

Operational Guideline for Entry Point Activities (EPA)

Indo-German Development Cooperation

Climate Change Adaptation Programme in the Himalaya,
Component II: Tripura. Climate Resilience of Forest
Ecosystems, Biodiversity & Adaptive Capacities of Forest
Dependent Communities

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Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| ADC | Autonomous District Council |
| BMZ | Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (<i>German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation</i>) |
| BPL | Below Poverty Line |
| CEPF | Community Engagement Planning Framework |
| CREFLAT | Climate Resilient Forest Landscape in Tripura |
| DPMA | District Project Management Authority |
| EPA | Entry Point Activity |
| ESMF | Environmental and Social Management Framework |
| GoI | Government of India |
| GoT | Government of Tripura |
| GP | Gram Panchayat |
| HH | Household |
| IEC | Information, Education, and Communication |
| IGDCP | Indo German Development Cooperation Project. |
| CREFLAT | Climate Resilient Forest Landscape in Tripura |
| IWMP | Integrated Watershed Management Project |
| KfW | Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau |
| MGNREGS | Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme |
| PWD | Public Works Department |
| SWC | Soil and Water Conservation |
| TA | Technical Assistant |
| TFD | Tripura Forest Department |
| TO | Technical Officer |
| VC | Village Council/Committee |
| VCW | Village Community Worker |
| VDP | Village Development Plan |
| VDPIC | Village Development Planning and Implementation Committee |

Executive Summary

Summary EPA Steps and Processes: Identification, Prioritization, Planning, Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

| | |
|---|--|
| Introduction | EPA is to be implemented in every CREFLAT villages as per the project Feasibility Report. |
| Implementing body | VDPIC will be the planning and implementing body for EPA in coordination with the project. |
| Objectives of EPA | Rapport and confidence building measures between target communities and the project by enabling to experience early tangible benefits. |
| Guiding principles | EPA may be a bundle of different activities across the <i>paras</i> in each village (VC/GP), and not necessarily a single activity in a particular para; low cost, participatory process, provide benefits to larger section of the community members; part of VDP with clear linkages with project objectives and outcome; avoid activities that may likely result in conflicts; Should be fitted to landscape perspective. |
| Pre-requisite for EPA | Community consent; VCW in place; VDPIC has been formed; VDP prepared and EPA included in the VDP; VDPIC has a bank account. |
| Identification & Prioritization | Participatory needs assessment carried out with identification of EPA and prioritization done to short-list the potential EPA as per community ranking of EPA. |
| Preparation of EPA Plan | EPA Plan will be prepared jointly by the project and VDPIC with technical, financial, social considerations together with implementation timeline and monitoring indicators. |
| Funding and cost norms | Each unit of EPA will not exceed Rs 2 lakhs (even multiple activities across the <i>paras</i> under a single VC/GP will be treated as one Unit). |
| EPA Plan approval | The PMA/DPMA will approve the EPA (technical, cost norms and location/s) with the recommendation of the VDPIC. |
| EPA Action Plan Implementation | EPA Action Plan Implementation steps will be part of the EPA Plan and will be joint responsibility of the project and VDPIC. |
| Payment system | Payment system for works done for EPA will be as per standard financial procedures of the project. |
| Monitoring & quality control | Monitoring & quality control will be joint responsibility of the project and VDPIC; project will designate supervision officer who could be Range Officer or Beat Officer. |
| Transparency & accountability | Transparency in all matters of EPA implementation will be maintained with photographic documentation and display of information board on the activity. |
| Post project maintenance & sustainability | Project will facilitate for periodic maintenance EPA by VDPIC; post-project sustainability will be worked out to be taken care of by the VC/GP. |

1 Introduction and background

1.1 Entry Point Activities (EPA) in the Project Feasibility Report

The CREFLAT Project Feasibility Report has briefly outlined the importance of Entry Point Activities (EPA) as crucial for mobilization and confidence building within the project villages that will contribute to the internal interest and feelings of ownership over the project activities (refer page 62 of the Report). EPA has the potential to endow early and tangible assets for target communities, provide short-term financial benefits and incentives, as well as contribute to building rapport between the project and the community.

1.2 EPA in the Separate Agreement

Para 1.1.17 (page 9) of Separate Agreement indicates the EPA as one of the many activities that will be financed by the project. Under the Result Matrix (Annex 1) of the Separate Agreement, the implementation of EPA is indicated as an important indicator under Output No. 1 (see Annex 1 Results Matrix). Furthermore, under the Time Schedule (Annex 3) of the project, the EPA is indicated as one of the important milestones to be monitored.

2 Rationale and Objectives of EPA

2.1 Role of EPA in Project Management

The initial 'entry phase' in any rural development project is a stage of the project management where efforts are made to introduce to the target community the project and its facilitating or implementing agency (and in this case the PMA and DPMA of CREFLAT under the aegis of the TFD). Considering the importance of the timely and wholehearted involvement of the people in the effectiveness of the project, the EPA is a means of winning the people's trust and confidence. People's participation in CREFLAT would essentially mean identifying, planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring and maintenance of the assets by the people even during the post-project period. Therefore, EPA may be considered as a foundation of any meaningful community-based participatory programme.

2.2 Why there is a need for EPA: EPA as community mobilization tool

The traditional practice of organizing meetings and distributing posters and pamphlets could be one of the means of enabling awareness about the project among the community. However, visible confidence building among the communities on the project may best be achieved through frequent interactions with the community stakeholders and their leaders as well as providing them visible physical asset/s having most common interest. For example, drinking water related EPA or common market sheds in the local market (based on initial field interactions), could be more attractive for village community as such activities would address their urgent needs. Therefore, EPA is a mean to build goodwill with the communities as well as a process of community mobilization at the initial stages of the project implementation.

2.3 Objectives of EPA

- a) To create awareness among the communities about the project as well as to gain their confidence.
- b) To mobilize and solicit them for effective participatory project planning and implementation.
- c) To enable them early exposure and skill enhancement in the community-based participatory planning, implementation and management of small common asset/s.
- d) To endow tangible assets to target communities about which they have immediate sense of utility and benefits.
- e) To provide short-term financial benefit and incentives by way of labour wages for the EPA.

3 Guiding Principles of EPA

3.1 General guiding principles for EPA

As CREFLAT project villages are located in challenging landscapes with diverse communities, the EPA guideline can only generalize common principles. Moreover, the 'village' in CREFLAT means the entire Gram Panchayat (GP) or Village Committee (VC as in ADC areas) consisting of several paras or hamlets (average of 4-8 paras) under each GP/VC. The EPA identified, therefore, should not raise any conflict at village level or between the paras, but should cater to the needs of common people of the village. It is suggested that EPA should be of low-cost investment and should give benefit to larger number of people within the communities. Some of the general principles of EPA for CREFLAT are as follows:

- EPA may be a bundle of different activities across the paras in each village (VC/GP), and not necessarily a single activity in a particular para.
- EPA should not be capital incentive, rather low cost activities that can be achieved through community mobilization and linkages/convergence with other schemes / programme / departments preferably complemented by voluntary work by local community.
- No EPA should be taken up that will likely or have potential to disrupt the communal harmony or inter-para goodwill of the village.
- Identify and implement those EPA that will encourage maximum physical and financial contribution from the community.
- Emphasis on EPA that will provide optimum community benefits and contribute to enhancing natural resource resilience or reducing dependency on natural resources or that enhance climate resilience of communities (such as on issues relating to water or energy).
- EPA process should involve maximum participation of community members at the planning and implementation stages.
- The identified activity or activities undertaken under the EPA shall have prior approval of the general body of the VDPIC.
- EPA should be part of the Village Development Plan or VDP.
- All EPA supported by CREFLAT will have to have a clear link to the overall objective of the project (reduced forest degradation and increased incomes) and the project outcome (increased climate resilience of forest landscapes), and will have to make a proven contribution to their achievement through systematic monitoring and evaluation.
- Convergence in planning with other public schemes should be aimed (e.g., if a line agency is already planning such activity, or the activity done has not yielded desired results) with consent of local community

3.2 What activities will qualify or be included for EPA

- Works based on urgent needs of the local communities such as rehabilitation of drinking water facilities, water harvesting, repair of local market-sheds, rehabilitation of locally-valued common bio-cultural site/place including community shrine, community playground, supply of solar lantern, supply/procurement of MGNREGS implements, small farming tools or implements, etc.
- Activities relating to health, sanitation, drinking water, nutrition-focused needs may be given preference above all other activities.
- Activities that address the drudgery reduction particularly targeting the women such as creation or repair of assets for common use such as drinking water facilities, washing and bathing platform, platforms for drying of crops/NTFPs, etc.
- Locally valued unique activities that may not fit in other components of the project may also be considered.

3.3 What activities are to be avoided under EPA

- Activities that will disrupt communal harmony, or have the potential to raise conflicts, and/or goodwill and fellow feeling among the paras within the village (GP/VC).
- Activities that will not contribute to livelihood enhancement and/or drudgery reduction of common people.

- Activities that will not contribute to overall project objectives and outcome of CREFLAT.
- Activities that show no duplicity with public schemes planned already.

4 Pre-requisite for the Implementation of EPA in a CREFLAT village

- The community has provided their consent using the standard FPIC format to engage with CREFLAT.
- The VDPIC has been formed and they have been adequately introduced about the project.
- VCW has been appointed for the village and has been trained in CEPF/ESMF.
- The VDPIC members have been trained on CEPF/ESMF and participatory village development planning preparation processes.
- EPA has been identified by the VDPIC and the same has been adequately discussed, presented and agreed in the general body meeting of community (as reflected in the Meeting Minutes of the VDPIC).
- VDP has been prepared and the EPA and/or EPA implementation action plan has been included as part of the VDP.
- The VDPIC has opened a bank account.
- The VDPIC members have received training on CREFLAT financial management and record keeping requirements.

5 Implementing and Monitoring Body of EPA

- VDPIC will be the planning and implementing body of the EPA.
- A monitoring sub-committee under the aegis of VDPIC will be established to be the monitoring body of all the EPAs.
- The DPMA, in association with the concerned Technical Assistant (TA) in the Range/Block office and together with the concerned VCW will have the overarching role in the planning, approving, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the EPA.
- The project will need to designate a supervision representative or officer in the person of either Beat Officer and/or Range Officer for supervision, verification and periodic quality control monitoring of the EPA activities.

6 Process of EPA Identification and Implementation in CREFLAT

6.1 Need assessment and identification of EPA

EPA under CREFLAT will be implemented in line with the Project Implementation Manual (PIM) and EPA Operational Guideline. EPA are necessary part to orient the community members towards involvement with the project, however, there has to be some “need assessment” to be carried out initially to identify the community needs, which can be done during the community consultation processes. The guiding strategy for need assessment may include the following:

- EPA should solve the pressing problems of the community and benefit larger sections of the society.
- Project through the VCWs and Technical Assistants will need to facilitate the communities for identification of EPA through a series of informal discussion preferably in small groups instead of doing in a larger group following the participatory bottom-up approaches.
- The priority needs of deprived groups including the needs of the women should be assessed through focused group discussion (FGD).
- While undertaking the need assessment, the existing inter-para dynamics should be kept in mind, as well as any activity that could have potential for any future conflict should be avoided.

6.2 Prioritization and short-listing of potential EPA

- The VDPIC with support from the project will prepare a list of potential EPA activities based on the problems and needs identified during informal and focused group discussions.
- Potential list of EPA may be referred at Annexure 1 (suggested EPA outlined in the Feasibility Report) & Annexure 2 (EPA under IWMP)
- Using the matrix ranking and facilitated by the project, the community members along with the VDPIC members will prioritize and short-list potential key EPA activities.
- The matrix in Table 1 may be used for assessment and prioritization of the EPA.
- With the general consensus, VDPIC will identify the location of each EPA activities or a specific EPA activity as per the priority list.
- The VDPIC shall approve the final list of activities or a specific activity to be undertaken under the EPA.

Table 1. Matrix for assessment and prioritization of potential EPA in CREFLAT.

| Options | Name of EPA | Criteria for ranking of the EPA (in the scale of 1-5; the lowest being 1, highest being 5) | | | | | | | Remarks |
|---------|-------------|--|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| | | Cost (INR) in lakhs | Demand-based (1-5) | Inclusiveness (1-5) | Timeline for implementation (1-5) | Equitable (1-5) | Cost-sharing (1-5) | Overall | |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | |

6.3 Preparation and approval of EPA Plan

- The EPA Plan should have technical, financial and social considerations, along with implementation timeline and monitoring indicators. The EPA plan will be prepared by the project along with the VDPIC.
- The EPA Plan should also clearly indicate the sources of financing, that is, by CREFLAT project and/or by convergence with other schemes or departmental activities.
- The EPA Plan preparation may also include:
 - Expected primary functions/purpose of the EPA;
 - Number of likely users of the EPA;
 - Location of the EPA; justification and rationale;
 - Various components or sub-components or activities of the EPA, if any;
 - Technical specification of the EPA including, say, desired sizing, materials and sources, etc.
 - Expected additional functions/utilities of the EPA;
 - Include quality control measures and key monitoring indicators;
 - Fund release and payment system including accounts keeping methodologies;
 - Maintenance aspects including post-project sustainability of the EPA;
 - Cross check with public schemes planned or if any clash with these activities;
- The EPA Plan should be approved by the VDPIC and the Project at DPMA/PMA for allocation of fund.

6.4 Funding pattern and cost norms of EPA

- The budgeted amount of EPA as per Project Feasibility Report and PIM is Rs 2 lakhs per unit.
- Every village will be eligible only one unit financing for EPA.

- It is suggested that about Rs 10,000 may be kept for community mobilization such as awareness generation and preparation of materials for information, education, and communication (EDC) about the EPA.
- All cost norms for EPA would be as per approved rate of TFD and/or PWD (or any other relevant department) as the case may be.
- All EPA implementation should be carried out as per the specific technical and financial norms and guidelines of the project; to the extent feasible, all cost overrun and time-overrun should be avoided.

6.5 Implementation of the EPA Action Plan

- Once the EPA Action Plan and cost estimates have been approved by the Project and to that effect, the letter of approval is sent to the VDPIC, the concerned VDPIC will convene a meeting of the VDPIC.
- This meeting will serve as the preparation of an action plan for the implementation of the approved EPA. The EPA Action Plan will include identification of activities, timeline for completion, responsibility and means of implementation.
- An example of an Action Plan for EPA Implementation is given in Table 2.
- Based on the type of EPA selected at the beginning of the Implementation Action Planning process, the VDPIC in consultation with the project will decide whether the members of the VDPIC or community members (in case the activity involves only labour component) will carry out the implementation of the EPA.
- In case the EPA activities are to be carried by external contractor/s, due processes of community procurement system may be follow, or as may be decided by the project (DPMA) with information to the VDPIC.

Table 2. Example of Action Plan for EPA Implementation in CREFLAT.

| SI No. | Activity | Responsibility | Timeline |
|--------|--|----------------|----------|
| 1. | Preparation of EPA Plan and estimates. | | |
| 2. | Presentation of the EPA Plan and cost estimates to VDPIC and DPMA/PMA. | | |
| 3. | Obtain approval of EPA plan & estimates from DPMA/PMA. | | |
| 4. | Transfer of first instalment for EPA to VDPIC or only approval and sanction letter as EPA may be directly implemented by the project/DPMA (as per financial guideline of the project). | | |
| 5. | VDPIC updated action-planning meeting. | | |
| 6. | Procurement of materials. | | |
| 7. | Work implementation including participatory monitoring. | | |
| 8. | Verification of works/activities. | | |
| 9. | Inauguration of the EPA along with release of basic Do's and Don't's of the EPA or basic rules and regulations in the use of the EPA facilities. | | |
| 10. | Maintenance. | VDPIC | Periodic |

6.6 Payment system for the works done under EPA

- Fund release and payment system for the works done under EPA would be as per the financial guidelines of the project, which will also be outlined in the EPA Implementation Action Plan.
- All payments should be done after the receipt of the measurement book, muster roll vouchers duly signed and verified by Chairman of VDPIC and supervision representative of the project (Range Officer / Beat Officer).
- If external contractors do the works, the VDPIC will receive the bills from the contractor and all bills should be counter-verified by the supervision representative of the project.

- Supervision representative will also verify that all bills contain the applicable taxes and that all the applicable taxes are duly paid or deposited and accounted for.
- The supervision representative of the project in consultation with the VDPIC should prepare a consolidated statement of expenditure and work progress for submission to DPMA for payment to VDPIC or to the contractor/s directly.
- All payments should be through cheques or bank transfer.

7 Monitoring, Participatory Evaluation and Transparency

7.1 Monitoring of EPA and quality control

- The project, in consultation with the VDPIC, will identify critical indicators for monitoring during construction phase and the operational phase, including the quality parameters of the construction activities.
- The project will closely supervise and monitor the implementation progress as per the timeline and expenditure made including the quality parameters of the implementation activities.
- Monitoring report should be shared with all concerned and use the report for crosschecking, verifications and preparation of follow-up action plan where required.

7.2 Participatory Evaluation of EPA

- During the post-operational phase of the EPA, the communities should periodically undertake participatory evaluation exercise to evaluate the utility, benefits and impacts of the EPA.
- Also, discuss and agree on how benefits could be enhanced and shared across the community households.
- Where necessary or considered required, social audit of the EPA may also be encouraged.
- Community participatory evaluation should be done by the VDPIC under the guidance of the project, and record of participatory evaluation should be maintained.

7.3 Transparency in EPA

- Transparency in the implementation of EPA is crucial to secure the community participation and building trust. As EPA would most likely be the first major engagements between the project and the people, the EPA should be implemented with utmost transparency. Transparency would demonstrate that resources are being used wisely and effectively, and for the stated purpose only.
- **Photography and documentation:** For each EPA, photo-documentation should be made at least at three stages as follow. All photos should have details such as date of photography, caption of the photo, location with latitude & longitude (GPS Data), etc.
 - **Before the activity** to indicate the original landscape/site, etc.
 - **During the construction phase:** Several rounds during early or initial stages of construction and mid-way of the construction. Do include the photographs of people working in the construction site as they labour.
 - **After the completion of the EPA,** including during the inauguration or opening of the EPA, as well as during active utilization of the EPA facilities.
- **Display board:** There should be a display board at each EPA site with estimated cost, expenditure, year of execution, name of the place, number of beneficiaries, key contact person for the facilities, etc. Display board should be low-cost but durable, and could be at least bi-lingual, that is, English and Bengali or local dialect of the community benefiting from the EPA.
- **Cost of display board may be included in the estimates of the budget while preparing for the proposal.**

8. Post-Project Sustainability of EPA

- Post-project sustainability and maintenance strategies of the EPA should be clearly spelt out in the Action Plan, which will be discussed and agreed in the community meeting and implemented by the VDPIC.

- After the project closure, the GP/VC should take full responsibilities for the monitoring and maintenance of the EPA.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Suggested ideas for EPA in the Feasibility Report of CREFLAT

- Repair of minor infrastructure such as bridges, trails, community sheds, refurbishing community centres, etc.
- Small-scale soil erosion and landslide control measures.
- Provision of small-scale water pumping and storage facilities using solar pumps, etc.
- Establishment of eco-tourism facilities (for villages with rich biodiversity values).
- Technology/technical demonstrations on improved, climate resilient agriculture.

Annexure 2 – EPA carried out under IWMP in Tripura and other states in Northeast India

- 1) Drinking water facilities.
- 2) Digging/renovation of Water Tank/Community Pond/Community Reservoir.
- 3) Water pipelines.
- 4) Community water filter.
- 5) Ring wells.
- 6) Construction/renovation of market sheds.
- 7) Community toilets & bathing place.
- 8) Village community hall.
- 9) Footsteps.
- 10) Fencing of community reserved areas.
- 11) Purchase of diesel generator.
- 12) Renovation of community/village guest house/community hall.
- 13) Improvement of village approach road.
- 14) Renovation of community fishery pond.
- 15) Waiting shed.
- 16) Solar lights in the village.
- 17) Culvert construction on the approach road of the village.
- 18) Plastic chairs and tables for community meetings, trainings, etc.
- 19) Sintex water tanks.
- 20) Retaining wall along the village approach road.
- 21) Hand pump.
- 22) Cooking utensils for community gathering.
- 23) Mini rice mill.
- 24) Construction/renovation of village entrance gate.
- 25) Renovation of village football ground.
- 26) Improvement of village drainage.
- 27) Dustbins for community use in critical areas of the village.