MULTI-SECTORAL PLATFORMS FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

How they might better serve forest and farm producers

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FOREST AND FARM FACILITY

Multi-sectoral platforms for planning and implementation

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Acronyms

ANR	Agriculture and Natural Resources platform, Gambia
BID	Inter-American Development Bank
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CFF	County Forest Forums, Liberia
CFG	Community Forest Management Group, Nepal
CFUG	Community Forest User Group, Nepal
CONAP	The National Council for Protected Areas, Guatemala
COP	Conference of Parties – supreme body of UNFCCC
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forest User Groups, Nepal
FFF	Forest and Farm Facility, hosted by the FAO
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
GCI	Inter-institutional Coordination Group, Guatemala
GPSC	Cabinet of Production, Services and Commerce, Nicaragua
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
INAB	The National Forestry Institute, Guatemala
INAFOR	The National Forestry Institute, Nicaragua
INATEC	The National Technology Institute, Nicaragua
INTA	The Nicaraguan Institute of Agricultural Technology, Nicaragua
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LFG	Leasehold Forestry Group, Nepal
MAGA	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition, Guatemala
MAGFOR	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry, Nicaragua
MAI	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Myanmar
MARENA	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Nicaragua
MARN	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource, Guatemala
MDFT	Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams, Gambia
MEFCCA	Ministry of Family Economy, Community Cooperatives and Associations, Nicaragua
MERN	Myanmar Environmental Rehabilitation and conservation Network
MINSA	Ministry of Health, Nicaragua
MITA	Inter-sectoral Platform for Land and the Environment, Guatemala
MOECAF	Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, Myanmar
MoFSC	Ministry of Forestry and Soil Conservation, Nepal
NACO	Natural Resource Consulting, Gambia

NACOFAG	National Coordinating Organisation for Farm Association of the Gambia
NAPA	National Adaptation Programmes of Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NEA	National Environmental Agency, Gambia
NFLF	National Forest and Landscape Forum, Liberia
NFP	National Forest Programme
NFPG	National Farmers Platform of the Gambia
NLBI	Non Legally Binding Instrument on forests
RAAN	Autonomous North Atlantic Region, Nicaragua
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
R-PP	REDD+ Readiness Plan
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee to the ANR platform, Gambia
TANGO	The Association of Non-Government Organisations, Gambia
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WAAPP	West African Agricultural Productivity Programme
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

Multi-sectoral platforms are processes which often become institutionalized bodies drawing together multiple stakeholder representatives from different sectors to make decisions. They are convened to harness the benefits of collaboration in tackling planning problems that span more than one sectoral jurisdiction and therefore require a co-ordinated response in policy formulation and implementation. Examples include platforms to address planning issues around climate change, food security, biodiversity conservation, timber legality and so on – many of which have nested processes from international level right down to local level.

The improved participation, transparency and accountability they embody is seen as best practice in governance of forest and farm landscapes. They are often therefore invoked in the design or reform of policy processes that span multiple sectors. In addition, they are particularly useful when problems spill into more heated conflict, when power imbalances require redress, when broader consensus or innovation are needed and when there are significant collaborative efficiencies to be had in tackling problems of a substantial nature.

The first pillar of Forest and Farm Facility work aims to strengthen forest and farm producer organisations for business and livelihoods and for policy engagement. The preceding decade of work by the NFP Facility, and three years of work by the Growing Forest Partnerships initiative noted, from the perspective of local forest and farm producer organisations, widespread deficits in policy design, implementation and information that constitute a substantial impediment to sustainable, profitable and socially just forest and farm production by local producer organisations. So multi-sectoral platforms to resolve such deficits are a natural second pillar of FFF work – building on in-country demand, and assuming the mantel of prior work in the programmes that led up to FFF.

But catalysing such platforms is challenging. There are challenges to do with the multiplicity of platforms with which forest and farm producer might engage. Which one to choose? There are challenges to do with the restricted time and financial resources to participate. How best to engage? There are challenges to do with differences of perception as to what might be worth discussing within them, What to focus on? Additional operational challenges also need to be addressed – how to maintain the trust to see them operate productively? How to overcome differing expectations about what might be a desirable outcome? How to agree and abide by processes of decision-making?

Prior experience (from the literature and in practice) suggests that all the following needs careful consideration in order to maximise the beneficial outcomes of such platforms: questions of leadership; collaborative issues to do with relationships, structures and processes; and issues of facilitation. A number of specific pointers are laid out in the text about the delicate skill of making progress in such multi-sectoral settings. Naturally, the quality of representation of forest and farm producer organisations is one key element in framing discussions in such platforms so that the outcomes meet their needs. To be effective such platforms need to be both multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder in nature.

In each of the six FFF partner countries attempts have been made to catalyse or strengthen multi-sectoral platforms that better serve forest and farm producer groups. These include the Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) platform in Gambia, two national (GCI and biomass energy platforms) and two provincial platforms (the MITA and Peten Agroforestry platforms) in Guatemala, the National Forests and Landscape Forum (NFLF) in Liberia, an ad hoc launch platform in Myanmar, a Forest and Farm Enterprises platform in Nepal, and the Cabinet of Production, Services and Commerce (GPSC) in Nicaragua. While engagement directly by forest and farm producer groups varies, there are examples of positive outcomes in each case, and good prospects for sustainability in most.

From experiences so far, it is clear that FFF can learn from some of the emerging lessons herein presented. National FFF learning facilitators can help platform convenors to sharpen the goals that draw multi-stakeholder representatives together. There is scope to improve the clarity and processes through which leadership and facilitation drive collaborative inertia. Strengthening the organisational power and representation at these platforms is an ever-present priority that FFF is set up directly to address. But the FFF can also play a role in fueling the discussions within these platforms with carefully assembled evidence on the issues at hand. Through its financial support FFF can also firm up commitments made by participants in these platforms and help to hold participants accountable to them through careful minuting and follow-up. Finally the FFF can play a role in documenting the process through which collaborative decisions were made, the impacts of those decisions on forest and farm producers and the forest itself. By so doing FFF's support to multi-functional platforms can play an influential role in better serving the needs of forest and farm producer groups.

1. Introduction what are multi-sectoral platforms?

1.1 What are they?

Multi-sectoral platforms (often also called cross-sectoral platforms – we treat the two as synonymous here) can help institutionalize processes drawing together multiple stakeholder representatives from different sectors to make decisions on policy. They are convened to harness the benefits of collaboration in tackling planning problems that span more than one sectoral jurisdiction and therefore require a co-ordinated response in policy formulation and implementation. They differ from mere dialogue processes in the degree to which members are able to go beyond networking, to make commitments, resource those commitments, and hold each other accountable to such coordinated responses. Putting in place multi-sectoral platforms can ensure that there are ongoing mechanisms in place to maintain good communications and channels.

The need for these platforms has become increasingly urgent to manage complex decision making across landscapes; to avoid conflicting land use policies and programmes as pressures continue to grow for access to, and use of forests, farm land, pastures, waterways, minerals and environmental services; and to explore synergies between different interest groups, and investment choices in order to ensure truly sustainable development outcomes.

Multi-sectoral platforms may be established and convened at, and draw representatives from, different levels of decision-making authority, depending on the scale of the problem in view. For example, processes may be constituted at global level to deal with global planning problems and involve Ministerial representatives. Alternatively processes may be constituted at local level and involve local authority representatives. Furthermore, they may involve processes in

between these extremes – such as at national or regional levels.

Multi-sectoral platforms may also involve nested and interconnected processes between different levels. So for example, a process at global level may draw on representatives from, and be informed by related processes at the national level. Similarly, national level processes, may themselves draw representatives from and be informed by regional or local level processes.

While policy coordination and effective implementation are the main aims of these processes, and therefore require participation from decision-makers in some form, multi-sectoral platforms can benefit from inputs and participation from broader constituencies. These might include technical experts or representatives of forest and farm producer groups. Indeed establishing such platforms can specifically provide channels through which such inputs and multi-stakeholder participation can be encouraged.

1.2 What relevance do they have to forest and farm producer groups?

Multi-sectoral platforms addressing forest and farm issues come in many shapes and sizes. They are usually established to deal with a discrete planning problem. As a result, field level forest and farm producers may be affected by the work of more than one multi-sectoral policy platform. A number of examples can be cited to help illustrate how they work in practice.

One example involves global planning problems to do with mitigating and adapting to climate change. These require global collaboration across many sectors. Consequently, a Conference of the Parties (COP), the supreme body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meets once a year and draws together delegations of Ministerial level representatives from different countries, and different Ministries within countries, to review the Convention's progress. But country delegations are in turn informed by planning processes at national level. This may involve multi-sectoral platforms that discuss National Climate Change Strategies. These in turn may be informed by other multi-sectoral platforms dealing with sub-component issues of the larger whole – for example, platforms relating to National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), or National Strategies for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+). And these platforms, which are often convened with Ministerial oversight in capital cities, may in turn be informed by regional and even local planning processes, that themselves draw together lower levels of decision-making representation from various sectors. At each of these levels, and in addition to decision-making representatives, there are often invited inputs and representation from relevant organisation – for example, technical experts from research institutions, representatives of forest and farm producer organisations and so on.

A second example involves global planning problems to do with food security. Once more, these require global collaboration across several sectors. As a result, the Committee of World Food Security (CFS) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations bundles together the capacities of several UN system agencies in coherent action programmes under the leadership

of the UN Secretary-General. The membership of the Committee is up to Ministerial level and open to all Member States of The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) or The World Food Programme (WFP) and non-Member States of FAO that are Member States of the United Nations. The CFS also has membership of civil society organisations and Private Sector representatives participating. This platform is informed in turn by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) that provides independent, scientific knowledge-based analysis and advice – and involves a steering committee of acknowledged experts from different countries, further informed by issue based teams (Page, 2013). These two structures intersect with national food security programmes that draw together national decision makers from relevant sectors. Again, these national platforms may be informed by a range of regional or local platforms. At each level, inputs and representation may be extended to technical experts and representatives of forest and farm producer groups.

A third example involves global planning problems to do with biodiversity conservation. Yet another set of problems that require global collaboration across several sectors. In this case the apex-level platform is the Conference of the Parties (COP) that draws together up to Ministerial delegations to discuss issues relating to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), informed in this case by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) (Secretariat to the CBD, 2001). Working groups are organised around five thematic work programmes, addressing marine and coastal biodiversity, agricultural biodiversity, forest biodiversity, the biodiversity of inland waters, and dry and sub-humid lands. The COP, SBSTTA and secretariat are informed national level National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) which draw together national level decision-makers (up to Ministerial level). These in turn are informed by regional and local platforms for the conservation of biological diversity. Once again, at each of these levels inputs and representation may be invited from technical experts and representatives of forest and farm producer groups.

A fourth example involves regional planning problems to do with the illegal trade in tropical timber, and other forest risk commodities, entering a particular market such as the European Union. Again, these require global collaboration across several (albeit slightly fewer) sectors. Consequently the EU organises a biannual stakeholder meeting in Brussels around the Council Working Group Forestry (Van Bodegom and Hijweege, 2006). The discussions (which include up to Ministerial representation from both Europe and trading partner countries) cover progress, new developments and possible concerns about the EU international forestry agenda – in which the EU Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) is the main focus. This is informed in turn by biannual FLEGT consultation meetings convened by the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House in London and funded by DFID – in which country delegations also participate. These are informed in turn by discussions on trade related Voluntary Partnership Agreements at national level in trading country partners. And these platforms themselves may be informed by regional and local processes of consultation. As before these may involve inputs and representation from relevant organisations, both technical experts and from forest and farm producer groups.

Many other forest and farm-related planning problems (to do with land rights, labour, water, product certification, combatting desertification etc.) may also have equivalent structures at both global, national, regional and local levels. It is quickly apparent that a multiplicity of multi-sectoral platforms has great relevance to forest and farm producer groups – albeit slightly overwhelmingly so.

It is also clear from the summaries above that much of the discretionary power in such processes comes from Governments who generally control and grant inclusion, involvement and participation of other stakeholders. This provides a challenge to the full involvement of forest and farm producers, and hence provides a powerful justification for some external intervention in the facilitation of such platforms – to balance up the power between participating groups. It should be noted, that one of the main recent drivers for forest-related multi-sectoral platforms emerged through the work of the prior National Forest Programme Facility (see FAO, 2013) – that recognised the extra-sectoral challenges to forest and prospects for improved outcomes through multi-sectoral collaboration. Nevertheless, the review of the NFP Facility noted that success in this area had been limited. The new FFF has taken up the challenge, but with a new bottom up emphasis, strengthening forest farm producers groups to engage, rather than an emphasis primarily on the policy processes with which they might engage.

2. Motivation why are multi-sectoral platforms needed?

2.1 What is their underlying rationale?

Multi-sectoral platforms are the key means of gathering the experience of a broad group of people to discuss issues in a structured and transparent way so as to come to decisions about the best way forward. There is a broad literature that supports the improved outcomes that are possible through group inputs to decision-making. Principles such as efficiency, transparency, participation are both seen as the core indicators of good governance (UNDESA, 2007), but are also integral to such platforms. For this reason, multi-sectoral platforms have become a visible symbol of and central ingredient in attempts to improve governance.

Multi-sectoral platforms, while not in any sense an option of last resort, have also widely been seen as a particularly useful tool for solving especially difficult, unique or 'wicked' planning problems (Armistead, 2007). By 'wicked' it is understood that the planning problem has no definitive formulation, no easily provable solution, with every possible implementation pathway involving waves of different consequences for different groups over an extended (unbounded) time period – and in which the problem is probably a symptom of other equally wicked problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973).

Especially difficult planning problems are found in natural resource sectors (the core interest of forest and farm producer organisation) due to (i) multi-level overlapping sectoral jurisdictions (e.g. local regional and national governments); (ii) stakeholders differential knowledge and experience; (iii) differing sectoral values and norms; (iv) historical mistrust and (v) uncertainty about the impacts of different solution options (Gray, 2004a). For example, agriculture sector

investment policies and practices often result in forest clearance and the displacement of forest farming communities – and may be directly at odds with forest sector policies and practices or indeed with environmental protection policies and practices. Conversely, forest sector investments, for example in forest conservation, REDD+ or combatting illegal logging, may have implications for agriculture policies – such as those relating to food security.

2.2 What more specific issues trigger their establishment?

As a result, the motivation for their establishment often comprises a number of the following elements:

Conventional best practice – In many cases the establishment of multi-sectoral platforms is a core part of programmes to improve the efficiency, transparency and participation of policy planning and implementation (UN-DESA, 2007). The benefits of group decision-making enshrined in popular sayings such as 'two heads are better than one' are one core reason for opening up policy planning processes. In addition there are political benefits to behold from transparent and accountable governance. Many processes that involve either the design or the reform of policy / law multi-sectoral platforms are seen as standard best practice.

The involvement of representatives from different sectors can be particularly useful in avoiding overlaps or duplications of efforts that might otherwise occur between sectors. In many cases, the reform processes attract support from external development partners – who may wish to insist that their support does not have any undesired effects. Again, multi-sectoral platforms are seen as the best way to achieve desired outcomes and avoid possible unwanted effects. For example, this was a particularly notable feature of the National Forest Programme Facility work in multiple countries where consultative platforms were developed often at regional and national level (FAO, 2013).

Problems uncontained – In many cases the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms is driven by difficult planning problems spilling into the domain of political economy. For example, food-related patterns of agricultural investment in forest-risk commodities may be generating displacement and social conflict that requires coordinated political intervention (see for example Cotula, 2013). Global concerns over illegal logging, forest-related carbon emissions, and climate change may generate programmes that themselves breed conflict when the rights of local communities are not accommodated within a coordinated political response (see for example ACRN, 2014).

In these and many other similar cases, a planning problem spills over into social conflict that affects the domains of different sectoral decision-making agencies and therefore requires a coordinated governance response. There is substantial evidence that such conflicts can be tackled through consensus-based decision-making, shared responsibility for resulting actions, and collective action to gather necessary data and resources to implement solutions (Schroeder-Wildberg et al. 2005). In order for such consensus to emerge, a multi-sectoral policy platform is

often required that engages local forest and farm producers to air their grievances and suggest solutions.

Power imbalances requiring redress – In many instances, the spill over of difficult planning problems requires political action to redress imbalances of power and voice in articulating what the problem is. Different stakeholder groups might have very different access to decision-making power. For example, in Guyana, a neoliberal economic program from the 1980s allowed representatives of Asian companies to negotiate control over at least 80% of Guyana's large-scale forestry concessions, equivalent to one-third of the 15.8 million hectares of State-administered public forests (Bulkan, 2014). The way in which such deals are done and justified can often lead to a situation in which more powerful actors do not perceive there to be a problem – and where the less powerful take a long time to air their grievances, if they manage to do so at all.

In order to address such imbalances of power, in which problems remain unrecognised by the powerful causal actors, it is often necessary to widen the decision-making arena. This might involve both strengthening collaboration between and social mobilisation of less powerful groups such as forest and farm producers (see for example Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2004) and tactical moves to use multi-sectoral platforms that involve powerful actors beyond those directly responsible for the issue in question. By using such platforms the actions of particular sectoral elites can be challenged.

Consensus required – As noted above, the positions of dominant powerful groups and their alliances may be challenged (in part through the establishment of multi-sectoral platforms or by the spill over of the problem in such a way as to affect their interests). The powerful groups may then themselves seek processes through which new consensus can be reached around a solution.

Multi-sectoral platforms can provide a vehicle through which they can build inter-sectoral consensus on how the problem is framed (Tannen, 1979) reaching a shared understanding on what the problem is, why it is occurring, the values and norms (motivations) of the institutional representatives concerned, and how it might be solved (Gray, 2004a). Reaching consensus often requires a substantial investment to develop the social capital / trust required to address the problem. This might be through emphasising bonds of citizenship / kinship, professional status, historical obligations, mutual dependencies and so on.

Innovation necessary – Difficult planning problems often require the sectoral participants to explore broader areas of possible innovation in solving the problem (Powell et al. 1996). For example, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience may require innovative ways of mobilising local actors through coordinated political action to address landscape level planning problems (Butchart et al. 2010). When palm oil producers sought greater social acceptability and environmental sustainability in the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil they solicited innovative new thinking by environmental and social NGOs who were engaged with that round

table (RSPO, 2012).

In many ways, formal negotiation channels for pursuing global sustainable development have become clogged and inoperable in recent years. The way forward is increasingly seen in 'issue based approaches' that gather smaller but still multi-sectoral partnerships together around particular issues. So for example, following the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development one particular commentator noted: "This Summit will be remembered not for the treaties, the commitments, or the declarations it produced, but for the first stirrings of a new way of governing the global commons – the beginnings of a shift from the stiff formal waltz of traditional diplomacy to the jazzier dance of improvisational solution-oriented partnerships that may include non-government organizations, willing governments and other stakeholders" (WRI, 2002).

Collaborative efficiencies – In tackling difficult planning problems it would be exceptional for any individual or indeed institution to have had all the skills and resources necessary to solve the problem alone. In the face of skill deficits and scarce resources, multi-functional platforms can search out different levels of collaborative efficiency. They can match champions at the political level, with field level operators who help to scale up a solution on the ground.

A spectrum of potential collaborative efficiencies for multi-sectoral platforms has been described – each level going one stage further (Himmelman, 2001):
- Networking – exchanging information for mutual benefit (not much time or trust needed)
- Co-ordinating – exchanging information for common benefit and altering activities for common purpose (time and trust needed – but no sharing of turf)
- Co-operating – exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and common purpose (time and trust and shared turf)
- Collaborating – exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources and a willingness to enhance the capacity of another for (transformative shifts in institutional structure, resourcing and activity based on high levels of time, trust and shared turf).

In many ways, each of these different categories of collaboration is useful in its own right, but in moving towards more concrete action, the latter categories are desirable. The FFF has framed its work on catalysing of multi-sectoral platforms quite broadly – and it may be necessary to revisit this with a more tightly defined vision of the category of collaboration that is desired.

2.3 Why are they integral to the mission and pillars of the Forest and Farm Facility?

In the final report on 10 years of in-country partnership through the National Forest Programme Facility (FAO, 2013) it was noted that most country Forest Departments had not been able to establish the necessary cross-sectoral linkages, nor had they been able to integrate forestry into overarching policies. The forest sector had remained "isolated" and to a large extent excluded from the higher level national policy dialogue. Making reference to other sectors and addressing

inconsistencies of sectoral policies had been weak in almost all countries. There was felt to be a lack of recognition of the national importance, economic as well as social and environmental, of forests. This could be attributed to the lack of economic data on the contribution of the informal forestry sector as well the forest environmental services to the national economy. The limited communication capacity and competence of forest administrations is another identified reason for the missing link. With this firmly in view – the new FFF was tasked with addressing this challenge.

The Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) is hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and comprises a Management Team composed by FAO, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The FFF vision is that "Smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples organizations have improved their livelihoods and the decision-making over forest and farm landscapes". In order to realise this vision, FFF activities are organised under three pillars:
- Pillar 1: Strengthen smallholder, women, community and Indigenous Peoples' producer organizations for business/livelihoods and policy engagement.
- Pillar 2: Catalyze multi-sectoral stakeholder platforms with governments at local and national levels.
- Pillar 3: Link local voices and learning to global processes through communication and information dissemination.

The desire for policy engagement that forms one element of pillar 1 becomes the rationale for catalysing multi-sectoral platforms (pillar 2) with which those forest and farm producer can effectively interact. The idea behind multi-sectoral platforms was not dreamed up by FFF in isolation. In the six existing partner countries in which the FFF operates (Gambia, Guatemala, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal and Nicaragua), and much more broadly, there are, from the perspective of local forest and farm producer organisations: deficits in policy information; unwarranted restrictions to local resource use; unjustifiable resource allocations to outside interests; ambiguities in rights and responsibilities; and in some cases direct contradictions between different sectoral jurisdictions. Together these constitute a substantial impediment to sustainable, profitable and socially just forest and farm production by local producer organisations. They hamper environmental restoration, poverty reduction and social conflict resolution. Difficult planning issues such as these require multi-sectoral resolution through collaboration – catalysed through multi-sectoral platforms. Furthermore in thinking towards the kinds of integrated policies needed in the future to incentivize livelihoods and recognize sustainable management that in ways that cross traditional departmental boundaries to match the perspectives of forest and farm producers, new multi-sectoral platforms can generate innovative new solutions.

Both because of the historical legacy of the NFP Facility and for the practical reasons alluded to above, FFF has already sought to catalyse and strengthen multi-sectoral platforms that bring together different ministerial and departmental actors to discuss policy issues that need to be addressed to unleash the potential of forest and farm producer groups. In order to improve the efficacy of those platforms, the FFF Steering Committee requested in late 2013 that the Management Team unpack a little more clearly the rationale for this work and how it is currently being operationalised in

partner countries. This working document might then, through a process of discussion and review be developed into more of a guidance piece for in-country learning co-ordinators.

3. Challenges – what challenges do multi-sectoral platforms face?

The preceding section introduced the various ways in which difficult planning problems require the establishment of multi-sectoral platforms as a response. Such planning problems are endemic to most countries – and this is certainly the case in FFF partner countries. The preceding section also introduced the specific rationale for catalysing such platforms within pillar 2 of FFF. But for a variety of reasons that we describe in more detail below, there are a variety of practical challenges to catalysing multi-sectoral platforms. It is important to describe these so as to remain realistic about what FFF might achieve. Furthermore, these challenges vary along the context and immediately introduce the need for a degree of flexibility about operational practice – rather than pursuing any prescriptive 'one-size-fits-all' approach to such platforms.

3.1 Challenges to do with entry points

Organisational strength of forest and farm producer groups to engage – one of the greatest challenges to multi-sectoral platforms is that the people closest to the ground, and with most knowledge of the problems first hand (i.e. forest and farm producers) are not organised to represent their views in such platforms. In many cases, platforms are forced to operate in an extractive manner – reaching out through 'consultation processes' to elicit the views of these producers. But often those consulted are not really representative of their constituency, or not authorised to do so. More importantly they are often uninformed over the background information about the process on which they are being consulted, the impact their views might have, and how they might correct any misinterpretation that arise.

Of all the challenges facing multi-sectoral platforms, this is probably the most significant. It undermines the very core of what such platforms

might achieve, namely broadly informed and socially acceptable decision-making. Without strong representative organisation of forest and farm producer groups the very idea of 'entry points' becomes irrelevant – there is no-one legitimate to 'enter'. For this very reason, the first pillar of the FFF focuses on strengthening forest and farm producer organisations.

Multiplicity of difficult planning problems and multi-level platforms to address them – efforts to catalyse multi-sectoral platforms face an immediate issue that is common to almost all of the FFF partner countries – the proliferation of such platforms. Not only are their many platforms, but they often also have nested processes at different levels (local, national and even international). The perceived urgency of tackling development and environment problems has led to multiple overlapping agendas (see section 1): Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) strategies, national food security programmes, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP), processes to define legality within Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs). Each of these might correctly be framed as a difficult planning problem. Each often leads to the establishment of local, national and international processes – usually overseen by some form of multi-sectoral policy platform. Overlaps in the content of discussions within such platforms are often substantial. The demands on those wishing to participate are high – which often results in key decision-makers not being able to attend – usually sending less well-informed proxies. This in turn diminishes the capacity of those platforms to make decision and commit resources to their implementation.

A practical issue faced by forest and farm producers (and FFF attempts to support their policy engagement) is to know which of these many possible processes, and at what level, would be most efficient to engage with. For people living an integrated rural existence it can be frustrating that only a small fraction of their concerns and demands can be discussed within such platforms – each with limited decision-making scope and complex externally nuanced agendas that are a barrier to engagement. The option of catalysing a more generic policy platform driven by the needs of those forest and farm producers simply causes further process proliferation. In short, careful thought must be given to the entry point – which policy platform, to discuss what, and with whom.

Restricted timeframes and financial resources – another area of challenge in catalysing multi-sectoral platforms has to do with scheduling. Many complicated issues require a degree of information and discussion well in advance – especially if forest and farm producer groups are to adequately prepare their inputs. Framed in terms of the right to Free prior and informed consent (FPIC) this is a fundamental principle embedded in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which directly affects millions of forest and farm producers. Up front time needs to be dedicated to ensuring that people are well informed of issues and options. For example in The Forest Dialogue process between investors and forest and farm producer groups on how best to invest in locally controlled forestry – three dialogues were required just to reach consensus on an agenda between family smallholders, community groups and Indigenous Peoples. Particularly when there is a process of policy

reform with sharp decision deadlines and drafting timetables, it can be difficult and expensive for forest and farm producer groups to engage.

A particular issue is that resources have to made available, not only for the actual policy platform event, but also for all the preparatory work to inform, engage and then follow-up the platforms meetings. Without such sustained process and active facilitation, the capacity of the platform to address issues and reach collaborative agreement is likely to be severely impaired.

3.2 Challenges to do with operational issues

Setting them up, running them and shutting them down – It may seem mundane, but a very real challenge with multi-sectoral platforms is setting them up and running them in the first place. A justification has to be found, and someone to champion it (in the context of overloaded and busy stakeholders). Resources must be assembled and secured for the life-time that a platform needs to achieve its objectives. Discussions on representation and membership must be held, invitations sent, minutes kept etc. All of this requires energy, leadership and resources.

Equally important is that multi-sectoral platforms, when they have reached a suitable and hopefully pre-decided outcome, need to be shut down. There seem to be a range of platforms whose ongoing purpose and outcomes are unclear. They linger on, perhaps providing an opportune meeting place, or a sense of self-worth to those participating, but with little real decision-maker influence or impact. The energy, legitimacy and power have gone. Findings ways to shut such platforms down is a necessary challenge in managing the multiplicity of platforms earlier described.

Differing perceptions of severity of problem – As noted in the section on power imbalances above, there may be differing perceptions of the severity of elements of a planning problem. For example, there might be a strong incentive for forest farm producers marginalised by land investments to raise that issue, but little incentive for agricultural department to open up issue for discussion. This can cause stand offs between groups trying to advance or discuss different agendas, or simply the marginalisation of the perspective of the less powerful groups.

In part, the problem noted above can come down to a lack of organisation and representation amongst representatives of forest and farm producer groups. Without strong organisation to champion their views, issues such as insecure land tenure, non-transparent land allocation, lack of market access, insufficient extension and so on can be readily put to one side – and the interests of large-industrial land users can receive undue prominence.

Trust between participating groups – Sometimes people do not know who is participating. In other cases sectoral representatives frame the problem in such a way that it involves a strong sense of identity (who they see themselves as in comparison with other sectoral groups) and consequently adopt a defensive stance – rather than collaborative stance to ensure their identity remains intact. Some groups may fear loss of unilateral control over outcomes or have concerns

over dependence on altered activities, resources and willingness of other sectors (Gray, 2004b). In short, there are often strong tensions, rivalry and competition between participating groups, in Government, civil society and private sector groupings.

For whatever reason, lack of trust between the members of multi-sectoral platforms can lead to entrenched and defensive positions that blocks any real innovation and progress. Finding ways to build trust and mutually acceptable options is strongly dependent on the leadership and facilitation of such platforms (a topic addressed in the following section).

3.3 Challenges to do with follow-up

Differing expectations about desirable outcomes – In introducing the different potential categories of collaboration, above, it was noted that there are different possible expectations as to what a multi-sectoral policy platform might achieve. For example, some participants might be quite satisfied with simple networking – exchanging information but little else. Other participants might be looking towards full collaboration in which altered activities, sharing of resources and new institutional responsibilities are firmly in view. These differences in expectation can hamper progress – with those content simply to network resisting any push towards more formal decisions and commitments (especially where these involve financing).

Again, the capacity to push a multi-sectoral policy platform towards useful full collaborative actions is in part determined by the strength of organisation of forest and farm producer groups. For example, in Guatemala, a national Alianza, made up of more than 400 community groups, with about 77,000 members, has become a strong force for engaging multi-sectoral platforms, and in lobbying successfully for new forest financing policies and Instruments for its members (FFF, 2014).

Territoriality and inadequate decision-making authority – A challenge which arises often from the proliferation of multi-sectoral platforms is the dilution of decision making authority. It remains difficult for many officials to cede leadership or coordination to another department or ministry. Key decision-makers simply cannot attend all the relevant meetings and so send subordinates who are perhaps less well versed in the issues at hand, or do not have the capacity to take decision on behalf of the competent authority. If several sectoral agencies have to refer any decision-making back to higher levels within their institutions, this quickly works to paralyse progress.

Once again, the capacity to encourage higher levels of decision-making representation comes in part from the degree of organisation of forest and farm producer groups. Strong national federations can greatly increase the likelihood that senior representatives of government agencies will participate. For example, in Nepal FECOFUN represents most of the 18,088 Community Forest User Groups, who together with 6,800 Leasehold Forestry Group (LFG), and 19 Collaborative Forest Management Groups (CFG) manage 1,841,629 ha forest area and mobilize 2,798,272 households (Thapa et al., 2013). This scale of organisation (almost quarter of Nepal's population) means that meetings with the leader of FECOFUN are very difficult for high level decision-makers to ignore!

4. Functionality – what makes multi-sectoral platforms work well?

Having outlined the rationale for catalysing multi-sectoral platforms, and assessed some of the main challenges, it is worth now considering what tips the literature offers for their effective functioning. The literature on these topics points to particular insights on: (i) leadership, (ii) collaborative inertia and (iii) facilitation. Each of these is covered in turn.

4.1 Factors to do with leadership

Leadership is considered by some to be the key success factor in delivering impact from multi-sectoral platforms (see Weiss et al. 2002). The latter authors introduce notions of leadership *efficiency* – which relate closely to the spectrum of possible collaborative categories referred to above. They suggest that the quality of leadership can be measured by the extent to which the leader is (with reflective questions added by the authors):

- Taking responsibility for the platform – does the leader / leadership institutions' success depend to some extent on resolving the planning problem that is the focus of the multi-sectoral policy platform?
- Inspiring and motivating participating groups – is the leader / leadership institution distinguished in its track record of effective engagement on these issues?
- Empowering participating groups to attend and contribute actively – is the leader / leadership institution widely respected and actively known for engaging and including different groups?
- Working to develop a common language or framing amongst participating groups – is the leader / leadership institution able to use a language and symbolism that creates a framing that is acceptable to all participating individuals from across political or customary divides?

- Fostering respect and trust – is the leader / leadership institution known for transparent dealings and honesty, building consensus and abiding by democratic outcomes (avoiding behind-the-scenes manoeuvring)?
- Encouraging inclusiveness and openness in an environment where differences of opinion can be voiced – is the leader / leadership institution sufficiently strongly positions as to be unafraid of difficult or contentious decision being aired and discussed?
- Combining perspectives and resolving conflict among partners – is the leader / leadership institution of a calibre that is sufficient to mediate well between potentially conflicting groups?
- Felping participating groups to be creative in developing possible solutions – is the leader /leadership institution known for willingness to try out new solutions?
- Encouraging sharing of resources – is the leader / leadership institution of sufficient status as to elicit financial commitments from the other participants in pursuit of agreed outcomes?

There is no perfect leadership individual or institution. Indeed there are also important questions of political patronage that need to be considered. For example, in some cases much better results can be obtained when the 'leader' (even if nominally) is at the highest political level (e.g. a Permanent Secretary, Minister etc). In some cases, for example in Guyana's multi-sectoral platform for the Low Carbon Development Strategy, the President himself chaired meetings. Deficiencies in some of the operational skills listed above, can be made good by an able facilitator, while retaining the convening power of the formal 'leader'.

It may be that the current leadership of particular platforms is adequate. Yet in thinking systematically through the list and reflective questions noted above, it might be that a candidate for leadership emerges who is better suited to lead platforms. Findings ways to introduce notions of rotating leadership – or leadership change so as to encourage their leadership contribution is worth considering under such circumstances.

4.2 Factors to do with collaborative advantage versus collaborative inertia

There are a number of factors that the leadership of a platform might wish to consider in order to improve the collaborative advantage and reduce the collaborative inertia of a platform, and its likely success. Extensive research summarised by Savage et al. (2011) has grouped some of these factors that influence collaborative inertia and improve collaborative advantage. Those point to a number of relational linkages (extent of shared goals between participating groups), structural features (how coupled / institutionalised the participating groups are) and processual issues (degree of trust between participating groups and quality of leadership) – See Table 1.

Table 1. Factors influencing collaborative advantage/inertia (Adapted from Savage et al, 2011)

Focus	Factors	FFF Management Team suggestions
Appreciative linkages	Sharing a common sense of mission, strategy, value: i.e. degree of goal similarity	Define clearly the problem in view and a manageable specific goal
	Legitimacy of participants and topics they are competent to take decisions on	Ensure that appropriate representatives are invited to the platform with both the mandate and skillset to contribute legitimately
	Past ties with, and reciprocity by, partners: associated with perceived collaborative uncertainty	Invite early statements of positive contributions towards achieving goal – to increase mutual commitment
	Perceived stakeholder inter-dependence: associated with perceived organisational benefit	Frame the problem in such a way that it has relevance to all sectoral groups (e.g. perhaps using economic growth, not sustainable forestry as the goal)
	Agreement about the inducement for collaboration: associated with perceived organisational benefit	Clarify the timeframe for the process – and any links to ongoing reform processes
	External mandate for collaboration: associated with perceived public benefit	Make explicit any existing legal obligations that favour a positive outcome (e.g. due to national signature of any international agreements)
	Uncertainty as moderator between trust and alliance performance	Encourage continued stable participation by representatives of different agencies so as to ensure continuity of understanding
Structural features	Shared power via joint decision-making	Establish clear rules for democratic or consensus-based decision-making
	Similar cultural experiences	Structure the platform to involve field visits that allow a growing appreciation of the problem in view
	Relational versus formal contracts: associated with integration and accountability	Links explicit action points to particular individuals institutions and encourage reporting on progress
	Alliance network structure e.g. geographical proximity	Balance the need to experience for regional exposure to the problem at hand, with the needs to maintain continuity of participants
	Having adequate resources	Make sure the ambitions of the platform and its timeline are matched by resources – that also extend to preparation before meetings
Processual issues	Supportive communications	Ensure that meetings are documented and key decisions highlighted so as to ratchet forward progress
	Visionary leadership: associated with conflict resolution and supportive climate	Revisit the leadership of the platform periodically and encourage rotation of Chair and hosting of meetings to encourage buy-in of good leaders
	Awareness of each organisational goals, services and resources: associated with conflict resolution and supportive climate	Document (in an annex to meeting notes) the ways in which organisational goals of particular participating institutions match the platform goal
	Mutual trust based on interpersonal relationships	Work hard to maintain a spirit of collaboration through informal meetings, social events and email communication between meetings

One general principal that emerges has to do with visibility. The clearer the goal of the platform, the more carefully captured are its decision and action points, the more likely it is that a platform will move away from mere networking towards more substantive collaboration. Offering reporting and documentation services, and making the results visible through email or websites can enhance the collaborative advantage of a platform.

4.3 Factors to do with facilitation

It should be apparent from the above, that much of the hard work to improve the functionality of a multi-sectoral policy platform happens behind the scenes – preparing participants through clear information prior to the meetings, and documenting and spreading the outcomes and action points – to keep participants accountable and engaged. Such work involves good facilitation.

Indeed, in many multi-sectoral platforms, leadership need not necessarily reside in an individual or even in a clearly defined hierarchy. It might often be the case that leadership is shared and needs to be shared. This may lead to initial paralysis as the possibility for collaborative advantage stalls through lack of anyone willing to take the first step. This further emphasises the importance of the quality of facilitation and the structures and processes through which a multi-sectoral platform discusses issues and makes decisions (see Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

For shared leadership situations the role of a talented and neutral facilitator may be critical – particularly since, in many cases leadership emerges over time – as particular individuals are empowered through the processes of discussion (Hoskings, 1988). Setting the early agenda, arranging financing, briefing participants with prior information, documenting outcomes, and engaging potential new institutional allies are fundamental roles that a facilitator can play in order to kick start a multi-sectoral platform into life. With its vision of 'catalysing' such platforms – the FFF in-country learning facilitators have an important role to play.

Another critical role of facilitation is to ensure the quality of representation of stakeholders, particularly in the context of forest and farmer producers. The legitimacy and capacity of representatives of these groups is often reflective of the democratic processes in and strengths of their constituent groups, associations etc. It is also a function of the degree to which those groups have been informed of discussions and decision to be taken, and have had the time to reflect internally within their group on these issues, ensuring the Free prior and informed consent (FPIC) actually takes place. Issues of vertical and horizontal consultative processes among the constituent members of forest and farm producer groups are essential. It is these processes that generate tangible input for their representatives and bring back feedback/ accountability such that the process is considered productive. Facilitation of these elements is a crucial part of FFF's work.

5. Examples – what is FFF currently supporting?

In each of the countries in which FFF is engaging – detailed consultations and a baseline study have led to the identification of one or more appropriate multi-sectoral platforms, within which strengthened engagement by forest and farm producer groups can be supported. The structure of these platforms, their membership, decision-making and outcomes are discussed in more detail below.

5.1 Gambia

In the Gambia, the FFF is supporting a multi-sectoral policy platform known as the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) platform. Membership of the platform consists of representatives of Government Ministries and Departments, representatives of forest and farm producer organizations, representative of The Association of Non-Governmental Organization (TANGO) and private sector actors. The ANR has a written policy within which its headline objectives are threefold:

- Coordination of stakeholder efforts on ANR activities at all levels.
- Enhancing stakeholders' common understanding on ANR sector-related policies, such that ANR development measures could be enhanced and supported by all.
- Facilitating timely forest tenure transfers to local communities in the form of Community Forest Management.

All members are fully aware of the current objectives and there are no mixed objectives since all the members are taken on board.

The ANR multi-sectoral policy platform operates at national level. It is, however, informed by ANR sub-committees, and at regional level by Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), with district level Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams (MDFTs)

that operates at community level with ward development and Village Development Committees (VDCs). Recently, the National Farmers Platform of The Gambia (NFPG) expressed the need to include farmer organizations in the membership of TACs during their last nation-wide tour to Regional Governors such that farmer voices could be better heard during their deliberations and engagements.

The lead institution and convenor of ANR is the National Environment Agency (NEA) as coordinator of the multi-environmental agreements (MEAs) to which Gambia is signatory. NEA leads the ANR multi-sectoral policy platform and hosts the ANR-Working Group. The ANR-Working Group also serves as a Secretariat for another Working Group for UN Conventions, chaired by the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Agriculture or Environment and Parks & Wildlife. The ANR Secretary (who is in fact an NEA Program Officer) helps to set the agenda and facilitates the discussion during meetings with support from the National FFF Facilitator. Meetings are chaired by the ANR Platform Chairman, who currently serves as the national President of National Farmers Platform of The Gambia (NFPG). The term of office for the chairmanship is for a period of two years and will be rotational between Government and Farmer Organizations. The venue for meetings rotates amongst institutions and organizations participating in the platform – to encourage participation.

When particular discussions require a decision, this is taken by a simple majority vote or by a special resolution depending on the type of decisions to be made. Before any decision is put up for vote, the facilitators check the ANR policy to ensure that any decisions are based on Government policies, strategies and objectives.

Membership of the ANR multi-sectoral policy platform is deliberately broad. The following Government organizations are represented on the ANR Platform: National Environment Agency as convenor plus the following Ministries: (i) Finance and Economic Affairs, (ii) Trade, Regional Integration and Employment, (iii) Local Government and Lands, (iv) Forestry and Environment, (v) Parks and Wildlife, and (vi) Agriculture. In addition the following line departments are represented (i) Department of Forestry, (ii) Department of Fisheries, (iii) Department of Agriculture, (iv) Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, (v) Department of Water Resources and (vi) the Gambia Tourism Board. The identification of permanent representatives from ministries took some time because responsible heads of institutions failed to react swiftly to the invitation forwarded to their respective institutions to be a member of the platform. Initially, consistencies in representations during ANR Platform meetings from the line-Departments and Ministries were problematic.

Membership also includes one representative from each of the following Forest and Farm Apex bodies: (i) National Farmers Platform of The Gambia, (ii) Rice Farmers Association, (iii) All Gambia Forestry Platform, (iv) TRY OYSTER Women Group, (v) Livestock Association, (vi) Cashew Growers Associations, (vii) Fisher folks, (viii) Horticultural Group and (ix) National Coordinating Organization for Farmer Association of The Gambia (NACOFAG).

Non-Governmental Organisations are represented by The Association of Non-Government Organization (TANGO), and the private sector is represented by Natural Resources Consulting Gambia (NACO).

As can be seen, the Forest and Farm Product Groups representatives occupy key positions in the ANR such as the Chairmanship and Assistant Secretary. The platform allows them to have an entry point for discussing projects and programs targeting forests and farm groups. It provides an interface between the various groups and the governmental representatives on the platform. Finally, it allows them to share emerging concerns from members to those in decision-making authority on the platform.

The outcomes of FFF support to the ANR multi-sectoral policy platform so far have been several. FFF engagement has:
- Encouraged the ANR Working Group to integrate all relevant stakeholders such as the NGOs, producer groups and private actors – who had not previously participated in the platform with such regularity.
- Strengthened the role of ANR Working Group in functioning as the "clearing house" for all ANR issues and decisions taken by the ANR multi-sectoral policy platform.
- Strengthened the role of the ANR multi-sectoral policy platform in decision making processes affecting the forest and farm producers.
- Improved the rolling-out and awareness of the ANR Policy to key stakeholders at regional and district level (through TACs and MDFTs) to allow increased awareness using multi-media approaches (meetings, radio live programmes on community radio stations, newspaper publications and a TV Programme).
- Enabled the ANR to successfully convince a new project and programme to avoid setting up a parallel platform on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) as envisaged in the original project documents, instead using the ANR for all SLM activities.
- Increased specific awareness of forest and farm producers to the dangers of vermin / problematic wildlife species, thereby minimizing conflict between human and wildlife.
- Decreased conflict between farmers and local forest managers in the necessary clearing of forest lands for agriculture.
- Increased awareness on field and forest fire management to combat rampant uncontrolled fires.
- Encouraged more farmer groups to register with existing apex bodies.
- Promoted and encouraged linkages with micro-finance institutions (during a first contact and collaboration fare that was organised through the ANR).
- Linked cashew growers associations to Business Development Services and markets through contacts with the private sector.
- Approved the training of women horticultural groups on improved cooking stoves to reduce firewood consumption during cooking.

In terms of longer term sustainability of the work of the ANR, sources of funding are still a

little restricted. However, participating institutions are outsourcing funding from existing projects to support both the meetings and the implementation of decisions in certain areas. The best possible solution is to encourage government to increase resourcing for key service institutions to participate in the platform and encourage existing projects to cater for the requests of the ANR platform. There will inevitably be an ongoing budgetary requirement within the NEA to fund meetings. To secure this funding, there has been an initial dialogue with the Department of Forestry and the Ministry of Finance to include ANR multi-sectoral policy platform activities when budgeting for the National Forest Fund (NFF). Because of its policy relevance, it has been possible to approach projects for support in funding field trips organized by the platform. In addition, the West African Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) has agreed to fund the annual farmer's conference for forest and farm producer organisation members of the ANR.

5.2 Guatemala

In Guatemala, the FFF has channelled support to four different multi-sectoral platforms – two at national level, known as the Grupo de Coordinación Interinstitucional – Inter-institutional Coordination Group (GCI) and Firewood and Energy Platform and two at Petén regional level, known as the Mesa Intersectoral de Tierra y Ambiente – Inter-sectoral Platform for Land and the Environment (MITA) and the Petén Agroforestry Platform.

The national GCI platform operates at the national level and has two main objectives:

- To establish a coordination mechanism that harmonises policies between the administrative organisations responsible for natural resource management – with a view to improving the effectiveness of actions relating to conservation, management and protection of biodiversity, and sustainable natural resources management.
- To coordinate the implementation of policies regarding the management and administration of the use and conservation of natural resources – especially in the area of renewable natural resources (forests and protected areas) such that they are oriented, promoted and implemented towards sustainable development.

The convenor for the GCI is the Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, MARN). A technical secretariat oversees the operations of the groups and is composed of one professional member of each of the institutions that constitute that group: MARN, Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación – MAGA (The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition), Instituto Nacional de Bosques – INAB (The National Forest Institute), Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas, CONAP (The National Council for Protected Areas). The secretariat also has an administrative secretary, who at the present time is is a representative of the FAO Regional office and who is temporarily the FFF facilitator in the country through a letter of agreement until June 2015.

The leadership of the group is officially MARN and while the plan is to rotate leadership, the

participants have agreed that the administrative secretary from FAO should temporarily drive the group as the national coordinator of the FFF. Other institutions have also been asked for support to facilitate the flow of information in order that the group can take decisions between them: the Ministerio de Energía y Minas (Ministry of Energy and Mines) and the Secretaria General de Planificación (General Secretary for Planning). Additionally, in order to discuss particular subjects, the technical secretariat have invited the participation of other institutions such as the Banco Interamericano de Desenvolvimento (Interamerican Development Bank, BID), Rainforest Alliance, IUCN and a number of other Ministries.

The GCI multi-sectoral policy platform takes legislative decision in relation to themes emerging from the: (i) national REDD+ process , (ii) the inventory of climate change gases, (iii) programmes aligned under the Guatemalan system of protected areas, (iv) the strategy for conservation of communal areas, (v) strengthening of reforestation programmes, and (vi) implementation of the National Forest Programme. Among these themes, the process which has received most attention to date from the GCI has been the REDD+ process.

Membership of the GCI, as noted above includes high level representation under a cooperation agreement between MARN, MAGA, INAB and CONAP including Ministers/Vice-ministers, Managers/ sub-managers, executive secretaries and sub-secretaries. Depending on the nature of themes being discussed, participants are also invited from a range of other institutions – both government and Non-Government Organisations.

At this time, forest and farm producer groups do not have direct representation on the GCI platform – but rather an ad hoc representation depending on the themes being discussed by the formal representative members of the GCI. For example, the forest and farm producer groups are represented in discussion on REDD+ through their participation in the Grupo de Bosques y Cambio Climático (Forest and Climate Change Group) and the Comité de Salvaguardas para REDD (Committee for REDD+ safeguards). Representative of these groups raise petitions through the technical secretariat of the GCI. Additionally the forest and farm producers have indirect representation through the coordination process of the FFF via the administrative secretary. In the future, their ought to be further consideration of the necessity of giving forest and farm producer groups stronger representation.

The most concrete outcomes of FFF support to the GCI to date has been the consensus within the GCI to push forward a national REDD+ readiness plan (R-PP) and national REDD+ strategy. Within those plans and strategies, the roles of the Ministries and institutions has been agreed. Additionally, agreement has been reached over the consultation platforms for REDD+ through which forest and farm producers will be represented.

In terms of longer term sustainability, this GCI platform is sustainable by virtue of its formal involvement of the national institutions responsible for management of natural resources and the environment within Guatemala. In the case of the FFF – this initiative is uniquely placed to help develop the technical actions of the secretariat, documenting the decision made and communicating any resolutions more broadly. This is achieved through close collaboration with

other initiatives that help the operational workings of the GCI such as BID, USAID/Rainforest Alliance and IUCN.

The Firewood and Energy Platform was created in 2013 and operates at national level. Its objectives are: (i) to design and implement policies, plans and projects oriented towards the more efficient use of biomass energy (fuel wood); and (ii) to identify and implement coordinated multi-sectoral pilot actions of efficient use of biomass energy.

The convenor of the platform is the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) – and the same institution takes on the leadership and provide the secretary to the platform (although there have been suggestions that this should fall to the National Forestry Institute (INAB). Decision making is in the area of planning (rather than legislative).

In terms of membership the platform involves Government entities such as:
- The Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM)
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition (MAGA)
- The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN)
- The Ministry of Social Development (MIDES)
- The Ministry of Public Health and Social Services (MSPAS)
- The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC
- The National Forestry Institute (INAB)
- The Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SESAN)
- The Secretariat General for Planning and Programmes (SEGEPLAN)
- The National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP)
- Representatives of Municipal Governments

It also involves:
- Private Non-Governmental Organisations
- Academia
- Private Sector clusters of clean stove makers.
- Technical cooperation agencies (such as FAO)

At this point in time, forest and Farm producer groups do not have any direct representation.

In terms of outcomes, the platform is currently working on a sustainable use strategy for fuel Wood, a plan of action on fuel efficient stoves, and a capacity building manual on the use of fuel efficient stoves and efficient fuel Wood production. For the period immediately ahead (in 2014) the platform is receiving assistance from the FFF to broaden the outreach on themes of sustainable biomass energy use, the formulation and management of programmes to certify fuel efficient stoves, the production of a manual on fuel efficient biomass energy use, and the strengthening of the platform itself.

In terms of sustainability, the prospects are good because the platform draws together institutions who have their own mandate and budgets to address these issues. It has been suggested that it might be good to have a judicial order to establish the platform such as a 'Governmental Agreement' (signed by the President of the Republic).

The regional MITA platform (Mesa Intersectoral de Tierra y Ambiente), operates in the Petén province. Its main objective is to promote action to resolve problems relating to the protection of the environment, natural resource governance, and rural and agrarian support through strategic alliances based on the principals of co-management between Government, Municipalities, community groups, NGOs and the private sector.

The convenor for this platform is an advisory council for the platform. A convenor has been nominated who occupies the role of Municipal Manager of the association of townships of the Petén. The leadership of the platform at any one time is undertaken by a delegate chosen by the advisory council as agreed by the members from Government, civil society and the respective townships. In each meeting a facilitator or secretary is nominated who acts on behalf of the management of the association of townships of the Petén.

Decision-making occurs through consensus of all members based on the analysis of material presented to the members. Each meeting is characterised by taking decision that are then monitored and followed up by the advisory council.

Membership of the platform is open and is led by organisations who have institutional competence in the thematic area under discussion, or have an interest in that area, or who have a direct institutional mandate to solve the problem under discussion. Government agencies participate, led by the Vice-President of the Republic leaders of townships, civil society organisations, community groups and the private sector.

In terms of local forest and farm producer organisation members, there is one prominent group of timber producers and carpenters who are looking to organise, develop their production capacity and find markets for their products. The involvement of these actors is achieved through a collaborative effort between the Association Balam, together with INAB and CONAP.

Outcomes to date have included some high level decisions in favour of forest and farm producer groups. Notable among these have been:
- The creation of an enforcement agency against illegal timber extraction.
- The development of a technical commission to resolve agrarian issues.
- A coordination mechanisms to over see the road development between Guatemala and Belize.
- The implementation of a mechanism for a policy of rural development in the Petén.

As for sustainability, the MITA platform has sufficient finance committed by the participating organisations. The actions of MITA build on local institutional capacity, with local actors and township authorities.

The Petén Agroforestry Platform (Mesa Agroforestal de la Cuenca del Lago Petén Itzá) has as its general objective the re-establishment of an organisational planning, coordination and inter-institutional implementation body oriented towards the management of natural resources and support for agroforestry in the region of Lago Petén Itzá. Specifically it aims to improve the level of inter-institutional coordination in the promotion of soil conservation measures, promote

action and concrete measures, interact with other regional platforms, and help to implement the Strategic Plan for the Lago Petén Itzá region.

In terms of its scale, the platform operates in the region of Lago Petén Iztá (1,144 km2), in which there are three municipalities and 29 communities. It has strong relationship with Biosphere Reserve of the Maya.

The platform is a second tier organisation that coordinates actions on agroforestry in relation to other platforms (the Social Platform and the Infrastructure Platform within the region of Lago Petén Itzá). The convenorship is mostly organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition through the Directorate of Natural Resources and Tourism. Specifically the platform is convened by Aldo Rodas and Oscar Penados who are charged with organising meetings by the Vice-minister in charge of the Peten. At the beginning of each year, interviews are organised with each of the institutional members of the platform – consulting them about desired actions and plans. The overall ideas and plans are discussed in the initial meeting of the year – at which point they develop an implementation plan. The process allows for a shared leadership of the platform that has worked well over the last three years (including 95% attendance during that period).

Decision-making is really established in the initial set of interviews and the first planning meeting where the agenda for the year is defined. It should be emphasised that the participation in the platform is on an entirely voluntary basis – and is mostly about information sharing and coordination between the different participating institutions.

Membership of the platform is open, to all those who are able to show interest in the topic (without any political distinctions) – and each institution proposes a person to participate. In fact the membership includes government institutions such as CONAP, MARN, MAGA, INAB, Non Governmental Organisations such as GIZ, WCS, Fundación Propeten, Fundación Naturaleza Para la Vida and representatives of Municiaplities (Flores, Santa Ana, San Benito, San Andrés, San José, San Francisco). What has been learned over the last three years is that working together can achieve much better results than each institution working alone. Several examples of this can be cited. For the year 2014 there are various scheduled activities all of which involve at least 2-4 institutions.

In terms of the role of forest and farm producer organisations – these are the target audience for the work of the platform. In each intervention the needs of these groups are assessed by the participants of the platform. The majority of the producers are organised through CADER (the Centre for Learning on Rural Development) which has a focus on agriculture, agroforestry and forestry. The ideas and methods to be applied in practice are usually designed together with these groups and supported with funds from the participating organisations. But the actual producer organisations do not take part in the platform – they are more involved at the level of field implementation. For each proposed action there has to be specificity about which groups are to be involved in these field level actions.

In terms of results there has been significant impact at field level – with good examples of how interventions have been scaled up. One example is in the area of livestock production who received technical support form both MAGA and the NGO WCS who worked together as a single team in the field. Another example is in the extension work of MAGA with inputs from GIZ in which organisations and livelihoods observably benefited. The credibility of the work of the Government actors has noticeable improved through working with other entities that share the same objectives. Another example is the 'project for sustainable farm management in the Peten which has dispersed US$ 1.5 million with support from BID.

As for sustainability, the platform has now held approximately eight annual meetings, each of which has been financed by different participating organisations – providing a space and food for participants. The sustainability is guaranteed by the financial resources and shared mandates and resources of the Government, Municipalities and civil society organisations. The method seems to work and the main challenge is to see whether this model of platform can be extended to other regions and other strategic themes.

5.3 Liberia

In Liberia, the FFF has financially supported the multi-sectoral policy platform known as the National Forests and Landscape Forum (NFLF). The main objectives of the NFLF have been:
- To improve the coordination and consultation among forests and landscape management sectors. Lack of coordination in the past has led to overlapping of concessions awarded by these sectors as well as conflict between concessionaires and the communities.
- To address the lack of land use planning and land tenure rights in Liberia. The NFLF is conducting an inter-sectoral dialogue that will ensure an integrated Forests and landscape Management Policy that will be followed by awarding contracts. It is also carrying on awareness and capacity building among the communities on the issues that affect the sustainable management of forest and landscape.

The sector managers who participate in the NFLF are aware of these objectives and that the majority of the community dwellers have little knowledge of the consequences of business as usual.

The NFLF operates at two levels including (i) National level and (ii) County Level. At the County level, the Forum is represented by County Forest Forums. In every National level meeting, at least three County Forest Forum members are represented at a time.

The convenor of multi-sectoral dialogues and consultations is the National Coordinator from the Forestry Development Authority. The NFLF originated from the National Forest Forum (NFF). It was one level of the tiered consultation platforms developed through the support of National Forest Programme Facility of FAO. The Focal Point of that initiative was hosted by the Forestry Development Authority and this continues – but the hosting of each meeting rotates between different sectoral ministries in order to encourage participation. Any discussions on forests or landscape management occur through stakeholder's participation which has been

functioning well. Several initiatives including NFP facility, GFP, NLBI, used this platform to lead discussion and provide institutional memory for those initiatives.

In terms of decision-making, the NFLF is composed of focal points appointed to the Forum by the sector ministries and agencies on one hand and on the other hand, it comprised of representatives from civil society, international partners, the private sector, and members from the County Forest Forums (CFF). All decisions are made and agreed through consensus or voting by the members of the Forum present in the meeting. For example, it was general consensus that brought about the rotational hosting of meetings across various sectoral Ministries.

The memberships of NFLF includes all sectors and institutions responsible for the sustainable management of forests and landscape in Liberia. The following invitation list is maintained:
- Ministry of Agriculture, (focal point appointed)
- Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, (focal point appointed)
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, (focal point appointed)
- Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs (yet to appoint focal point)
- Forestry Development Authority, (focal point appointed)
- Land Commission, (focal point appointed)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), (focal point appointed)
- National Bureau of Concessions, (focal point appointed)
- National Traditional Council of Liberia, (focal point appointed)
- University of Liberia, (focal point appointed)
- Forestry Training Institute, (focal point appointed)
- Representatives each of the 15 County Forest Forum, (focal points appointed)
- Liberia Timber Association (focal point appointed but yet to attend meetings)
- Farmer Union Network (focal point yet to be appointed)
- Liberia Chainsaw and Timber Dealer Union (focal point appointed)
- Civil Society (Coalition of Environmental NGOs in Liberia), (focal point appointed)
- Liberian Women Integration for Sustainable Environment, (focal point appointed)
- College of Agriculture & Forestry Student Association (CAFSA), (focal point appointed)
- USAID-Liberia (Observer), (focal point appointed)
- Fauna & Flora International (FFI-Liberia) Observer, (focal point appointed)
- FAO (Observer), (focal point appointed)
- United Nation Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Civil Affairs (Observer), (focal point appointed)
- United Nations Development Programme (Observer) (focal point yet to be appointed)

The NFLF first year of operation (2013) involved engagement at the county level to ensure participation of local forest and farm producer in all discussion. However, only one county was engaged in that first year and at that time the forests and farm producers had not been fully identified or organised to participate. The 2014 work plan has the potential to engage the forest and farm producers to fully participate in the dialogues and consultations as well as the awareness programmes. The NFLF work plan will also attempt to integrate the forest and farm producers into the County Forest Forum activities. With this type of engagement, there will

be a gradual change in decision making direction in favour of forest and farm producer groups.

Outcomes of the FFF support to the NFLF are still to be seen. However, even in the limited time of operation to date outcomes have included:

- Greater cooperation and coordination achieved between the various forest and landscape management sectors in terms of willingness to discuss policy decisions that will avoid conflicts.
- Increased awareness of the need for coordinated decision-making on land use allocations and tenure rights system of the country with potentially positive result for improved community livelihood and food security. The NFLF convener is closely involved in a programme to roll out the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance for Tenure in Liberia through a national workshop and training modules.
- Understanding of the importance of developing integrated policy documents.

It will require constant and regular engagement as well as coordinated efforts of all stakeholders to turn this potential into more concrete outcomes.

The prospects for sustainability of the NFLF without further FFF support are limited owing to the financial situation of the current government. The current funding and scheduling of platform meetings are not adequate to the objective of the NFLF ambitions. To achieve its objectives, more prolonged and strategic engagement is needed through proper funding and technical assistance to build the capacity of the NFLF members at both national and county levels. Learning from exchange visits to other successful country of similar activities will enhance the capacity of the NFLF. Engaging other donor and international partners that are relevant to the objective of the multi-sectoral policy platform for technical and financial assistance will help move the process beyond donor funding from FFF alone. A successful outcome of the NFLF through the support of the FFF will be a positive entry point to persuade Government and donors to support the NFLF activities.

5.4 Myanmar

In Myanmar, the political situation has not allowed FFF to immediately catalyse or build on a formal multi-sectoral policy platform. Instead, the FFF team, acting through the local agency of the in-country delegation of FAO supported an initial ad hoc platform meeting between the Government representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI), the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MOECAF) and the ministry of Cooperatives among others.

The initial meeting was convened jointly by the FAO representative and a Director of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry. At the initial meeting the participants expressed a collective desire to improve cross-sectoral coordination and welcomed the idea of a dialogue, perhaps chaired by a focal point in (MOECAF) – but drawing on proposed solutions to the constraints faced in any FFF pilots to organise producer groups for business.

It was thereby agreed, that the immediate next steps within Myanmar would be four fold. First,

the FFF would contract, through a competitive call for proposals managed by the Myanmar Environmental conservation and Rehabilitation Network (MERN), a series of regional actions to strengthen forest and farmer producer organisations for business. Second, the producer groups representatives, supporting civil society groups and local agents of the state Forest Department would undertake an interim exchange of experience to improve the efficacy of these actions to strengthen local forest and farm producer organisation for business. Third, an international exchange of experience, also involving producer group representatives, NGOs and Government would be organised between Nepal and Myanmar. Finally, a second ad hoc national platform meeting would be convened to discuss in more details the challenges facing forest and farm producer groups in Myanmar.

At the time of writing the fourth and final stage of this process has not been completed. It is therefore to early to speculate on the possible processes of facilitation, decision-making or outcomes that might emerge. Nevertheless, the national exchange coincided with a revision of the Forest Law and of the Community Forestry Instructions – such that the need to improve the commercial aspects of community forestry in Myanmar legislation have received renewed attention.

5.5 Nepal

In Nepal, the FFF has been working to support the Multi-stakeholder Platform for Forest and Farm Enterprises in Nepal. The main vision for the platform is to provide multi-sectoral forum to build and strengthen complementarity in the promotion of forest and farm enterprises along with addressing emerging issues and challenges for the growth and sustainability of enterprises, including policy and institutional development support. Specifically, the goals of the platform are to:
- Address emerging issues and challenges which hinder on the growth and sustainability of forests and farm enterprises, including policy and institutional issues.
- Build the capacity of the producer organizations and enterprises on sustainable management and utilization of the natural resources, especially agriculture and forest resources, by joint planning and implementation, sharing of lessons learnt and best practices.
- Promote public, private and community partnership in forests and farm related enterprises.
- Strengthen communication, collaboration and coordination among the stakeholders.

The problem which the platform will seek to solve relates to suboptimal (a) small scale production, (b) partnership, collaboration and communication among the public, private and community institutions, and (c) solution of challenges related to production, transport and marketing, which hinder on the growth and sustainability of enterprises, focusing on policy and institutional aspects.

The platform is in the process of formation. The goals listed above are still under discussion by the members. Hence they might still be revised or improved following comments and

suggestions of the members and the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). Nevertheless, all the members are aware of preliminary objectives, which will be finalized later on.

The platform will operate both at national and district level. At the national level, it will be under the leadership of the public sector stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC). At the district level, the committee will be chaired by the Local government, District Development Committee with the representation from the public, private and community institutions.

The Federation of Community Forests User Group, Nepal (FECOFUN), will be the convenor of the multi-stakeholder platform, whereas the Federation of Nepalese Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI) will be the co-convenor. Both of these organizations will convene meeting on a rotational basis. Both the convenor and co-convenor will sit jointly for deciding the agendas of the meeting, which will be shared to the other members after getting consent or discussion with the chair of the Platform. These agencies will be responsible for organizing and facilitating the Platform meetings in consultation with the Chairperson.

In terms of political leadership, the Joint Secretary of MoFSC is proposed to be the ex-officio chairperson of the multi-sectoral platform. The final decision will be made in the Project Advisory Committee, as to who will chair all the meetings. The Project Advisory Committee meeting is planned on the first week of June 2014.

For decision-making purposes, initial thinking is that the decisions will be made either through consensus or by a majority democratic vote. The convenor will circulate the agenda prior to each meeting, including highlighting key issues for decision, in consultation with the chairperson. The members will discuss the items on the agenda and attempts will be made to make decision in consensus as far as possible. If consensus is not reached on particular agenda, decisions will be made by the majority (at-least 50 % or more members should agree on particular issues). The chairperson and convenor will not have voting rights. However; they can share or put their views about the particular agenda.

The following members from public, private and civil society related institutions are the official members of the platform.
- Joint Secretary, MoFSC, Chair (Government)
- Under Secretary, Department of Forests (Government)
- Under Secretary, Department of Agriculture (Government)
- Under Secretary, Department of Livestock Services (Government)
- Under Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture Development (MoAD) (Government)
- Under Secretary, Ministry of Land Reform and Management (MoLRM) (Government)
- Under Secretary, Ministry of irrigation (MOI) (Government)
- Under Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local development (MoFALD) (Government)
- Representative, National Cooperative Federation (Civil Society)
- Representative, Forest Action (Civil Society)

- Representative, The Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association (HIMAWANTI) (Civil Society)
- Representative, Dalit Platform For Natural Resources, Nepal (DANAR, Nepal) (Civil Society)
- Representative, Collaborative Forests Federation (ACOFUN) (Civil Society)
- Representative, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) (Civil Society)
- Representative, Agriculture Enterprise Centre (Private Sector)
- Representative, Himalayan Bio-trade (Private Sector)
- Representative, International Union for Conservation of Nature (Civil Society)
- Representative, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) (Media)
- Representative, Cottage and Small Scale Industry Development Board (Government)
- Representative, Federation of Community Forest Users' Nepal (FECOFUN), Convenor, (Private Sector)
- Representative, Federation of Nepalese Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI), Co-Convenor (Private sector)

Participants will be invited in the meeting through official letter/invitation. The convenors of the committee will invite participants. However, the members may request for additional invitees to be introduced into the meetings. The convenor, with the consent of the chairperson, may then invite other stakeholders as required.

The committee is in the processes of formation. Preliminary discussed have been held with the chairperson and convenors about the membership composition, including the role and responsibilities. This will be finalized after project advisory committee meeting.

It is too early to draw lessons, since the process has been just initiated. Nevertheless, past experience in working with similar committees shows that the representative or the participants of all the agencies in the meetings are not the same persons. This often creates problems in developing common understanding and continuity of the last meeting decisions or follow-up. We have been attempting to avoid this problem and requested all the stakeholders to officially nominate a person and ensure that same participant will represent in the meeting only.

Main role of the farm and forests producer groups (some of whom occupy key positions within the platform) are to:
- Discuss and share about the problems and issues, which they faced on operation and management of enterprises, including the capacity building needs.
- Advocate and lobby for the policy revisions or reformulations, especially in those area, which have hindered the growth and sustainability of enterprises.
- Share about the lessons and best practices to influence in policy and programme planning.

No outcomes have yet materialised, but expected outcomes are to:
- Improve common understanding and address emerging issues and challenges of the forests and farm enterprises in collaborative way.
- Influence policy and programmes at the national and district level for facilitating growth and sustainability of enterprises.

- Improve communication, coordination, collaboration and among the stakeholders.
- Promote public, private and community partnership and strengthen business linkages.
- Improve access to business development services.

In terms of future sustainability, the platform has only been recently initiated. Nevertheless, in order to ensure sustainability, the FFF will provide limited initial funding. The convenors are requested to mobilize their own funds as far as possible to augment this budget and ultimately to phase out FFF support. A two pronged approach has been followed where the public sector institutions will lead the committee whereas the civil society/private sector will arrange or organize meeting. Producer groups may use this platform to discuss on policy issues which they encountered even after completion of the project. The effectiveness of the platform will be subject to a formal review and shared with the policymakers for replication in the regular programme at the later stages. The hope is that the convenors will want to use this forum to discuss these and broader issues related to natural resource management into the future.

5.6 Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, FFF has supported work to engage the Gabinete de Producción, Servicio y Comercio (GPSC – Cabinet of Production, Services and Commerce). The main problems that the platform is seeking to solve are the land invasion in the Biosphere of Bosawas, scarcity of water, weak forest regulation, and other environmental and agricultural issues around Bosawas. All the institutions are very aware of these problems, and they cooperate together to solve or mitigate them. The Cabinet of Production, Services and Commerce was established to address these issues and to serve as a cross-sectoral coordination and decision-making body at the local level. In addition, it aims at promoting local sustainable development and strengthening local governance.

Geographically, the Cabinet acts at the regional level in the framework of the governance of the Autonomous North Atlantic Region (RAAN), but its operations are focused on the departmental and municipal levels.

The Cabinet of Production, Services and Commerce is still in the process of developing its operational framework, which is why the convener or leadership have not been clearly defined yet. To date, the Ministry of Family Economy, Community Cooperatives and Associations (MEFCCA) has been convening the initial meetings in coordination with the Political Secretary of the Government. There is a comprehensive coordination between the Cabinet and the political representatives at the municipal level.

In terms of leadership, the President of Nicaragua mandates that all government agencies at the local level need to coordinate their efforts, something that takes place in the meetings of the Cabinet of Production, Services and Commerce. Currently, MEFCCA is coordinating the platform and has assumed temporary leadership of the process. The FFF aims at strengthening the platform by solidifying the operational guidelines and defining the roles of each institution in the process.

The normal procedure in the platform is for participants to take joint decisions in its meetings

through a coordination and discussion process. During the meetings all the participants are free to articulate any problem or a particular situation they wish to draw attention to. Thereafter, the issue is discussed, taking into account the roles and functions of the participating institutions as well as their institutional plans. The Cabinet may also create a smaller commission or an ad-hoc working group to gather evidence or try to resolve particular issues. The decisions that the cabinet takes directly shape and contribute to local development.

Participation in the platform is by invitation only. The government agencies and ministries that participate in the process include MEFCCA, the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Livestock (MAGFOR), Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), The Nicaraguan Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), The National Forestry Institute (INAFOR), The National Technology Institute (INATEC), the Ministry of Health (MINSA), Local Governments and other invitees as appropriate to the subject matter. The other invitees participate actively in the discussions, but not in the decision-making processes. FFF aims to catalyse the inclusion of the representative of the Mayangna Nation as part of the platform, because the Cabinet has formal responsibility for indigenous territories.

Forest and farm producer groups can participate in the platform as invitees if a member of the Cabinet requests that. They can express their opinions and suggestions in the meetings; however, their participation has so far been sporadic.

Regarding outcomes, the platform is still very recent, which is why there aren't concrete examples of achievements yet. However, one of the most important lessons learnt is that the cabinet can promote joint coordination and planning between different government institutions to solve issues at the local level. The cabinet also has the potential to influence policies and development projects and programs in the area.

The platform doesn't have a specific operational budget to organize meetings. The FFF aims to augment the budget for hosting relevant meetings which are deemed important to local forest and farm producer groups and where influential decisions affecting the local level may be taken.

5.7 Global and regional processes

While most of the FFF activity relating to multi-sectoral platforms occurs at national level, FFF has also committed to support regional and international action by forest and farm producer groups. From the 74 proposals, a short list of 5-6 planning and partnership grants will be approved in 2014. Several of these proposals have in view the representation of those forest and farm producer groups in regional or global level decision-making platforms – notably those relating to climate change (e.g. community and indigenous peoples views in the forest related elements of the climate change COP meetings). While too early to document how these engagements are structured, the FFF monitoring and learning system will be collating materials form each partner against a set of indicators and reflective questions – to ensure that lessons of wider relevance will be captured. Future reporting will capture this important dimension.

6. Conclusions – how might FFF do better?

It is early days for FFF attempts to catalyse multi-sectoral platforms to further the interests of forest and farm producer organisations. While in some cases, these attempts are already well advanced (e.g. in Guatemala and the Gambia), in many cases the processes of engagement are still evolving. With this in mind, and based on the analysis of literature and FFF activity above, it is worth concluding with a set of points that relate to the second pillar of the FFF monitoring and learning system – catalysing multi-sectoral platforms at regional/national levels (see Figure 1 next page).
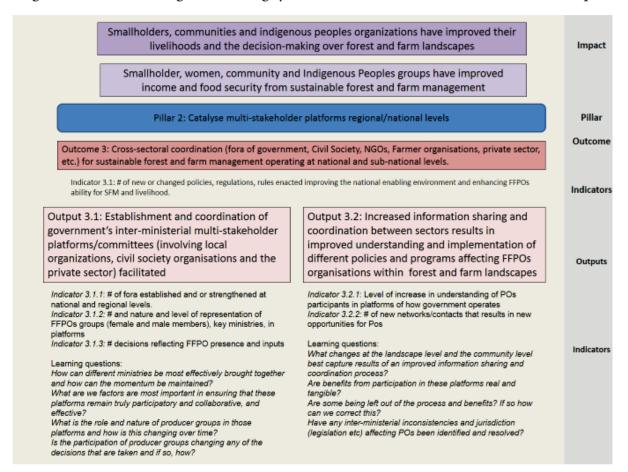
As can be seen from Figure 1, the desired outcome (labelled as Outcome 3) for Pillar 2 is that there is 'cross sectoral coordination for sustainable forest and farm management operating at national and sub-national levels' within FFF partner countries. Two FFF outputs contribute to this outcome:

- Outcome 3.1 Establishment and coordination of government's inter-ministerial multi-stakeholder platforms / committees (involving local organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector) facilitated.
- Outcome 3.2 Increased information sharing and coordination between sectors results in improved understanding and implementation of different policies and programmes affecting forest and farm producer organisations within forest and farm landscapes.

The monitoring and learning system, and the reflective questions integrated within it, provide a good basis for trying to develop some guidance that draws on international literature and in-country practice, and further strengthens the capacity of in-country FFF learning facilitators to deliver Outcome 3. There are clearly many areas of challenge and best practice that need to be captured from emerging FFF activity – so that a body of knowledge can be built up on how FFF

might best make use of multi-sectoral platforms. At the same time, the brief literature review within this paper, and the early documentation of FFF in-county processes does allow some initial indication of areas that require attention.

Figure 1. FFF monitoring and learning system framework for Pillar 2 outcomes and outputs

6.1 How better to facilitate the establishment of multi-sectoral platforms?

Sharpening the goals that draw together multi-sectoral decision-makers – At the heart of the work of multi-sectoral platforms is a goal or set of goals. In the FFF partner country examples described above, each platform laid out some generic or more specific goals. In some cases the goals were very broadly stated. For example, in the Guatemalan GCI platform one of two main goals was 'to establish a coordination mechanism that harmonises policies between the administrative organisations responsible for natural resource management – with a view to improving the effectiveness of actions relating to conservation, management and protection of biodiversity, and sustainable natural resources management.' In other cases, there are a mix of the generic and the specific. For example, in the Gambia ANR platform, one generic goal was

'the coordination of stakeholder efforts on agriculture and natural resource activities at all levels'. But alongside that rather vague goal was the much more specific goal of 'facilitating timely forest tenure transfers to local communities in the form of Community Forest Management'. Similarly the Liberian NFLF has one generic goal 'to improve the coordination and consultation among forests and landscape management sectors' alongside one more specific goal 'to address the lack of land use planning and land tenure rights in Liberia'.

There are of course advantages and disadvantages of more generic or more specific goals. Generic goals allow a range of potential problem issues to be brought up for discussion within the legitimate mandate of the platform. However, they leave rather vague the actual ambitions of the platform. Specific goals on the other hand lend themselves to more concrete programmes of discussion and action, but may distance agencies not directly perceived to be relevant to those discussions and actions. One option might be to retain rather generic goals at the level of the platform as a whole, but then to introduce more specific goals on specific thematic discussion areas. By clarifying these more specific objectives, and reaching agreement about the need to solve particular problems, how those problems are best framed, and how a process of dialogue might lead to their resolution, it may be possible to increase the sense of momentum and therefore buy-in from key agencies involved with those problem areas. Another observation (e.g. from the case study of Nepal) is that some of the goals identified go beyond what a platform can realistically achieve. They are phrased as if they were programmes in their own right, posing fear to replicate already existing sectoral plans or programmes of other organisations. It is good to be ambitious while being realistic, and having achievable goals.

Improving the leadership and facilitation that drives collaborative advantage – As noted in the FFF country examples, it is usually one institution that is responsible for convening and leading the discussions within a platform. For example in Nicaragua the agency MEFCCA leads the GPFC platform. In some cases (such as Liberia) the notion of rotational leadership was also introduced to improve ownership of the platform outcomes. Occasionally the leadership is handed over to a facilitating agency – such as in the Guatemalan GCI in which the FAO were mandated with the role of facilitating meetings. In some cases, however, the leadership and the convenorship have been usefully separated. So in Nepal, the Government Ministry MoFSC leads the platform but the forest and farm producer groups FECOFUN and FNCSI convene the meetings. This allows strong political patronage while ensuring that local producers can discuss the topics that are deemed critical by them.

With the exception of Nepal, the boundaries between leadership and facilitation are poorly defined with one institution doing both. There is also a general lack of clarity about who is responsible for preparing and circulating information prior to platform meetings, and who is responsible for recording and disseminating outcomes from those meetings. It might be worth exploring in a little more detail, how the FFF might strengthen its capacity to facilitate – through better planned platform roadmaps and agendas and more clearly specified evidence gathering and information sharing functions. This might equip platforms with better planned and better

informed discussions – with improved accountability of participants for auctioning any decision taken.

Strengthening the organisational power of forest and farm producer groups – The role of forest and farm producer groups, both nationally in general and within the multi-sectoral platforms in particular varies significantly. For example, in the Gambia, producer groups occupy key positions within the discussion platform. This is also the case in Nepal with the very strong FECOFUN and FNCSI rotating their convenorship of the meetings. This differs from say the Guatemalan GCI platform where forest and farm producer groups are only invited on an ad hoc basis depending on the thematic issue in question.

The FFF has an important catalytic role to play, both by directly strengthening producer groups at the national level (in Pillar 1 work) and in ensuring that funding to catalyse multi-sectoral platforms (Pillar 2 work) is also used to ensure greater representation by such groups in policy discussions. One potential option to improve representation beyond representation by high level apex bodies such as national federations is to schedule meetings with field visits to meet forest farm producer groups and discuss critical policy issues with them. This has been effective in the Gambia and also in Myanmar for example where regional delegations (comprising forest and farm producer organisations, NGO support organisations, and state forestry representatives) met together in a national exchange that involved a field visit to see community forestry in action.

Giving adequate thought to sustainability – in addition to ensuring that multi-sectoral platforms are established, thought must also be given to their sustainability. In-country partners have witnessed a number of platforms that have been set up with donor funds and collapsed as soon as soon as the money ceases to flow. The entry point therefore needs to be scrutinised so that they are not interpreted as a 'project' but rather as mechanisms for stakeholders/sectors to reach important common objectives, even with resources from their own sectoral budgets.

One of the encouraging things in many of the platforms documented above, is that they have arisen due to mutual interest between institutions that have a mandate and budget to pursue those issues (see for example, the four platforms in Guatemala). With financial resources independent of the platform itself – there are good grounds for believing that the processes so initiated will be sustainable.

6.2 How better to improve information sharing, understanding and policy implementation through those platforms?

Building the evidence base that informs cross-sectoral understanding – Discussion leading to positive policy decision-making can be greatly enhanced if informed by advanced evidence gathering. Indeed, in some cases prior evidence is necessary first to show why a particular

topic needs multi-sectoral discussion at all. Such evidence can be presented alongside recommendations for action. Collection and presentation of evidence (perhaps even by forest and farm producer organisation themselves) can help to provide a structure to discussions that improves the chances of positive outcomes.

Another useful tactic is to make sure that the process of discussion and the evidence on which it is based is made widely and freely available. For example, The Forest Dialogue has generated considerable consensus for action in a number of disparate problematic forest areas, by commissioning background papers that inform field dialogues (see for example Palmer 2012). Both background papers and subsequent co-chairs summaries are then made available to participants and generally on a website. Progress in understanding can then be built dialogue after dialogue within a community of practice – a possibility that exists in any multi-sectoral policy platform. This also happened with the Ban Chautari in Nepal, supported by Growing Forest Partnerships initiative that preceded FFF.

Firming-up commitments and improving accountability for their implementation – As noted in the section on collaborative advantage versus collaborative inertia above, a critical element of avoiding inertia is to ensure that there is clarity about decision-making – whether by democratic vote or by consensus. This relates also to a broader and equally important point about the need to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of different participants within platforms is made clear (e.g. the difference between observer and decision-maker). Clarifying such issues can help to reduce potential conflicts. In almost all of the country partners (with the exception of Myanmar) there has been some useful discussion about how decisions are to be taken. But it is not just the taking of decision that helps to keep positive momentum alive, but also the recording of those decision, and perhaps most critical, those responsible for taking action as a result. One of the key elements of facilitation for multi-sectoral platforms is the minute taking, ensuring that action points are clearly recorded and reminders to those responsible sent out in between the meetings of the platform itself.

Scheduling into the early portions of any platform meeting a review of the minutes and action points from preceding meetings is one way of maintaining momentum and keeping pressure on busy decision-makers to come good on commitments made.

Documenting tangible results to keep the process alive – Through careful planning, the FFF is in an enviable position of having quite comprehensive baseline surveys of forest and farm producer metrics and policy constraints. These baseline surveys should allow a degree of attribution to be made to any decisions within multi-sectoral platforms that result in substantive change on the ground. An important component of any facilitation work is to carefully document the process of discussion and decision within these platforms and the resultant field level outcomes. By so doing, confidence in the utility of a particular multi sectoral policy platform will grow encouraging active participation.

The FFF has a role to play – not only at national level, but also internationally (in Pillar 3 work) to ensure that voices of forest and farm producer groups inform global processes. One of the best ways of making this happen is to document and relay credible stories of change at national level. By tracing the link between producer organisation engagement in national level platforms and field level change – it will be possible to make a more compelling case for strengthening such groups in the future.

6.3 Sharing and linking FFF learning with other efforts to support multi-sectoral platforms

Going forward the Forest and Farm Facility will continue to share experiences with support for multi-sectoral platforms with other departments which span several of the new Strategic Objections within FAO which also see this as a critical component of their work. The practical and grounded work in FFF partner countries provides an important field laboratory for increasing understanding at a broader level around best practices for multi-sectoral platforms. Hopefully this will contribute to more integrated and comprehensive government policies and effective implementation of programmes that more closely match the needs and potential of forest and farm producer organisations.

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