

Management response to the Growing Forest Partnerships (GFP)

Final Evaluation

This document encompasses the comments of the individuals representing the institutions of the Catalytic Group (CG) of the GFP initiative in response to the revised version of the final evaluation (FE) of GFP, dated 26 August 2012. The CG, consisting of the World Bank, IUCN, FAO and IIED, has managed GFP to date. The content of this 'management response' reflects discussions held at and subsequent to a GFP CG meeting in London, 3 July 2012 at which a draft of the evaluation was presented by the evaluator.

Overall response to the evaluation

The CG welcomes the findings of this final evaluation and in particular the acknowledgement of the continuing relevance of partnership building to engage representatives of forest dependent communities actively in decision-making (p 49) and the impact of such partnership-building by GFP through creating in-country and international platforms (p50).

The big things that have made GFP 'well worth it' for the CG are: the in-country impacts (see page 48 of the FE); the development of the 'G3' alliance; the drive for, and uptake of, investment in locally controlled forestry (see page 46-47); the communications experience (see page 41-43); and the CG collaboration drawing on the very solid base provided by our original consultation analysis and products (see page 34-38).

The CG appreciates the careful documentation of (i) the genesis of the GFP initiative, (ii) the bottom-up approach through which in-country teams, and the international dialogues process, were allowed to develop priorities based on broad consultations, and (iii) the resulting outcomes in terms of partnerships with a strongly owned, and broadly shared, agenda on investing in locally controlled forestry (ILCF).

The tension that this approach created by failing to have a rigorous pre-defined set of outcomes against which to monitor progress, but instead working to consolidate multiple different theories of change into a more coherent whole over time, is well captured in the evaluation report.

However, the evaluation perhaps undervalues the profound shift in approach engendered by the initial consultations in exploring 'locally controlled forestry'. This fundamental shift infused the work of CG partners during subsequent in-country work and international processes. Contrary to the evaluation report, the emergence of ILCF is not seen by the CG as a happy coincidence – retrofitted within a theory of change to explain synergies between in-country and international work – but as an explicit emphasis early in the GFP process that became better captured and articulated over time as the synergies between in-country work and the international ILCF process became increasingly obvious.

Response to individual recommendations of the evaluation

This is an initiative from which we have learned, and will continue to learn, a great deal across the institutions comprising the CG. We will develop, produce and disseminate the systematic lessons highlighted by the FE – In particular, we will show what is needed institutionally and financially to nurture and sustain engagement of forest dependent people over time. In response to the specific recommendations of the evaluator, the CG offers the following responses (with the square bracketed text a verbatim quote from the reviewer):

1. Clarifying and communicating the theory of change at an early stage. [The overall theory of change and anticipated outcomes of GFP were nebulous and interpreted differently across the partnership. In order to capitalise upon the experiences of GFP in the future, it will be necessary to refine the GFP concept, link ILCF with country level experiences and communicate this coherently in future initiatives of this kind.]

CG Response: The CG, through IIED, has further elaborated the theory of change in a summary document that captures and articulates the ILCF framework and will be published on the GFP website before the end of 2012. A refined Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) concept has been developed through a thorough consultation process, within which links between ILCF and country level experiences are made explicit. We will communicate this FFF theory of change more coherently from the outset in the FFF initiative.

2. Defining the added value of international partnerships. [In future initiatives of this kind it will be critical to communicate clearly the added value of international partnerships and the roles and contributions of each partner, as well as streamlining support in ways that minimise administrative responsibilities for national and international implementers.]

CG Response: . The roles of the key international partnerships are more clearly defined in the FFF initiative, and co-ordinated through one management team in one institution (the FAO institutional host) rather than the four CG members in GFP. This will reduce transaction costs both for international partners of the CG and for the in-country partners who will from now on deal with a single administrative structure. Each CG partner institution will participate in the FFF (with IUCN and IIED involvement initially supported by the World Bank as donor support for the FFF platform develops). The current FFF management team is also considering bidding for management of the Dedicated Grant Mechanisms (DGM) drawing on lessons from the added value of international partnerships – including how to streamline future support between the FFF and the DGM.

3. Assessing and attributing impact. [When undertaking future initiatives of this kind, expertise should be made available to country teams to clarify a coherent set of expected outcomes, to develop the theory of change and to establish systems necessary to track achievements against goals. Furthermore, systems are needed to capture impacts across and between participating country processes, so that the overall impact of the programme can be ascertained.]

CG response: The FFF builds on the baseline assessments, start-up workshops and monitoring and evaluation processes of the former NFP-Facility – within which the theory of change and ways of tracking achievements against goals will be established from the outset, thereby avoiding the problems associated with the complete flexibility on expected outcomes that was afforded partners

within the GFP initiative. However, we also note that GFP's flexibility and bottom-up processes have borne fruit in the clear objectives and expected outcomes now possible to express in the FFF.

4. Undertaking a systematic review of lessons learned across the GFP initiative. [GFP has generated a wealth of results, which vary markedly from country to country. However, in the absence of an established M&E system, it is not possible to define what these are at present. As such, it is recommended that a systematic process of identifying key experiences and lessons learned from the GFP process is undertaken. This may require additional funding from the World Bank.]

CG response: The CG will seek resources to undertake a systematic review of lessons – a final 'companion volume' to the original GFP consultation document. In addition, there will be an exchange and learning function built in as an integral part of the FFF.

5. Learning and disseminating lessons between countries. [Other than through regional exchange-visits organised by GFP, opportunities for country-to-country learning and exchange within GFP were limited, despite the potential benefits that such a process could have engendered. In future initiatives of this kind, a process should be established to foster the sharing of experiences and lessons between country teams. This could take the form of cross-visits or regional / global meetings where common themes are explored and compared.]

CG response: The idea of an annual learning event – together with thematic exchange visits – is included in FFF. The latter may also continue to support activities initiated by GFP in e.g. Guatemala, Liberia and Nepal (dependent on funding). However, the final decision on in-country programmes and learning and exchange events will be decided by the independent FFF Steering Committee.

6. Supporting partnerships mobilising around the ILCF Concept. [The ILCF is an exciting and innovative concept that brings together many different themes around a unifying framework. As such further support should be provided across various initiatives supported by the GFP partners in the future.]

CG response: The FFF Steering Committee will involve representation from major alliances of forest rights-holders (the G3 – involving but not restricted to the Global Alliance for Community Forestry, GACF, the International Family Forestry Alliance, IFFA, and the International Alliance for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, IAITPTF) who have been instrumental in defining the ILCF concept. The ILCF concept is central to the theory of change of the FFF. In addition, work on ILCF has been written into strategic plans of each of the current GFP CG member institutions. The publication in quick succession of the ILCF Pocket Book (for a general lay audience), The Forest Dialogue ILCF Review of the ILCF dialogue process (for technical development audience), and the ILCF Guide (primarily for practitioner investor and rights-holder audiences) will inform the work of the FFF at international and national levels. The mission of the FFF is now explicitly stated as "to promote sustainable forest and farm management by supporting local, regional and international organisations and platforms for effective engagements in policies and investments that meet the needs of local people".

7. Applying flexibility to anchoring and convening national level processes. [Experience of GFP (as well as the National Forest Program Facility) has pointed to the real benefits that anchoring such processes within government forest agencies can bring. However, GFP experiences also highlight

some of the risks, including a perceived domination by government and a lack of balance from other potential participants such as civil society and the private sector. Given the variation in context between countries, a flexible approach to anchoring is recommended that takes account of local conditions and perceptions.]

CG response: Three main outputs are built into the FFF: (i) organisation at local and community levels with capacity to manage and create efficient and sustainable enterprises from forests and farms, while cooperating in networks to negotiate with policy makers; (ii) established and coordinated inter-ministerial multi-stakeholder platforms within which local and community organisations can engage, and (iii) national policies and incentives in place to support these organisations. This responds to the need to anchor the new initiative within government agencies, while also maintaining a flexible approach driven by the interests of forest and farm producer organisations.

8. Communicating the outcomes of the ILCF process. [Now that the Forest Dialogue outputs are being prepared and published, it will be necessary to develop a coherent communication strategy to disseminate the valuable results of the ILCF process beyond those organisations directly involved in implementation.]

CG response: The ILCF pocket book was launched at Rio+20 alongside multiple presentations by the G3. The TFD ILCF review was launched at IUCN World Conservation Congress. The ILCF Guide was launched at CoFo and is soon to undergo a concerted push for wider dissemination. In addition, and as noted above, the CG partners will take forward ILCF through TFD work, the Livelihoods and Landscapes work of the IUCN, the Forest Connect alliance co-managed by FAO and IIED, the IIED managed FGLG, the World Bank DGM and beyond.

9. Thinking through representation in programme governance mechanisms. [Future governance arrangements for international forestry programmes should take account of the GFP experiences and those of other programmes (such as FIP, FCPF, UN-REDD and others), as well as the role and mandate of decision-making at different levels; how southern interests can be solicited and included; and how the role of implementing agencies and partners can be fostered without any potential for conflict of interest.]

CG response: An ad hoc Steering Committee of the FFF will be convened in January 2013 to define the full membership and mandate of the FFF Steering Committee, revise and endorse the programme document of the FFF and select initial partner countries. When defining the Steering Committee governance structure and the management team structures of the FFF, the CG has taken into account the well founded recommendations in the full text of the final evaluation.

10. Linking national and international processes. [In the process of designing and establishing the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) and Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM), it will be important to consider how - from an early stage - national and international processes can be linked and mutually reinforcing, perhaps by introducing requirements that any international support must demonstrate downward linkages to emerging country level processes.]

CG response: The CG agrees with this recommendation – and within the FFF the international and national components of FFF approaches have been designed as an integral whole to realise the full benefit of processes at each level.