Measures Resolving Potential Risks to Successful Implementation of REDD+ in Bangladesh

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Abstract

REDD+ implementation and its governance is needed in Bangladesh for resource management, conservation and enrichment of natural forests. REDD+ can generate both carbon and non-carbon benefits to the forest dependent people. On the contrary, good forest governance leads the transparency and accountability in the forest sector. The study was conducted with a view to find out the necessary measures for effective REDD+ implementation in Bangladesh. To realize the objectives, online survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informants' Interview (KII) were used. The study was conducted in Rangamati, Modhupur, and Sreemongal for FGD and KII interviews. For online survey, professional version of 'Survey Monkey' online software were used. The study found that capacity building for implementation of laws and regulations, strong policy, political influence on right tract, strengthen and empower civil society's capacity etc. are the possible resolving measures on REDD+ implementation. Promoting public awareness on laws and regulations, strengthening law enforcement in the forest sector, and successful implementation of policies had been revealed to increase the effectiveness and integrity for the implementation of REDD+ in Bangladesh.

বাংলাদেশে বনজ সম্পদ ব্যবস্থাপনা, সংরক্ষণ ও প্রাকৃতিক বনের প্রবৃদ্ধি'র জন্য রেড+ এর বাস্তবায়ন ও সুশাসন দরকার। রেড+ বন নির্ভর জনগোষ্ঠীর জন্য কার্বন ও অকার্বন সুবিধাদি প্রদানের জন্য কাজ করে। দুর্নীতি না থাকলে, বন নির্ভর একটি সুশাসন বন দপ্তরে স্বচ্ছতা ও দায়িত্বশীলতা আনয়ন করে। গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য সাধনের জন্য অনলাইন জরিপ, ফোকাস গ্রুপ ডিসকাশন এবং কি ইনফরমেন্টস ইন্টারভিউ সম্পন্ন করা হয়েছে। গবেষণাটি রাঙামাটি, মধুপুর ও শ্রীমঙ্গলে সম্পাদন করা হয়েছে। অনলাইন জরিপের জন্য 'সার্ভে মাঙ্কী' এর প্রফেশনাল ভারশন ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে। আইন-কানুন ও শক্তিশালী নীতি বাস্তবায়ন, রাজনৈতিক প্রভাবের ধনাত্বক ব্যবহার, সুশীল সমাজের দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধি এবং তাদের ক্ষমতায়ন রেড+ এর সফল বাস্তবায়নের জন্য সম্ভাব্য ব্যবস্থা বলে বর্তমান গবেষণা ধারনা পায়। জনগণের আইন-কানুন সম্পর্কিত সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি, বনবিভাগে আইন ব্যবহারের ক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধি এবং নীতি'র সফল বাস্তবায়ন বাংলাদেশে রেড+ বাস্তবায়নের জন্য অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নিয়ামক হিসেবে পাওয়া গেছে।

Introduction

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, Conservation of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) is introduced to the Conference of Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at its 11th session at Montreal in 2005 and ultimately issued as a climate change protocol at the 16th session at Cancun, Mexico in 2010, the Cancun agreement [1]. Forest governance is a key driver for implementation of REDD+ and it acts as a

forest manager to enhance transparency on behalf of REDD+ implementation [2]. If REDD+ to be effective and equitable, it depends on good forest governance [3]. For implementation of REDD+, strong forest governance is needed to build up effective surveillance and community participation with benefit sharing [4]. Forest governance ensures transparency and accountability behind corruption and leads RDDD+ activities on a right tract. REDD+ is a major issue to mitigate global climate change. It is a low cost options as well as cost effective way to compare the subsistence agriculture in the Philippines [5]. Policy priority and political feasibility need to execute REDD+ at national level. A regulatory framework among opportunity cost of REDD+ and biodiversity conservation needs to maximize co-benefits that needs strong governance policy and regulation for implementing REDD+ [6]. Bangladesh tied the UN-REDD program in 2012 and serves as a preparatory phase for UN-REDD Country program. Implementation of REDD+ depends on good governance system. Strong governance is needed for successful community participation and effective surveillance to conserve forest [4]. Strong and fair democratic structure needs for ensuring property rights and participation of indigenous peoples by strong monitoring system, grievance mechanism and right awareness [7]. Forest Department acts as an immense role to manage and protect the natural forests. To enhance transparency and accountability as well as to eradicate illegal activities, the forest department needs sufficient laws and regulations [8]. For effective and efficient sustainable forest management to improve the governance sector and enrich forest, a 'Community Forestry' management system is introduced in Bangladesh by involving local people [9].

Around 1.6 billion people in the world depend somehow on forests whereas around 0.6 million people in many ways depend for livelihood on the Sundarbans forest. The forest officers engage irregular auctions and offer familiar syndicates by leakage information and also involve irregular appointment, posting, promotion and transfer by getting bribes [8]. For food, security and ecosystem services millions of people depend on forest directly [10]. In South Africa, total household income covers around 20% from non-timber forest products (NTFPs) [11, 12]. On the other hand, around 38% of the total household income comes from forest in Ghana whereas people in the Mali use around 90% of the NTFPs from the natural forest [13, 14]. The NTFPs contributes to the Bangladesh's national economy around tk1.3 billion annually [15]. By harvesting and selling forest products, rural households earn 30% of their cash income as the alternative use of forest products [16]. Afforestation/Reforestation (A/R) Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as a climate mitigation options deals with sustainable development in the social, environment and economic sector. While it needs management skills need to run CDM project, poor skills hinders the project in Bangladesh.

Biodiversity conservation is an important issue while mitigating climate change. To reduce the atmospheric impact, 'Preservation Pathway' approach is built which aims to meet the demand of forest conservation and climate goals simultaneously by avoiding deforestation [17]. Carbon based conservation by taking biodiversity distribution is possible without compromising the effectiveness for climate change mitigation [18]. REDD+ simply and functionally work reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as well as conservation of forest carbon stocks,

sustainable management of forest and enhancing forest carbon stocks but not defined other things with perfectness. Without taking the potential actions i.e., capacity building for implementation of laws and regulations, politicians' influence to receive commissions, and transparency and accountability, the REDD+ implementation will be difficult. To find out the preventive and corrective interventions for effective REDD+ implementation in Bangladesh, this study was undertaken to bridge over the knowledge gaps for successful implementation of REDD+ activities in Bangladesh.

Materials and Methods

To realize the objectives, the study was accomplished by three types of survey and interviews. These were online survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant's Interview (KII). The study was conducted during the period of July 2013 through February 2014. The online survey used the 'Survey Monkey' professional version. It requested 200 respondents for the online survey. Among them, the Survey Monkey received only 68 responses. There were 88% male and 12% female respondents in the online survey.

Maximum respondents were in the age class of 20 to 35 and 36 to 50 years whose percentage was 47% and 46%, respectively. The online survey toke respondents from different work class and institutions, where the highest number (16%) of respondents from International Institution/Groups in online survey and Local Governments was the lowest number (2%) of respondents.

The survey interviewed the people onsite in Madhupur, Sreemangal and Rangamati for FGD and KII. Maximum respondents about 55% had working experience in the whole life in or outside of Bangladesh.

Results and Discussion

Knowledge about REDD+ in Bangladesh

Around 36% of the respondents' knowledge about REDD+ were good, around 31% were poor and around 30% were fair. A few people (3%) had expertise on knowledge of REDD+ in Bangladesh. REDD+ is a mitigation and adaptation strategy to reduce global climate change. The important objectives of the REDD+ are reducing the rate of mass-scale logging, preservation of existing forests and enhancing of carbon stocks in forests. The study showed that the percentage of the respondents' knowledge about REDD+ were not substantial (Figure 1).
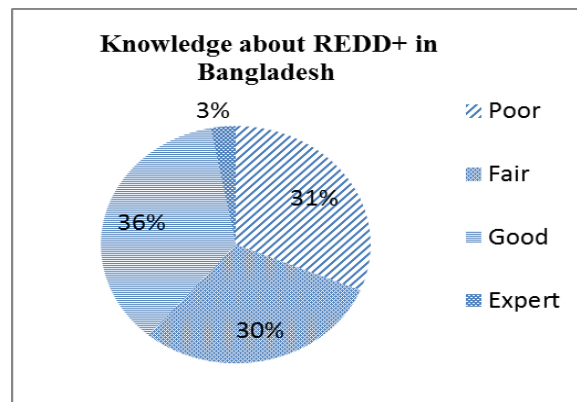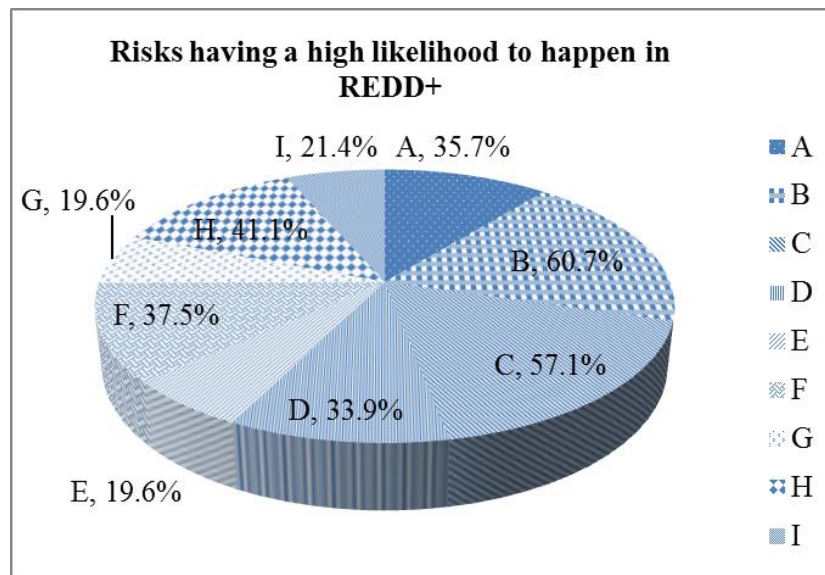
Figure 1. Knowledge level of REDD+ in Bangladesh

Risks having a high likelihood to happen in REDD+

Anti-corruption commission plays a key role to develop capacity building and for implementation of laws and regulations to control corruption. Political commitment and funding also be an important factor to control corruption.

Most of the respondents 60.7% opine that lack of capacity for implementation of laws and regulations to prevent and control corruption is the important bottleneck to implement the REDD+ (Figure 2). More than half of the respondents (57.1%) state that lack of capacity for enforcement and punishment of corruption can hamper the REDD+ activities. About 41.1% respondents alarms that lack of available information to allow proper monitoring also can disrupts the successful progress of the REDD+ in Bangladesh.

(Note: Multiple responses are here)

Figure 2. Risks of high likelihood of REDD+ in Bangladesh.

Note:

 A = Weak policy (i.e. defectiveness, absence of or inappropriateness of laws or policies)

B = Lack of capacity for implementation of laws and regulations to prevent and control corruption

C = Lack of capacity for enforcement and punishment of corruption

D = Lack of funding for implementation of laws and regulations to prevent and control corruption

E = Lack of funding for enforcement and punishment of corruption

F = Accepted culture (there is tolerance or acceptance of corruption)

G = Lack of awareness of what constitutes a corrupt action

H = Lack of available information to allow proper monitoring

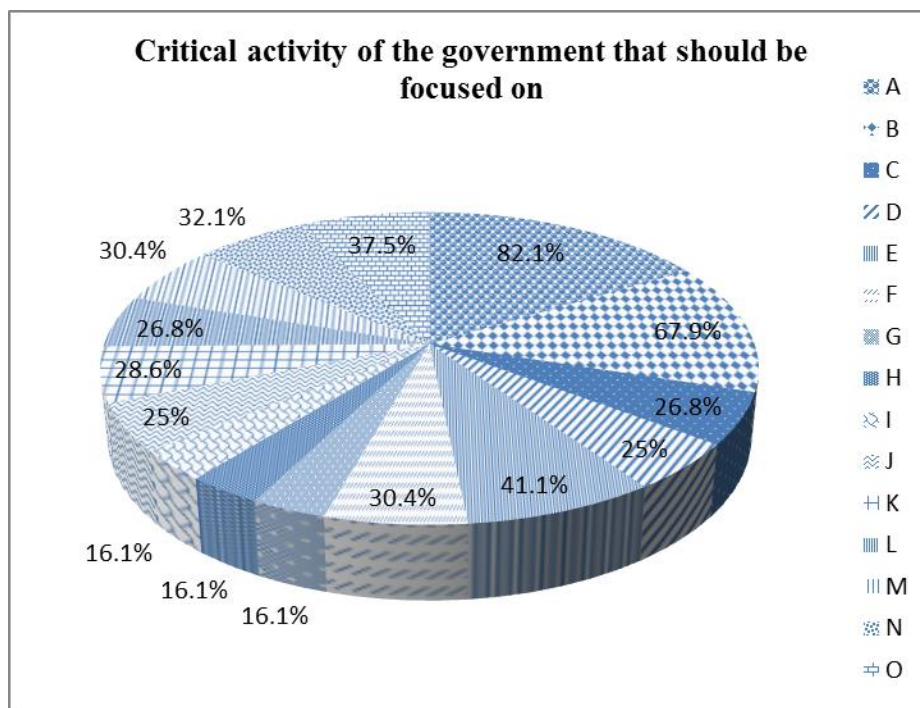I = Absence or lack of effective protection for whistleblowers

To compare all, percentage of respondents' lack of capacity for implementations of laws and regulations to prevent and control corruption is the highest position. According to the journalists in Rangamati, lack of appropriate punishment and political commitment, the corruption becomes illusive. From the consultation of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with different categories of participants, application of forest laws and regulations and involvement of local people in decision making enhance integrity in the forest sector. Laurence [19] found that measurement of emissions with effective monitoring and verification needs good governance policy, right decisions and regulations. UN-REDD [20] found that government will develop a monitoring system which ensure measuring, reporting

and verification (MRV) and provide information on safeguards and assist co-benefits.

Government's critical activity to implement REDD+

Political commitment is an important factor for implementing REDD+ which involves policy making, resource inventories and performance reporting and, carbon and non-carbon reporting.

The respondents' feedbacks were kin to indicate important events where political commitment can work to resolve these. About 82% of the respondents mentioned politicians' influence on issuance of permits, about 70% on politicians' pressure and interference on policy making, about 41% on abuse of discretion, and so on (Figure 3).

(Note: Multiple responses are here.)

Figure 3. Critical activities of the government for implementing REDD+ in Bangladesh.

Answer Options	Response Percent
A. Politicians influence the issuance of permits to accommodate friends, receive commissions or as owners of businesses.	82.1%
B. Manipulation, pressure and interference of politicians (particularly at the LGU) in policy-making and implementation (particularly for ordinances).	67.9%

C. Interpretation of the law favors vested interests	26.8%
D. Misleading or fraudulent claims on carbon rights	25.0%
E. Abuse of discretion with regard to whom the projects will be awarded	41.1%
F. Implementers of REDD+ activities offer bribes to overlook fraudulent on reforestation and similar forest-related activities	30.4%
G. Personal use of vehicle/s and other equipment not in relation to the work	16.1%
H. Implementers of REDD+ activities fraudulently double report forestry activities	16.1%
I. Implementation of REDD+ activities produce fraudulent resource inventories and performance reporting, including survival rates of reforestation efforts	16.1%
J. Manipulation of carbon and non-carbon reporting	25.0%
K. Favoritism in the resolution of grievances and conflicts involving REDD+ programs and projects	28.6%
L. Abuse of discretion in the selection of personnel to be sent for trainings (sp. travels abroad) --	26.8%
M. Diversion of funds	30.4%
N. Overpricing of equipment, supplies and materials (including survey materials, seedlings, and other equipment)	32.1%
O. Collusion (of politicians, investors and REDD+ implementers) in the bidding or approval of contracts	37.5%

Percentage distribution of response on politicians' influence over the issuance of permits to accommodate friends, receive commissions or as owners of businesses is in the top position. It is the critical issue which should be taken care of for the REDD+ implementation. From the perception of forest dependent communities in Modhupur, political pressure increase corruption in forest sector by creating pressure to Forest Department officials for encroachment and collect forest produces. Perception of senior journalist in Modhupur found that political commitment needs to enhance governance system in the forest sector. Melick [21] used "customary ownership method" to focus on money rather than forest management to secure carbon rights. Ahmed [22] found that the area of the forest land is decreasing due to the influence of politicians. Ludwig [7] introduced grievance mechanism and strong monitoring systems to ensure property rights.

Necessity of laws, policies, programs and/or institutions to strengthen REDD+ activities

Strong laws and policies are needed to halt corruption activities. Favorable and appropriate laws and policies can strengthen the governance system and enhance REDD+ activities successfully. Not only favorable laws and policies but also its implementation is much necessary to establish REDD+ activities in context of Bangladesh. Only about 21% are familiar about laws and policies which can reduce corruption activities (Figure 4).
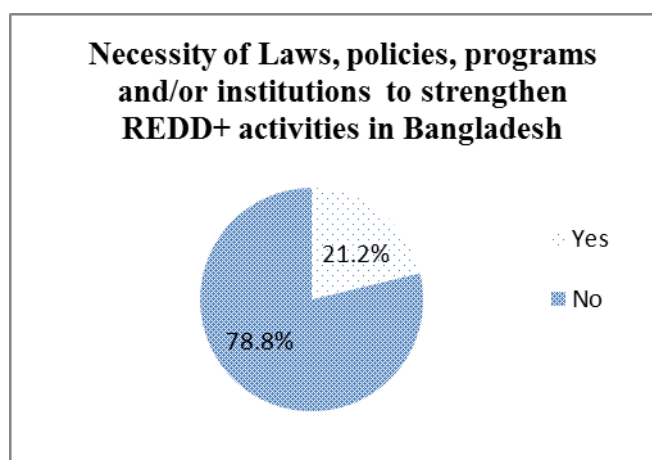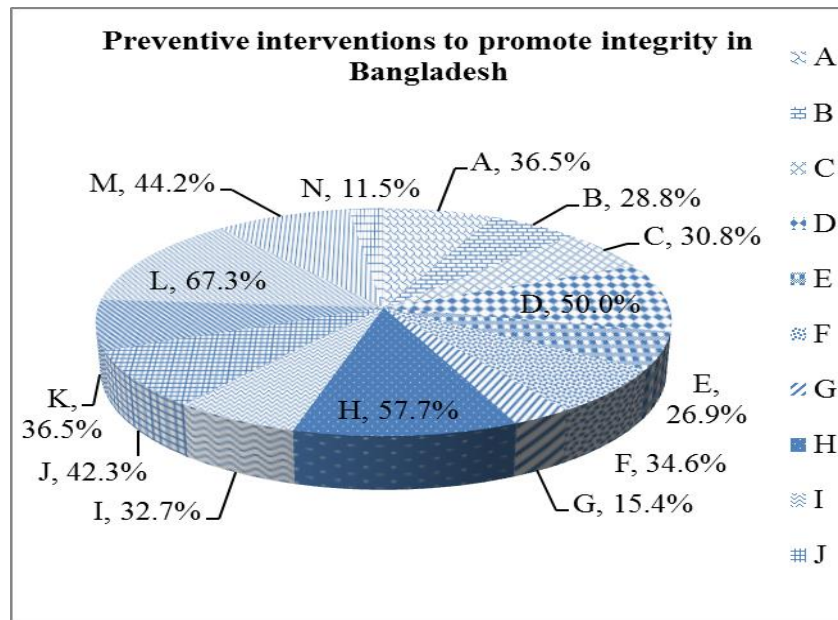
Figure 4. Knowledge about policy and laws for REDD+ implementation in Bangladesh.

The study shows that vast people are not aware of any particular laws and policies. UN-REDD [20] found the key regulating forest resources in Bangladesh is The Forest Act, 1927 which deals conservation and protection of government owned forests as well as some private forests. This act also deals "Social Forestry" which aims creation and sustainable management of plantation forests by local communities.

Preventive interventions to promote integrity in REDD+

Successful consultation reduces corruption and promotes integrity in REDD+ activities. Application of code of conduct enhances proper performance of public functions. Transparent monitoring system and reporting enhance REDD+ activities effectively.

Most of the respondents (67.3%) suggest that strengthening and empowering civil society's capacity to demand accountability, monitor REDD+ activities and reporting corrupt acts are the important preventive intervention to promote integrity in Bangladesh (Figure 5). More than half of the respondents (57.7%) confirm that transparent monitoring of REDD+ activities can enhance the integrity in the program. Among others, establishing a complaints grievance mechanism at local level, enhancing the capacity of the anti-corruption commission on REDD+, establishing transparency portals, improving consultation process, and ensuring independent monitoring, reporting and investigation can have a great role to enhance the integrity in the REDD+ program in Bangladesh.

(Note: Multiple responses are here)

Figure 5. Preventive interventions to promote integrity in Bangladesh.

Note:

A. Improve consultation process especially before the issuance of policies and ensure meaningful engagement

B. Strengthen and standardize internal Audit Services in all organizations managing REDD+

C. Introduce and implement code of conduct for those who work on REDD+

D. Awareness campaigns at local level on what REDD+ is and what it is not, to avoid information asymmetry

E. Feedback mechanism to allow citizens to comment on REDD+ decisions at all levels

F. Ensure independent monitoring/3rd party reporting and investigations

G. Harmonize reporting systems procedures and methodologies

H. Transparent monitoring of REDD+ activities (e.g. use of registries)

I. Establish or strengthen a system of rewards and incentives for integrity in organizations managing REDD+

J. Establish or strengthen a complaints grievance mechanism at local level

K. Establish transparency portals that track the movement of REDD+ funds and benefit distribution

L. Strengthen and empower civil society's capacity to demand accountability, monitor REDD+ activities and report corrupt acts

M. Enhance the capacity of the Anti corruption Commission on REDD+

N. Train judges

According to the forest dependent communities in Modhupur, to promote integrity in governance system need appropriate coordination between forest department and forest dependent people to manage forest. From the perception of indigenous rights activists in Modhupur, civil society acts key role for improving governance system by putting pressure on the forest department. UN-REDD [20] found that the government of Bangladesh takes steps to establish "REDD+ Stakeholders Forum" with non-government sector for consultation to increase public awareness on REDD+. Manowong and Ogunlana [23] found an introduced "Public Hearing Regulation" by people's participation in Thailand acting to strengthen governance.

Corrective interventions which are the most effective

Strengthening law enforcement needs to promote governance system for successful implementation of REDD+ program.Awareness of people about law is also needed. Ensuring citizens are aware of the Whistle Blower law is rated the highest, 4.21 (Figure 6). Likewise, ensuring citizens are aware of the witness protection program is 4.13. The other good ratings were for strengthening international cooperation to track transboundary illegal activities (3.96) and for speedier prosecution of cases (3.37).
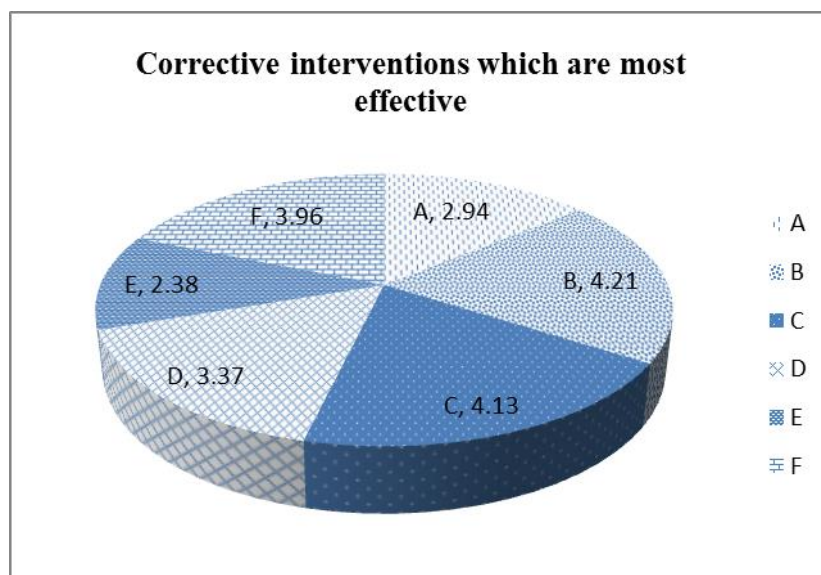
Figure 6. Effective corrective interventions for REDD+ implementation in Bangladesh

Note:

 A. Strengthen the system on reward and punishment

 B. Ensure that citizens are aware of the Whistle Blower Law

 C. Ensure that citizens are aware of the Witness Protection Program

 D. Speedier prosecution of cases

 E. Strengthen law enforcement in the forest sector

 F. Strengthen international cooperation to track transborder illegal activities

According to the senior journalist in Modhupur, proper implementation of current Forest Act needs to promote integrity in the forest sector. In Rangamati, from the consultation with forest dependent community found that large number of irrelevant forest case and misuse of transit rules and forest rules enhance corruption. From the perception of the forest dependent communities in Modhupur, lack of awareness among forest dependent people about laws and regulations, they engage forest litigations unwillingly.

Conclusions

The study reveals that positive role of politicians can minimize the possible risks of REDD+ and its proper implementation in Bangladesh. By strengthening law enforcement in the forestry sector, transparency can be enhanced. The role of civil societies plays a great role to enhanced accountability and monitoring REDD+ activities. The Anti-corruption commission may play a vital role to promote integrity in forestry sector of Bangladesh for effective REDD+ implementation.

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