

Minutes V0.1
GFOI PLENARY MEETING
New World Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
11-12 April 2017

Day one

1. Welcome and opening address – Dr. Nguyen Van Ha (Deputy Director General of VNFOREST, Vietnam) and Anthony Bennie (Chair, GFOI Leads Group)

Dr. Nguyen and Mr. Bennie set the scene for the Plenary, emphasising the importance of MRV for REDD+ and broader land sector mitigation actions in support of the Paris Agreement. Mr. Bennie explored the achievements and challenges faced by the GFOI going forward, and introduced the GFOI Phase 2 concept.

2. REDD+ Update – Maria Sanz Sanchez

Maria explored the history of the land sector and REDD+ in UNFCCC negotiations, providing an overview of forests and their role as a major carbon sink in climate change mitigation. Maria outlined where countries are in relation to REDD+, with most countries undergoing readiness actions, and many countries becoming involved in bilateral and multilateral results-based payment initiatives.

Maria posed key questions for REDD+ and its ongoing role in achieving climate change mitigation and broader sustainable development goals. These included how REDD+ could be used to increase the global level of ambition in Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement, and whether REDD+ investments by donors were being adequately allocated to the capacity of countries to effectively absorb such finances. Maria concluded her address with an endorsement of the GFOI, saying that the Initiative will be key in the technical improvements required for successful land sector abatement in support of the Paris Agreement.

3. Panel: Country perspectives – Nguyen Van Ha, Diego Ramirez (Ecuador), Sophyra Sar (Cambodia), Hewson Kabugi (Kenya), Rawle Lewis (Guyana) and Renato Timane (Mozambique) – moderated by Maria Sanz Sanchez

Each panelist outlined the progress of REDD+ in their countries, including national priorities, achievements and challenges faced. The countries represented are at various stages of REDD+ readiness and implementation, with Maria reflecting on the role that national circumstances (such as domestic development priorities, geography and political expectations) play in shaping REDD+ in each country.

Drawing on her professional experiences, Maria interpreted the panel discussion as a testament to the importance of harmonising top-down global objectives with the bottom-up objectives of countries looking to implement REDD+ activities. Importantly, she noted that GFOI can act as a vehicle for these bottom-up interests to be communicated by countries. Drawing commonality between the panelists' experiences, the Leads noted that GFOI is positioned to provide tailored, country-specific capacity building support for all stages of the design and implementation of an MRV system for REDD+.

4. GFOI Successes and Opportunities – Jim Baker and Anthony Bennie

Jim presented the findings of the 2016 Review of the GFOI, which aimed to assess the progress of the Initiative to date and inform its strategic direction from 2017 onwards. The key Review findings were that that GFOI had been successful as unique forum for building technical capacity for MRV systems in accordance with IPCC requirements. The Review identified a number of challenges faced by the GFOI, including difficulties in the immediate measurement of long-term capacity building outcomes and the current gap between enhanced access to data and the capacity of countries to use it.

The Review concluded that the GFOI is now well-situated to support countries in the choice and development of MRV systems that best meet country needs, and that demand for the GFOI's capacity building support will increase as donors for REDD+ increasingly need to see progress. The Review findings formed the basis of GFOI phase 2, which will have a greater focus on coordinated, demand-

driven capacity building in developing countries for REDD+ MRV that is based on the MGD. On behalf of the Leads group, Anthony welcomed the findings and recommendations of the GFOI Review.

5. GFOI Component Presentations and Q&A – Carly Green (MGD), Sasha Gottlieb and Inge Jonckheere (Capacity Building), Frank Martin Seifert (SDCG), Martin Herold (R&D) and Rama Chandra Reddy (World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility) – moderated by Tom Harvey

Each speaker provided updates on the recent and planned activities of the GFOI components that they represent. Mr. Reddy delivered a presentation on the *Training the Trainer* workshop series that has been delivered in collaboration with GOFI-GOLD and the GFOI's Capacity Building and MGD Components. This was followed by a Q&A panel on the GFOI's components. In this session, the speakers reiterated the benefits of coordination between the components, the need to involve countries in the articulation of their own MRV capacity needs, and the importance of ensuring complementarity with countries' domestic priorities and existing capacity development work.

6. Breakout Groups: Key Themes from REDDcompass – Moderated by Carly Green; Groups facilitated by Carly Green, Inge Jonckheere, Nikki Fitzgerald and Sylvia Wilson.

Plenary participants were randomly assigned to breakout groups based on the four key themes from REDDcompass: (i) Institutional Arrangements (ii) Design Decisions (iii) Measurement and Estimation (iv) Reporting and Verification. The four breakout groups discussed the actions and concepts under their assigned REDDcompass theme, with each group member's input based on their own country's experience and national circumstances. Results from the breakout groups to follow.

Day two

7. IPCC: 2019 Refinement of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines – Andrej Kranjc and Sekai Ngarize (IPCC)

Andrej and Sekai provided a background to 2019 Refinement of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines. In light of the abundant new scientific and empirical knowledge published since 2006, the Refinement is being undertaken to update, supplement and elaborate the Guidelines which provide the scientific basis for supporting the preparation and continuous improvement of national GHG inventories. The Refinement will involve approximately 200 authors worldwide and is expected to be completed in May 2019.

Of particular interest to GFOI partners is a chapter in the 2019 Refinement on consistent representation of land, which will present guidance on how remotely sensed data, ground based data and ancillary data can be integrated and used to derive consistent time series estimates of land use and land use change. The IPCC recognises the importance of the MGD as a syllabus for robust land sector measurement and reporting; MGD authors will be heavily involved in the 2019 Refinement, effectively putting the MGD and REDDcompass at the cutting edge of best practice guidance for land sector MRV

8. Country FREL Presentations – Nguyen Dinh Hung (Vietnam), Edersson Cabrera (Colombia) and Budiharto (Indonesia) – moderated by Sylvia Wilson

Presentations were given by representatives of three countries that have submitted either a Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL) or Forest Reference Level (FRL). Presenters shared the challenges, successes and lessons learned in preparing, and submitting their Reference Level. Q&A following the presentations focused on the gaps identified by UNFCCC Technical Assessments of their submissions, and how countries can address these technical gaps with the support of GFOI tools and guidance. Many questions asked of the presenters were from developing country participants, exemplifying the South-South cooperation and country-driven lesson sharing that will be promoted in GFOI Phase 2.

9. Panel Discussion on Forest Monitoring Needs of REDD+ Countries – Vo Quang Hien (Vietnam), Akosita Lewai (Fiji), Haruni Krisnawati (Indonesia), Mohamed Yakubu (Ghana), Adalberto Lopez (Guatemala) and Deepak Kumar Kharal (Nepal) – moderated by Martin Herold

Each panelist presented on the current forest monitoring needs for the successful implementation of REDD+ activities in their countries. The identified capacity gaps in each country included data storage and utilisation, coordinating R&D activities and ensuring consistency between national GHG inventories and REDD+ submissions. Martin reflected on how the breadth of forest monitoring needs identified by the panelists across the six countries was addressed by the holistic nature of the GFOI and its package of MRV capacity building support.

10. Information Stations: Rolling Demonstrations on GFOI and Partners' Products

Parallel information stations were set up for the forest MRV and capacity building products developed by the GFOI partners. The stations demonstrations included: REDDcompass, Global Forest Watch, Data cube, OpenForis and SEPAL, GOF-C-GOLD training materials and the integration of existing tools & methods by SilvaCarbon.

The sessions were a great opportunity for participants to ask questions and directly engage with the developers on how they could make the most effective use of the various products being demonstrated. For the GFOI Partners, the sessions provided an opportunity to receive valuable country user feedback on their products. Throughout the demonstrations, the GFOI partners advocated the common theme that developing countries are free to choose the methods, tools and approaches that suit their needs and national circumstances; the GFOI empowers countries to take ownership of their MRV capacity development.

11. Leads Panel and Discussion Forum: GFOI Reflections – Anthony Bennie (Chair – Australia), Anssi Pekkarinen (FAO), Evan Notman (US), Henrik Fliflet (Norway), Stephen Ward (CEOS) and Sylvia Wilson (US) – moderated by Tom Harvey

Based on the week's discussions, the Leads group discussed the GFOI's progress to date, major priorities and next steps. The Leads reflected on the successes of the GFOI in establishing a community for all MRV stakeholders to collaborate, share lessons and harmonise their efforts in support of climate change mitigation. Reflecting on the findings of the 2016 GFOI Review, the Leads acknowledged the importance of making forest MRV capacity building processes as easy and accessible to developing country partners as possible. The GFOI has a promising outlook for Phase 2, with the Initiative having demonstrated the ability to adapt and capitalise on relevant global developments such as the Paris Agreement.

The Leads committed to the continuous improvement of the GFOI, emphasising that in Phase 2, the GFOI will look to increase its engagement with developing countries by seeking their ongoing input, participation and governance in the Initiative. Doing so will ensure that the GFOI's capacity building work is effective, demand-driven and empowering for developing country partners.

12. Wrap up & closing remarks – Anthony Bennie and Nguyen Van Ha

Mr. Bennie and Dr. Nguyen acknowledged the work of the GFOI Office and Vietnamese Government in organising the 2017 Plenary and thanked all participants for their contributions to the sessions.

13. Next meeting

The next Plenary will be held in Colombia in March-April 2018.

Meeting closed.

GFOI Plenary Breakout Sessions

The breakout session held during the 2017 GFOI Plenary covered the four (4) REDDcompass Themes and discussed some of the successes and challenges faced by countries, implementing agencies and donors in developing National Forest Monitoring systems (NFMS) for REDD+ Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV).

Interesting and engaging conversation, drawing on experiences of what did and did not work, led to a number of useful suggestions of what GFOI can tangibly do to overcome identified challenges, including:

- Assist in conducting gap analyses (REDDcompass)
- Facilitate South-South exchange with countries that have operational methods for additional REDD+ activities
- Facilitate coordination meetings with all relevant agencies in country
- Assist with institutional arrangements to enable data standardization between agencies (Vietnam)
- Provide support to institutionalize the process (less donor driven). Advocate for government funding
- Provide support to develop strong linkages between the institutional arrangements and reporting
- Training of trainers
- Transferring tools used by countries with success
- Improve and extend guidance in technical areas (eg belowground biomass measurements)
- Publish more country examples (sharing of experiences)
- Provide clear guidance on the differences between REDD+ and GHGI reporting aimed at enabling countries to communicate more effectively between agencies.

A summary of the discussions in each of the breakout groups is presented below.

Institutional Arrangements

Identify REDD+ Activities

- **Dependencies/Partnerships**
 - political decisions
 - international obligations
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - activities and carbon pools for FR(E)Ls documented
 - Because: Key category analyses conducted; and
 - REDD+ Strategy agreed through government
- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Lack of available data
 - Minimal (dedicated) human resources
 - improvement plans not as high a priority as completing the project or product
 - Too many projects using different methods making it difficult to get 'the right' answer to report

Conduct an assessment of deforestation/degradation drivers

- **Dependencies/Partnerships**
 - Key Category Analyses
 - Academia - often conducted this analysis
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - Acceptance based on existing knowledge of the quantified drivers
- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Nearly all REDD+ drivers require information from different agencies with a mandate for each land use (eg forest, agriculture, settlements, mining, planning)
 - Data sharing agreements are still being negotiated &/or are challenging to implement in a routine / systematic way

Identify deforestation/degradation counter measures

- **Dependencies/Partnerships**
 - National policy
 - South-South Exchange
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - Provincial pilot projects begun
- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Cross-sectoral coordination not as mature as it could be yet
 - Existing policies too general to implement for real action

Align counter measures with other forestry programmes

- **Dependencies/Partnerships**
 - political decisions
 - international obligations
- **Successes**
 - UNFCCC focal point in control of both LULUCF/AFOLU and REDD+ reporting
- **Challenges**
 - REDD+ staff in Forestry department and GHG inventory staff in Environment department
 - Data sources for GHG Inventory often not as likely to use remote sensing as those more used for REDD+
 - Different donors at different times lead to different methods being used
 - Different results between Deforestation and "Forest Land converted to {___} categories lead to inconsistencies between UNFCCC reports
- **What support can GFOI provide to overcome the challenges?**
 - Gap analyses (REDDcompass)
 - Facilitate South-South exchange with countries that have operational methods for additional REDD+ activities
 - Facilitate coordination meetings with all relevant agencies in country

Policy and Design Decisions

- **Important Dependencies/Partnerships**
 - Making efforts to align the responsibilities, e.g. merging Min. of Forestry and Min. of Environment
 - But, Activity Data is still generated by different agencies and is dependent on donor support usually
 - Technology transfer and TOT is very important
 - Working on tools that consolidate data e.g FLINT use in Kenya
 - Decisions on technical issues made by REDD+ groups but high level decisions need Ministerial approval
 - Important to involve high-level politicians and advocate for government budget support. GFOI could help by convening meetings of high-level politicians
- **Challenges:**
 - Move from Forest cover definition to Forest Land use definition
 - Expand to generate information for all REDD+ activities (i.e. forest degradation, sustainable forest management)
 - Expand to generate information for soils, debris and deadwood pools.
 - Cost to generate information for all carbon pools
 - Increase the capacity to generate information more frequently
- **Successes:**
 - FREL Submission: In countries like Colombia the FREL data is consistent with GHG inventory. Other countries are having negotiations between their institutions
 - Establish a National Forest Inventory
 - Agreement on Forest Definitions
 - Reporting in higher tiers, using NFI data
 - Alignment of different agencies (Indonesia)
- **Potential GFOI Support:**
 - Data standardization between agencies
 - GFOI can provide support to institutionalize the process (less donor driven). Advocate for government funding

- Training of trainers
- Transferring tools used by countries with success

Measurement and Estimation

Identify most appropriate remote sensing data

- **Dependencies (are they any)**
 - Good data / huge time series for change detection
 - Field data
 - Large uncertainties inate to the measurements: hard to explain to donors
 - Landsat USGS & Sentinel Archive: open data archive which might be at stake
 - Engaging with private sector for data operationalization
 - International cooperation for data acquisition
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - Standards developed on national scale
 - Harmonization meeting to align different maps made by different Ministries
 - Use of free data was enough for above ground mapping & estimation purposes
- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Reporting using different data sources
 - Different forest definitions between Ministries
 - Data sharing/ through internet
 - Software of operational system gets outdated
 - Attribution of REDD+ activities from detected change data

Generate consistent, multi date, forest area change activity data with associated uncertainty estimates

- **Dependencies (are they any)**
 - Regional estimates may be needed, therefore sampling designs should fit both national and regional scale: statistical relevance on different scales of use

- Dealing with any discrepancy between imagery and field data
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - Use of time series for area changes
 - Consistent use of forest definition
 - Mapping for aboveground data for the FREL based on CB work
 - Stock assessment and forest cover map deliverable
- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Different pools/methodology
 - Database system for archiving
 - Use of RS data is not under specific mandate of reporting Ministry
 - Regional estimates versus national estimates
 - Cloud cover
 - Monitoring of forest degradation is challenging
 - Different institutions for national and international reporting: data sharing protocols needed
 - RS projects completed from abroad: inclusion of national institutions is needed to improve quality of results and improve explanation of any variation in results.

Document process to ensure transparency and identify any areas for future development or research

- **Dependencies (are they any)**
 - Data sharing agreements in place needed
 - Other departments/Ministries adoption of forest definition
 - Political decision on publication of data
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - Making everything public
 - Centralized storage
 - Using same database
 - Data sharing agreements set with support of implementing agencies

- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Different data from different data pools held by different agencies
 - Isolated archives
 - Change in area due to definition that was agreed
- **What GFOI support could overcome these Challenges**
 - Belowground Biomass estimation and other carbon pools
 - Continuation of updating MGD guidance and methodology
 - Demonstration of successes in transparency and data management

Reporting and Verification

- **Important Dependencies / Partnership**
 - Estimates and reporting are a different things
 - Consistency with GHGI important / National Communication
 - Institutional Arrangements (glue) that lead to collaboration and transparent estimation leading to consistency in reporting
 - Design decisions have an influence on how to report and this needs to be done in the context of what is to be reported
- **Successes – what worked and why**
 - Documenting methods as a way of communicating how estimates are developed to improve collaboration between the reporting partners to facilitate MOUs as a starting point
 - Using the same raw data and forest definitions will help
 - Taking a step-wise approach as a learning by doing approach (take the plunge)
 - Training in what a verification process is / what sort of questions get asked
 - Review process is very useful (soft assessment) as a learning environment
 - Face to face makes it easier for communication
 - Countries should engage as experts into the assessment process
 - Transparency will make the process much easier for both sides
 - Clear checklist / clear communication of emerging issues

- Common understandings of the expectation

- **Challenges – what didn't work and why**
 - Vacuum in guidance on how to report estimates in the REDD report
 - Multiple reporting frameworks can be hard to reconcile
 - Degradation monitoring is still not operational at national scale
 - Limitations of guidance focused on only forests as it is land based reporting
 - REDD+ is activity based and GHGI is landscape based
 - Reporting burden (REDD+, FRA, GHGI, NDCs, SDGs)
 - Sensitive process
 - Lack of experience in verification process

- **What GFOI support could overcome these Challenges**
 - Country examples (sharing of experiences)
 - Provide clear guidance on how to develop estimates and then report REDD+ activities and the differences for estimating landscape emissions and reporting for GHGI
 - Help to understand why REDD+ and GHGI reporting is different so this is easier to communicate
 - Explain what inconsistencies could be expected between/and within the different reporting requirements
 - Provide more clarification on what is required in the various reports not necessarily how to report (work backwards).
 - Provide support to develop strong linkages between the institutional arrangements and reporting