

**Brief Report: PAGE Consultations for Eastern and North-Eastern States of India:
Kolkata, West Bengal, India August 23, 2019**

The eastern and north-eastern states of India are resource rich in terms of agricultural, mineral and biodiversity resources. However, they lag rest of the Indian states on most economic indicators. The North-Eastern (NE) states are hills states with fragile Himalayan ecosystem and have distinctive issues in sustainable development. In order to draw an inclusive prioritization exercise, the third PAGE India Sub-National consultation workshop focusing on the Eastern and North Eastern states was conducted by TERI under PAGE Stocktaking assignment at Kolkata, West Bengal on August 23, 2019 which was led by ILO as a PAGE Agency. The participants were drawn from among experts on sustainable economic development, mining, agriculture, livelihoods, ecosystems and biodiversity; government officials; policy think-tanks; representatives from industry associations, academia and research institutions; civil society representatives and other prominent stakeholders. The workshop saw strong presence of the top-level state functionaries including the Chief Secretary of the State of Sikkim, Principal Secretaries of three important states and senior officials from several states in the region who also apprised of the measures being taken by these states in the domain of sustainable development.

Dr. Cristina Martinez, Senior Specialist, Environment and Decent Work, ILO while making a presentation, highlighted the importance of just transition in the context of high vulnerability of jobs due to climate change and countries transitioning to low carbon economies. The Chief Secretary, State of Sikkim underlined the importance of coherent policies of Central and State governments and elaborated upon the specific challenges faced by the hill state.

The workshop which aimed at providing consultative inputs for the green economy stocktaking study, setting priorities of UN agencies for knowledge partnership, getting inputs on a roadmap for long-term sustainability of IGE interventions beyond PAGE and serving as a platform for networking, exchange of ideas and future partnerships; comprised three breakout sessions on thematic areas important in the context of the eastern and NE states of India. The three areas are **Agriculture and livelihoods; Ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change; and Minings and Extractives** each of the sessions was attended by relevant experts and practitioners and was moderated by an eminent expert/UN Agencies/PAGE to derive maximum consultative output.

The thematic area of ‘Agriculture and livelihoods’ assumes foremost importance in the context of eastern and NE states in view of dependence of significantly high percentage of the population of these states - as high as 80% in case of some states, on agriculture. This sector has significant challenges like slow growth, migrations due to vulnerability of livelihoods, frequent calamities in the form of draught and floods and a sustenance model of agriculture. The session deliberated upon key issues like enhancing agricultural productivity; providing resilient livelihoods to tackle migration, various constraints for achieving sustained and inclusive high growth; institutional approaches towards sustainable food and farming systems; efficient agricultural value chains and mainstreaming and climate-proofing smallholder agriculture.

The North-eastern India which has been declared as a mega-biodiversity hotspot in the world, has been witnessing rapid population growth, uncontrolled urbanization, industrialization, intensification of agriculture and destruction of forests coupled with large scale encroachment of forest land and their consequences on the ecology. The session on ‘Ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change’ debated these issues of critical concern on sustainable development and highlighted the importance of the triple bottom-lines of environment, society and economy and the community participation in preservation efforts. The issues for this thematic area included, inter alia, knowledge gap around estimation of ecosystem services from forests and other ecosystems; climate risks and strategies; strengthening

knowledge base in terms of adaptive management for scientific planning of multiple-use landscapes; governance, management and conservation of forest land and resources.

The Eastern part of India is the mineral heartland of the country. The session on ‘Mining and extractives’ deliberated upon the policies and models for sustainable mining in view of the damage being caused due to indiscriminate and unsustainable practices. It discussed the frameworks for incorporating the three dimensions of sustainability viz. Society, Ecology & Economy along with parameters such as conservation, accountability, carrying capacity, gender equity and diversity in the impact assessment of mining projects. just transition in the regional context, strategies to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts of mining and extractions on water, biodiversity and land and governance and institutional mechanisms needed for reclaiming efficiency and promoting responsible extraction were also discussed in detail.

Apart from the sector-specific issues, the breakout sessions specifically dwelt upon the priority areas for the concerned states, as also key interventions which PAGE should focus on in India for making a difference in the particular sector. There were detailed deliberations on the stock-taking study being conducted by TERI for PAGE engagement plan in India following the presentations made the TERI team. The workshop was successful in bringing several stakeholders and decision makers on one platform. It could mobilize commitments from many important and relevant stakeholders in the sectoral and thematic areas, as well as state government functionaries on PAGE. It sparked deliberations on thematic areas and generated several interesting and actionable ideas for PAGE India engagement plan.