



Development of the NCCF's Forest Management Certification Standard

The development report elaborates the process of the NCCF'S Forest Management Certification Standard Development process.

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Introduction

The Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) a multi stakeholder non-profit organisation was established in January 2015 with the objective of having a globally aligned India specific forest certification scheme in India , which while taking into consideration the International benchmarks of the standards requirements is also sympathetic to the local and legal frameworks of the country.

The NCCF drafted the standard setting procedures with reference to the internationally recognised best standard setting practices serving as guidance for the whole process. The NCCF Forest Management certification standard has been developed by the Standards Development Group (SDG) of the NCCF through an open, transparent, consultative and consensus based process, including a series of stakeholder consultations, undertaken through emails, online consultations, interviews and field level stakeholder consultation workshops. Post development, the standard was subjected to extensive pilot testing in 3 locations, Nagaon Forest Division in Assam, Dandeli (Haliyal) Forest Division in Karnataka and Hoshangabad Forest Division in Madhya Pradesh. The standard is the culmination of the process of the whole process of internal drafting, review, stakeholder consultation, pilot testing and the consensus building.

The project consisted of different stages. All stages being mutually dependent on the other thus forming a continuum. The outcome of the succeeding stage depended on the preceding stage, clearer the preparation at the initial stage, the finer and accurate the results in the stages ahead.

The development report describes the whole process under the following stages

- Phase 1 Announcement of the process
- Phase 2 Stakeholder Mapping and expression of Interests circulation
- Phase 3 Creation of the SDG and TWG
- Phase 4 Draft base document
- Phase 5 Extended Stakeholders Outreach
- Phase 6 Public Consultation
- Phase 7 Pilot Testing
- Phase 8 Consensus Building
- Phase 9 Approval by the Governing Body

1. Announcement of the Process

The Standard Development Process for the Sustainable Forest Management Certification Standard was announced through an 'International Conference on Forest Certification – positioning India' held on 16th March 2015 at New Delhi . The conference marked the launch of the standard development process of the SFM certification standard and the participants were invited to be a part of the process.



A stage - wise process was designed by NCCF to guide the SDG in accomplishing its objectives keeping in view the following agendas -

- To have an open and transparent Standard developmental process
- To cover all three aspects of triple bottom-line i.e. Social, Economic and Environmental
- To build and develop awareness among people for forest management certification
- To cover the stakeholders who for some reasons could not participate in the process

- To consider and involve key elements of existing models in India viz the Criteria and Indicators of the Bhopal India Process , the National Working Plan Code and the provisions contained in the National Forest Policy for promotion of afforestation, sustainable utilization of forest products and growth of the forest based industries

The first meeting of the International Stakeholders was held in 17th March 2015 at New Delhi presenting the standard setting process being adopted by NCCF for the development of the SFM Certification Standard. Further an internal meeting was held in 21st February 2015 to discuss and plan the timeline of the process.



To streamline the process, a country forest grid was also studied and prepared by the secretariat classifying the forest types, management type, forest products and the states falling under the assessment region. The grid divided the country into seven assessment regions, and using this grid as a reference, the further consultation exercises were planned.

2. Stakeholder mapping and expression of Interests circulation

According to UN Agenda 21, one of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision making. Agenda 21 defines the nine 'Major Groups' and in Chapter 23 recognizes the important role of civil society and the need to strengthen the role of Major Groups. Taking reference from the UN Agenda 21 stakeholder classes, the potential stakeholders for the forest management standards development were divided under the following Major Stakeholder Groups:

- Business and Industry
- Farmers and Forest Owners
- Local Authorities
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – social and environmental

- The Scientific and Technological Community
- Women and Forest tribals and dwellers
- Workers and Trade Unions
- Children and Youth
- Accreditation Body



Stakeholders were mapped for each of the classes and an invitation to be a part of the process was circulated to all the mapped stakeholders via email (In two cycles ; April 2015 and June 2015 respectively) followed by telephonic interactions and one to one meetings. An official letter was written to all the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of the respective states for the nomination of the nodal representative of their state in the process. Further official communication was made to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change for their participation in the process. MoEFCC directed to take assistance from their premier forestry Institutes- ICFRE & IIFM in the process.

In response to the expression of Interest circulated, members provided their acceptance for participation in the process and seven state Forest Departments nominated their officials as observers in the process, who were intimated via regular emails about the progress.

Further it was mutually agreed by the GB members that stakeholder mapping and engagement is an ongoing exercise and any stakeholder request for participation in the process at any stage will be entertained. Also regular letters and formal communications were made during the whole process to the Central and State Governments, premier institutes, organisations for their participation and support.

3. Creation of the SDG and TWG

The standard development group consisting of the 22 members was formed under the Chairmanship of Mr. A K Varma, IFS (retd). To facilitate its working and based on the availability of the members, a technical working group (TWG) consisting of 11 members was formed within the SDG to expedite drafting, review of drafts as well as incorporating SDG and stakeholders feedback and comments in working drafts. The TWG had representation from the different classes of the stakeholders/ members. The details of the SDG & TWG is provided in Annexe 1



4. Draft Base Document

The Technical Working Group during the initial discussions and meetings decided to prepare the draft base document structured on a National Level Approach, taking into account the C & I's for Sustainable Forest Management of the Bhopal India Process, key elements of the National Working Plan Code 2014, global objectives on forests under UNFF and the provisions contained in the National Forest Policy of India, International and regional certification requirements and legal frameworks in the country.



Further the structure of the document was finalised. Major issues relevant to forest certification have been grouped together into similar Themes, with the Themes further designed and organized to the 'triple bottom-line' approach for 'socially beneficial, environmentally responsible and economically viable' forest management. The Themes, as a fabric, were developed by bringing together the various strands of major issues that are addressed among different forest certification standards globally and considering the National Working Plan Code. Themes are further organized into Principles, which are further elaborated by various Criteria's for evaluation. As a further stage of refinement, Indicators have been developed for each criterion, to enable judging the performance in the field.

All the 6 themes were put on a 2 weeks online consultation for comments and suggestions from the SDG members and stakeholders. Post that the compiled reviewed version of the draft document was circulated to all the members for their comments and suggestions.

Phase 5 Extended stakeholders Outreach

The reviewed and finalised base standard Draft Zero was then put through Extended Stakeholder Outreach Exercise. The exercise aimed at covering the disadvantaged stakeholders (A stakeholder who might be financially or otherwise disadvantaged in participating in the standard-setting processes and works.) through wider public consultation among civil society, forest departments, industrial associations and many more.

Five interns from the Indian Institute of Forest Management were recruited for a period of 10 weeks (4 April 2016 – 10 June 2016) to carry out this exercise. Based on the forest grid the four regions were chosen for conducting the exercise.

The zones with the states falling under them are as follows:

Bio-geographical Zone	States covered under each zone
West India	Gujarat, Rajasthan
North-Central India	Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh
South India	Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana

The Process consisted of the following steps

1. Desk Review – of the available literature, researches related to certification and forestry in India.
2. Stakeholder Mapping – of the respective states
3. Stakeholder Contact Establishment – by emails , calls
4. Designing of Questionnaires – based on the zero draft, questionnaires were prepared.
5. Stakeholder Interactions and Meetings which included online and field consultation
6. Compilation of Stakeholder Inputs

As a part of the exercise, a consultation workshop was held in Bhopal at Indian Institute of Forest Management on 19th May 2016.



Phase 6 Public Consultation

After reviewing and incorporating the observations from the Extended Outreach Exercise, the draft FM Certification Standard version zero was circulated to SDG via emails (2 week consultation) and presented to the SDG in the meeting on 20th August 2016. The Revised draft

zero of the FM Standard Version 0.1 was circulated to SDG for suggestions before the Final public consultation.

On receipt of no major observation, the Draft Version 1.0 of the FM Standard was for put for 60 days public consultation from 3rd October 2016 to 2nd December 2016 on the website as well as notified to some stakeholder via email.

As a part of the consultation period, three regional consultation workshops were held as under:-

Venue	Dates
Bengaluru, Karnataka	25 th October 2016
Bhubaneswar, Odisha	8 th November 2016
Guwahati, Assam	8 th December 2016



The comments received during the Public Consultation was discussed and reviewed by the TWG in the subsequent meetings.

Phase 7 Pilot Testing

The revised document was put to pilot testing to fulfill the following objectives -

- To check the suitability, relevance and adaptability of the standard in the multitude of conditions and identifying the lacunae.
- To assign specific verifiers for region centric application and use.
- Contact / engagement of the disadvantaged stakeholders to solicit their comments and see the area of improvement
- Supply SDG with the comprehensive report providing area of conformance, non -conformance and non-applicability of standard in diverse forest conditions.
- Providing exposure to larger pool of potential auditors and standard implementers, to encourage familiarity with the standard.
- The field testing of the first draft of the national adapted Indicators will provide an additional opportunity to engage forest owners, companies, directly affected stakeholders and other interested parties in the national standard development process.
- Identifying the major sections getting non-conformance during the field testing but for whom conformance can be achieved after a specific interval and changes in the practices.

An expression of Interests was floated on the website in January 2017 inviting the potential stakeholders to participate in the process in capacity of observers and auditors. Considering majority of the forests area is under the Government of India, the NCCF Secretariat started liaisoning with the shortlisted State Forest Departments regarding obtaining the necessary permissions. The Pilot testing was done in three Forest divisions of three representative assessment areas. WWF & ICFRE nominated their representatives in the respective field team as observers.

Schedule for Pilot Testing of the Draft NCCF 's FM certification Standard

Forest Division	Timeline	Assessor team (consisting of 1 lead auditor and secretariat)	ICFRE representative	WWF representative
Dandeli, Karnataka	07 March–10 March 2017	A K Varma A K Bansal Deepali Rautela	Dr. N Ravi (Scientist-D), Tree Improvement and Genetics Division Institute of Wood Science and Technology (IWST), Malleshwaram, Bengaluru, Karnataka	
Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh	21 March-25 March 2017	AK Bansal, Ashish Mishra, Taruna	Dr. Yogeshwar Mishra (Scientist-F) Tropical Forest Research Institute (TFRI), Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh	Mr Jyotirmay Jena, Sr. Project Officer, Satpuda Maikal Landscape (SML), WWF-India, Mandla, Madhya Pradesh (attended the field on 21 st and 22 nd May 2017)
Nagaon, Assam	20 March – 25 March 2017	Manu Jose Mattam, Deepali Rautela	Dr R.K. Kalita,(Scientist-E), Head Forestry Extension Division Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI), Jorhat, Assam	Dr. Pranab J. Bora, Sr. Landscape Coordinator Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape, WWF India, Assam

The TWG met twice in May and June 2017 to discuss and review the findings of the pilot testing. The members decided not to remove any subject from the standard but to grade it as mandatory and prescriptive approach in the language of the indicator with the use of shall, should and may. A SDG and stakeholders meet was done on 1st July 2017 to provide an update of the whole process and present the standard to every stakeholder for their review/comments if any.

Post 1st July 2017 SDG meeting , the comments received were reviewed and the final draft of the standard along with the reviewed comments sheet and glossary was circulated to the SDG members for their approval via email on 30th August 2017.



Figure :- Dandeli
Forest Division,
Karnataka



Figure :- Hoshangabad Forest Division, Madhya Pradesh



Figure:- Nagaon Forest Division, Assam

Phase 8 Consensus Building

The revised final draft version 1.0 of the standard was put for the approval to the group members. The consensus was built via email, tele communication and one to one meeting. A united consensus was received by all the active members of the larger Standard Development Group by first week of September 2017.

Phase 9 Approval by the Governing Body

The final FM Standard and other supporting scheme documents were approved by the Governing Body on 9th September 2017.

The standard was launched for Domestic market on 13th January 2018 at New Delhi through “National Conference on Forest Certification”



Annexe 1

Standard Development and Technical Working Group Members

S. No.	Name	Email	Details	Stakeholder Group	Member
1.	Mr. A K Varma	avivarma@yahoo.com	IFS (retd), Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force , Karnataka State Forest Department		Chairman SDG & TWG
2.	Mr. Suneel Pandey	suneel.pandey@itc.in	IFS (retd), Vice President – Raw Materials ITC PSPD	Business and Industry	Member – SDG & TWG
3.	Mr. Khumanthem Devabrata Singh	deva_kh@yahoo.co.in	Sun polo	Business and Industry	Member – SDG
4.	Dr. Manmohan Yadav	manmohan.yadav@iifm.ac.in manmohanly@gmail.com	Associate Professor Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM)	Institute	Member – SDG & TWG
5.	Dr. Rajiv Pandey	pandeyr@icfre.org	Scientist E Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)	Institute	Member- SDG & TWG
6.	Dr. Srikanta K Pangrahi	srikanta.panigrahi11@gmail.com	Director General Indian Institute of Sustainable Development	Institute	Member – SDG
7.	Mr. R C Khuntia	rckhuntia@gmail.com	Representative of Building Wood Workers International	Trade and Workers Association	Member – SDG & TWG
8.	Mr. Philip Tapsall	philiptapsall@gmail.com	(Former) Director – Sustainable Business, WWF-India.	NGO	Member – SDG & TWG
9.	Ms. Rebecca	rebecca.aranha@gmail.com	(Former) Manager – Sustainable Business , Forestry , WWF- India	NGO	Member- SDG & TWG

10.	Mr. Aditya Petwal	aditya.petwal@iucn.org	Coordinator, Leaders for Nature IUCN	NGO	Member – SDG
11.	Mr. Pravir Deshmukh	pravir.deshmukh@cii.in	Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)	Association	Member – SDG
12.	Mr. A K Bansal	bansalka@yahoo.in	IFS (retd), former Additional Director General of Forests, MoEFCC		Member – SDG
13.	Mr. Akhilesh Singh	akhilesh@ioraecological.com	Manager- Forestry, IORA Ecological Solutions	Business and Industry	Member – SDG
14.	Mr. Amit Anand	amit@carboncheck.co.in	CEO, Carbon Check India Private Limited	Business and Industry	Member – SDG
15.	Mr. Sushil Sehgal	saigal.sushil@gmail.com	Individual capacity		
16.	Mr. B H Patel	bhpatel@vsnl.com pwsmbai@gmail.com	Chairman, Plywood & Allied Product Panel, Chemical and Allied Export Promotion Council of India (CAPEXIL) Patel Wood Syndicate	NGO/ Business and Industry	Member – SDG
17.	Mr. I V Rama Rao	ivramarao@gmail.com	Chair and Managing Director, CIBART	NGO	Member – SDG
18.	Ms. K Rathna	rathna@cibart.in	Chief Operating Officer, Center for Indian Bamboo Resource and Technology (CIBART)	NGO	Member – SGD
19	Late Mr. Sanjeev Vasudev	sanjeev.vasudev@gmail.com	STADD	NGO	Member- SDG
20.	Ms. Taruna	taruna@gicia.org	Manager, Natural Resource Management, GIPL	Business and Industry	Member- SDG
21.	Ms. Deepali Rautela	deepali.rautela@nccf.in	Assistant Director, NCCF		Member – SDG & TWG
22.	Dr Manish Pande	manish.pande@qc.in	Joint Director, QCI PADD	Accreditation Body	Member- SDG & TWG

Synopsis of the Process

Meeting/Event/Phase	Date	Remarks
Governing Body , NCCF Meeting	21 st February 2015	To initiate the process under the Chairmanship of Shri A K Varma
Stakeholder Mapping and engagement exercise		
Launch of the NCCF and announcement of the Standard Setting process	16 th March 2015	Through International Conference on Forest Certification- Positioning India at New Delhi
Stakeholders Mapping and Notifications for Participation	January - March 2015	The EOI was circulated via emails , website in two cycles.
1 st International and National SDG Meeting	17 th March 2015	To discuss the way forward and take inputs from the other National Scheme owner
Formation of the SDG & TWG Groups		
1 st TWG meeting	13 th April 2015	To discuss the process and guidelines acceptance
Creation of Draft Base Document		
2 nd TWG meeting	20 th May 2015	To discuss the structure for the base document
Basic draft of the identified themes was circulated to the members via email	15 th June – 26 th June 2015	
3 rd TWG Meeting	4 th July 2015	
4 th TWG meeting	25 th August 2015	Draft Themes Finalization and Online consultation process discussion and approval
Online consultation of Theme A	7 th – 20 th September 2015	Through email and website

5th TWG Meeting	3 rd October 2015	to review and approve the Theme A
Online consultation of Theme B , C (Principles & Criteria	18 th -30 th November 2015	Via emails and website
6th TWG meeting	5 th December 2015	To review and approve Theme B & C
Online Theme D, E ,F (Principles & Criteria)And National	22 th - 17 th January 2016	Via emails and website
7th TWG Meeting	30 th January 2016	To review and approve Theme D, E ,F
8th TWG Meeting	20 th February 2016	To review the themes and discuss the extended stakeholder outreach exercise
Compiled document draft circulation to all the SDG members	14- 16 th March 2016	Via email
Extended Stakeholder Outreach Exercise		
EOI to all the members for participation in the Outreach Exercise	7 th April 2016	
2ND SDG Meeting	7 th May 2016	To update about the process and way forward
Field visits and outreach exercise	April – June 2016	
9th TWG Meeting	18 th June 2016	To review the observations of the outreach exercise
10th TWG	16 th July 2016	To review the base draft
Circulation of the Base Draft Version zero to the members for review	27 th July 2016	
3rd SDG Meeting	20 th August 2016	To present and discuss the changes in draft
11th TWG Meeting	23 rd September 2016	To discuss the comments and review

Circulation of the Draft 0 for comments from SDG	27 th September 2016	
Public Consultation		
Public Consultation of the Draft Standard	3 rd October – 4 th December 2016	
Consultation Workshop at Bengaluru	25 th October 2016	
Consultation Workshop at Odisha	8 th November 2016	
12 th TWG Meeting	19 th November 2016	To discuss the plantations within forests and the Pilot testing
Consultation workshop at Guwahati	8 th December 2016	
13 th TWG Meeting	16 th December 2016	To review the draft post consultation and Pilot testing preparation
Pilot Testing		
EOI for participation in the Pilot testing was put on web and circulated via email	January 2017	
Liaison with the State Forest Departments	December 2016-February 2017	
Pilot testing	March 2017	
Report preparation and Submission	March 2017	
14 TH TWG meeting	19 th May 2017	To discuss the Pilot testing results
15 th TWG Meeting	3 rd June 2017	To review the changes
Drafting of the document and circulation of the Final Draft Version 1.1 to	July 2017	
4 th SDG Meeting	1 st July 2017	To discuss and approve the standard
Consensus Building		
	30 th August 2017 - 5 th September 2017	
Approval of Standard		
By the Governing Body	9 th September 2017	
Launch of the Standard	13 th January 2018	