR by the AfD.
- iii. Regarding implementation of plantation activities the GB was informed that due to late release of fund plantation targets were not fully achieved particularly for sal and bamboo plantation. Physical and Financial progress report with respect to implementation of plantation activities was presented before the GB. Copy of the same is enclosed and marked Annexure-2.
- iv. Regarding implementation of activity under Component-2: Strategic Planning the GB was informed that modalities for its implementation is required to be formulated. As the task will require involvement of specialized organizations/individuals the first task is to identify such organization/individual and the role they can perform either individually or together.

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The Chairperson opined that specialized agencies e.g. WII, ICFRE dealing in Biodiversity should be requested to advice on the issue of strategic planning. The Principal Secretary, Environment & Forest Department and Vice Chairperson, GB informed that a workshop is planned in this regard wherein it is proposed to invite organizations like Forest Survey of India, C-DAC, IIFM and also experts from the French Institute. The Workshop is expected to deliver the modalities in implementation of Strategic Planning and extent of involvement of institutes/organizations within the country. Role of foreign institutes/ organizations to provide input to fill in gaps in the approach of national institutes/organizations.

The Member Secretary informed that the TOR for the Workshop as suggested by the AfD has been prepared and has been sent to the AfD for consent. Consent of the AfD is awaited till date.

Shri.J. Walia, Project Co-ordinator, AfD informed the GB that the matter was discussed during the AfD mission in July, 2013 and TORs for the Workshop as well as for other national and international consultants is under consideration and will be finalized expeditiously.

The Chairperson desired that duration of workshop should for 2 days and the issues should be deliberated in length to arrive at best possible output and also that it should be held within 20th Dec, 2013. He requested the AfD to take necessary action for communicating their consent within 2 weeks time.

- v. With respect to afforestation activities, the Chairperson wanted to know the rationale behind planting Sal under this Project. The Member Secretary informed that the Project puts emphasis both on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation and plantation activities under Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) Mixed Hardwood Wood Plantation(MHW), Non-timber Forest Produce (NTFP), Sal plantation and Bamboo plantation categories are being implemented to restore degraded habitats. Conservation of existing ecosystems and restoration of degraded areas are both necessary for conservation of bio-diversity.

- vi. The Chairperson emphasized the need to create a Bamboo Park to conserve Bamboo genetic resources of Assam and the North East. He suggested ^{that} the Bamboo Park ^{could} be created in Dhakuakhana or in Karbi-Anglong. He laid emphasis on chalking out work plan for bamboo park in advance of planting time. The MS informed that in consultation with the State Bamboo Mission necessary action to create Bamboo Park will be undertaken.
- or other suitable site*

- vii. The MS stated that availability of planting material is the single most important problem being faced in creating Bamboo plantation. With the amount earmarked for bamboo plantation it will be very difficult to procure required number of bamboo rhizomes for planting and thus, bamboo nursery is required to be raised at least one in each circle where bamboo plantation will be created. The Chairperson suggested that the details may be deliberated in the EC meeting.

- viii. The Chairperson also desired that in future presentations, the progress report should be supplemented by the photographs of the works implemented.

Agenda item-2: Approval of Procurement Plan for AWP: 2012-13 and AWP: 2013-14.

The GB was informed that AWP for 2012-13 and AWP for 2013-14 were approved by the GB in the 1st and the 2nd meeting of the GB respectively. As the Procurement Plan

was not ready it was decided in the 2nd meeting to undertake plantation works in the coming planting season.

The Procurement Plan for both AWP:12-13 and AWP:13-14 have been prepared and has been furnished to the Administrative Department and also discussed in the 3rd meeting of the Executive Committee of the APFBC Society. The EC has approved the Procurement Plan for both AWP:12-13 and AWP:13-14. Copy of the Procurement Plans have also been communicated to the AfD and their consent is awaited.

The GB gave its approval to the Procurement Plan for the AWP: 12-13 and AWO: 13-14.

The Chairperson observed that:

- i. besides regeneration of RFs efforts should be made to encourage planting of local species on private/community land outside RFs. Therefore greater efforts on Agro-Forestry was required to be put forth.
- ii. Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat and RFRI, Jorhat may be given support for works related to Bamboos.

The Member Secretary informed that Agro- forestry and increasing tree cover outside RFs are activities incorporated in the project. The Project will endeavour to develop Agro-Forestry models suitable in our Agro-climatic condition as well as land holding which is largely small in size.

iii. The Chairperson also suggested that the project should facilitate research on important forestry and bio-diversity issues. The MS appraised the GB that the project has research component. The research topics would be finalized by Research Advisory Committee which will be constituted by the PCCF & HoFF, Assam. The Chairperson suggested to have representatives from Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat and RFRI, Jorhat included in the Research Advisory Committee.

iv. The Chairperson expressed concern over management of Deepor Beel as Ramsar site and wanted to know the present status of the WL sanctuary as well as the Ramsar Site. The Principal Secretary, E & F, apprised him about the decisions taken in w.r.t. Deepor Beel in the meeting held under his chairmanship on 15-11-13.

The MS appraised that a Management Action Plan(MAP) approved by Competent Authority is required under the guidelines issued by the Government of India and in force currently. The project has some fund earmarked for management of wetlands.

The PCCF(WL) appraised that the Revenue Department is required to hand over the area of the WL sanctuary by end of December, 13.

The CS desired that the Action Plan for conservation of Biodiversity of Deepor Beel be prepared in a month and be reviewed by the EC.

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Agenda item – 3. Approval of draft TOR for Technical Assistance and Standard RFP document, and draft of EOI and draft of advertisement for procurement of goods, works and services.

The MS informed the GB that draft of TOR for consultant and draft of EOI and that of advertisement have all been prepared and submitted to the Administrative Department and the AfD for perusal. These were also discussed in the 3rd meeting of the EC and approved. However approval of the AfD is awaited.

Regarding Draft TOR, Shri J. walia Project Co-ordinator, AfD informed that NOC has been given for M & E Consultants & Auditors. The AWP is under process and NOC may be given shortly. The Chairperson suggested that the AfD may complete the process by 15th of December, 13.

The Chairperson was of the view that the consultancy cost was on higher side and should not be more than 10%.

Agenda item – 4. Miscellaneous issues:

a. Approval of operational and maintenance cost for Accounting Software and Website by NIC.

The MS apprised the GB that NIC has developed the Web site of the APFBC Society and have also agreed to develop the Accounting Software free of cost. The PMU is in constant touch with the NIC for development of accounting Software. The MS then presented before the GB the proposal received from the NIC for maintenance of the WEB Site and the Accounting Software. The chairperson suggested that the proposal of the NIC be deliberated in the meeting of the EC. He also emphasised that the accounting software should be ready by Mid December.

b. Inclusion of the position of Nodal Officer in the APFBC Society:

The MS apprised the GB that in its 2nd meeting the EC, APFBC Society approved inclusion of an officer from the Environment and Forest Department to be a member of the Standing Sanctioning Committee of the EC. As this would require modification in the By-Laws of the APFBC Society approval of the GB to the proposal is required.

Mr. Cheikh Dia of the AfD stated that the TOR for the Nodal Officer appointed by the Environment and Forest Department, Government of Assam may cause overlap of functions of the Nodal Officer with that of the Project Director and this is not desirable and view of the AfD in the matter has been communicated in the Add Memoire of the Supervision Mission.

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The Chairperson observed that an officer will be designated as Nodal officer in the Environment and Forest Department to liaison with the Finance and other departments on behalf of the Principal Secretary. He may be included as member of the Standing Sanctioning Committee of the EC of the APFBC Society for which proposal for amendment in the By-Laws may be moved and till then he may be invited to the meetings of the said committee as special invitee. The Chairperson further observed that the Project Director will discharge his functions as envisaged in the MOA of the Society and therefore, question of any overlap does not arise

c.Extension of engagement of Single Source Consultant for another 2 months:

The MS informed the GB that Sh. Ekande's services are required for two more months and thus, period of his engagement may be extended by two more months to complete the tasks related to the JFMCs/EDCs. The EC has approved extension of period of engagement of Sh. Ekande by two more months.

The GB gave its consent for extension of period of engagement of Sh. Ekande for two more months.

d. Transfer of fund to the State Biodiversity Board:

The MS appraised that as per the decision of the GB biodiversity conservation related fund should be transferred to the State Biodiversity Board as the Board is dealing with biodiversity related issues in totality i.e. both forest and non-forest biodiversity. He presented the proposal of the State Biodiversity Board received in the matter. The Chairperson observed that:

- i. preparation of Biodiversity Strategy and Action plan for the state of Assam for identification and conservation of Biodiversity Hotspots, inventory and research on Biodiversity is the primary requirement and the fund received from the project should be activity linked.
- ii. The Assam State Biodiversity Board should explore possibility of getting funds from Ministry of Environment & Forests, Planning Commission and the State Government.

d. Other issues with permission of Chair.

- i. Representative of the AFD desired to review the progress of the constitution of the Research Advisory Committee. The MS stated that the Committee has not been constituted as yet.

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- ii. The Representative of AFD raised the issue of quarterly reimbursement through CAAA and requested the Forest Department Assam to take up the issue with CAAA. The need to get the audit done by the local audit Department was emphasised.
- iii. Mr. Cheikh Dia of AFD raised the issue of reimbursement of expenditure as in this Financial year no re-imbursement claim has been submitted to the CAAA.

The MS explained that re-imbursement claim can be submitted only if the accounts are audited on quarterly basis as laid down in the Financial Management Manual.

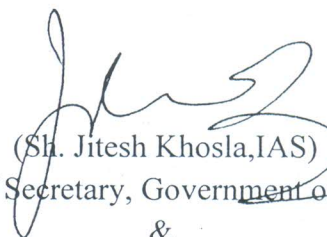
Mr Dia stated that the provision can be waived to effect drawdown and provide compiled accounts are furnished to the CAAA by the first week of December.

The MS stated that it may not be possible to compile accounts of all the Divisions within such short time.

The Chairperson observed that ideally re-imbursement claim should be made with audited accounts on quarterly basis. However, considering the exceptional situation the AfD may explore the possibility of making re-imbursement on the basis of financial statement submitted by the Project Director and supported by document like Utilization Certificate from the Divisions.

With regard to other issues the Chairperson desired that as they are related to the operational requirements of the project, approval of the EC may be taken for the same.

The meeting ended with thanks from Chairperson to all members and invitees.


(Sh. Jitesh Khosla, IAS)
Chief Secretary, Government of Assam
&
Chairperson, GB, APFBC Society
