OCTOBER 23RD, 2020

WePlan – Forests: A decision support tool for the spatial planning and implementation of tropical forest ecosystem restoration

REPORT ON THE TRAINING WEBINAR SERIES

RECIPIENT:
SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION
ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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Background

The series of webinars on *"WePlan – Forests: A decision support tool for the spatial planning and implementation of tropical forest ecosystem restoration"* is the product of a partnership between the International Institute for Sustainability and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the support of the European Commission and the Korea Forest Service of the Republic of Korea through its Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (FERI). The decision support tool (DST) will use analytical approaches and best available data to support countries as they set or revise national and sub-national targets on forest ecosystem restoration and plan their implementation. The series of webinars, in turn, aims to introduce the DST to potential users, promoting the uptake of the knowledge necessary to understand, use and apply the DST and its results for decision support by stakeholders. The webinars are also intended to collect feedback from attendees that will help tailor the tool and its user interface to maximize usability.

**Second session: October 21st and 22nd, 2020:**

How to deliver tropical forest restoration at scale: unlocking the potential of natural regeneration

The second webinar session took place on the Zoom platform at two separate times: at 10:30 am Brazilian time (GMT-3; or 08:30 Mexico City; 09:30 am Montreal; 3:30 pm Paris; 4:30 pm Nairobi) and at 2:00 pm Sydney time (GMT+11; or 07:00 am Moscow; 09:30 am New Delhi; 12:00 pm Beijing; 1:00 pm Seoul; 04:00 pm Auckland). A total of **88 participants** from **43 countries** in all five continents attended the session (**Figure 1**). Attendants were representatives of several organizations including local, national and international not-for-profit and civil society organizations, universities, research institutes, international cooperation commissions, government agencies, private companies, and others (**Figure 2**). The annex at the end of this document presents a full list of countries and their respective number of attendees.

Number of participants per country - Session 2

Nr of participants

12

1

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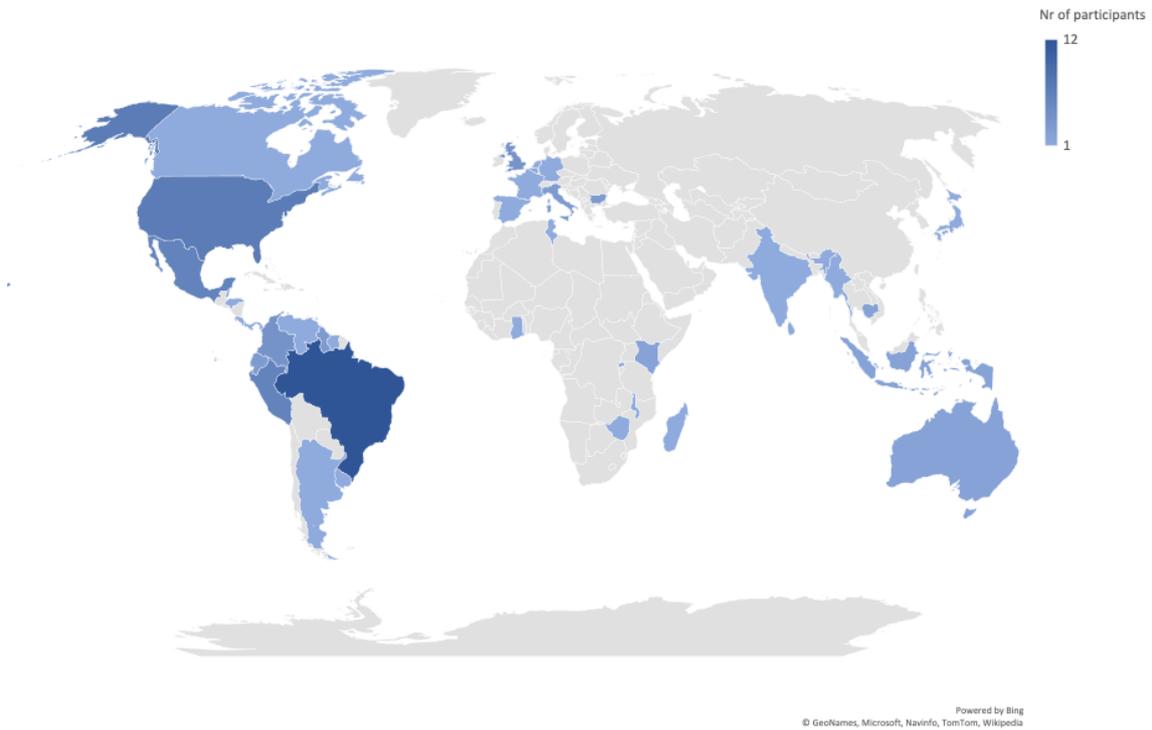
Figure 1: Map representing the countries of origin of the attendees of the second webinar of the series on WePlan – Forests. Darker shades of blue indicate a higher number of attendants. Grey indicates no attendants from the country.

Number of attendees by organization type

Universities and research institutes, 22

Government agencies, 31

United Nations, 6

Private sector, 4

NGOs, Not-for-profit, Civil organizations, 22

International cooperation, councils and commissions, 1

IUCN, 2
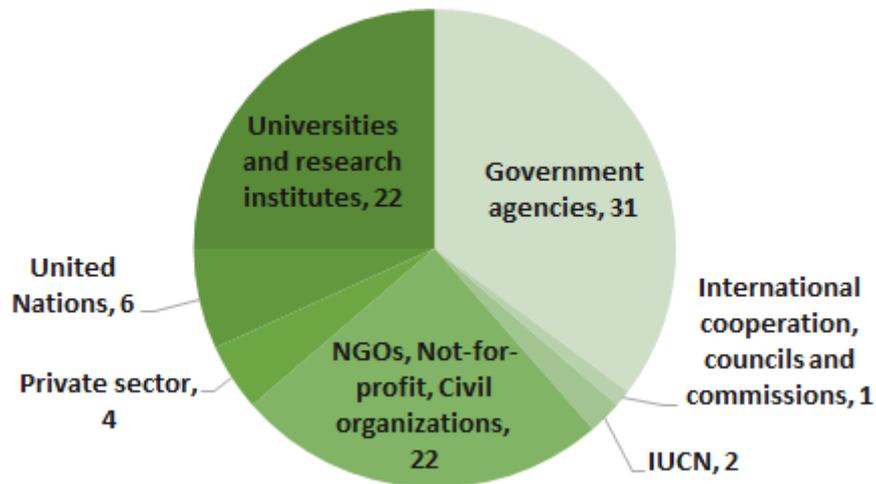
Figure 2: Distribution of attendees by type of organization. Most attendees were representatives of governmental agencies (ca. 35%)

The session program was divided as follows: opening and summary of the first webinar, three presentations introducing the topic of the session, a discussion session, and a live poll (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Program of the second session of the webinar training series for WePlan – Forests decision support tool. Times, shown in the first column, are in Brazilian standard time (GMT-3).

Webinar 2 - *How to deliver tropical forest restoration at scale: unlocking the potential of natural regeneration*		
Time	**Topic**	**Speaker**
10h30 – 10h40	Opening, recapitulation of the first webinar and presentation of speakers	Blaise Bodin (CBD)
10h40 – 11h00	The importance of natural regeneration and of assessing its potential	Invited speaker: Robin Chazdon (University of the Sunshine Coast Australia)
11h00 – 11h20	Mapping the potential for natural regeneration in tropical forest ecosystems	Renato Crouzeilles (IIS AU)
11h20 – 11h40	Applications of the map of the potential for natural regeneration for the planning of restoration actions and target-setting	Invited speaker: Starry Sprenkle-Hyppolite (Conservation International)
11h40 – 12h10	Discussion	Blaise Bodin (CBD)
12h10 – 12h25	Live Poll	Renato Crouzeilles (IIS AU)
12h25 – 12h30	Preview of next seminar	Blaise Bodin (CBD)

Q&A

Participants were allowed to ask questions using the Question and Answer (Q&A) tool available on the Zoom platform or by raising their hand to ask live questions during the discussion panel. A total of 29 questions were raised and answered, either live or in writing, during the sessions. Below is a list of 11 questions and respective answers. The questions are not as phrased during the sessions but grouped in simpler, comprehensive questions for clarity and concision.

1. **When is the next webinar session and do I need to register?**
   The next session will be on November 18th (10:30-12:30 AM Brasília) or November 19th (1:00-3:00 AM Brasília). If you have already registered using the form provided, you do not need to register again. A reminder will be sent to you before the session with the link to join.

2. **Will the presentations be available for later consultation?**
   Yes, all sessions are recorded and will be made freely available soon after the session. The links to the material (videos, Q&A, presentations and report) will be

sent to all attendees and published on the IIS-AU website: https://www.iis-au.org/news/events-webinars/.

3. **Where can I find information about the *WePlan – Forests* decision support platform and when will it be available?**
   All information can be found at the IIS-AU website, on the page: https://www.iis-au.org/projects/decision-support-tool-for-the-spatial-planning-and-implementation-of-tropical-forest-ecosystem-restoration/. The *WePlan – Forests* decision support platform is not yet available as it is still under development. A beta version is expected to be released in December 2020.

4. **What is meant by restoration and natural regeneration in this context?**
   Our decision support platform, WePlan-Forests, is aimed at tropical and subtropical forests. Hence, restoration means the reestablishment of forests in deforested land. Regeneration is the natural process of regrowth of said forests that can occur when land is abandoned, without the intervention of tree planting.

5. **How are Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs) and their traditional knowledge considered in restoration projects?**
   Indigenous knowledge and practices are very important. For example, the management of bracken fern in the Mayan region was done originally by planting balsa in fallows, which prevented the invasion of bracken fern by shading them, and allowed the forest to grow. That practice is now being used actively to control bracken fern in restoration practice. The long-term knowledge of landscapes and species of IPLCs is invaluable for restoration. Further, making sure IPLCs are included and partnered in these processes is essential, and rescuing ancestral knowledge on land management can bring practical solutions to current problems.

6. **Is natural regeneration possible in extremely degraded areas, such as mining sites and areas contaminated with pesticides? How?**
   Those areas usually are unsuitable for farming and the regeneration depends on interventions. One example is replacing the top soil by bringing in uncontaminated soil from that area that has been stored, where there are still seeds. There is still a need for experimental work to inform on regeneration of such areas without the need for extensive tree planting, but there already is evidence that it is possible. The necessary amount of tree planting will depend on the potential for seed income, that is, if there are source forested areas nearby or if the area is isolated.

7. **How is forest natural regeneration realized in farmlands?**
   In Brazil and other countries, there are laws that define amounts of land to be preserved within a given rural area, considering the conservation of ecosystem services and biodiversity. These amounts can reach up to 80% of the area. In cases where those areas assigned for conservation (e.g., river banks) have already been deforested, farmers will have to leave that area to regenerate naturally or might have to intervene to restore it by planting trees and fencing, for instance.

8. **Are invasive and exotic species a problem for natural regeneration? How to ensure that natural regeneration is not based on such species?**
    Invasive species can be a problem and how to manage them will depend on their lifeforms, among other factors. There are studies showing that removing woody and shrub invasive species, although labour-intensive, can initiate the process of regeneration. Another approach is to shade herbaceous and fern invasive species to stop their growth. In WePlan-Forests we do not directly consider the presence of invasive species. The use of the platform needs to be coupled with on-the-ground work, monitoring or other technologies to ensure the appropriate species (native and non-invasive) are being favoured in the regeneration process and the overall success of the restoration initiative.

9. **Many tools are being developed to assist decision making. Is it possible to integrate them? How to choose which ones to use?**
    There are many tools out there. The UNDP recently hosted a call where many of the groups generating these tools discussed synergies. The most important thing is to identify the questions that decision-makers are faced with and then to identify which tool is best for them. In the tool we are developing, we are accepting input and hoping to tailor our solutions to answer the questions that are most relevant to our primary stakeholders, in this case CBD Focal Points. The focus of the tool is to help countries explore the respective outcomes of different ambition levels for their national restoration goals to inform their contribution to a global restoration target under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. IIS is also open to discuss further with other organizations how we can build links between the complementary outcomes of some of these tools.

10. **What are some examples of policies and regulations that could or should be introduced to benefit natural regeneration?**
    For trees to grow on private land, they have to be an asset, to provide some value to the owners of the land. However, there are laws that create an incentive against natural regeneration and do not benefit farmers. Hence, very often it is about modifying existing policies that are holding back restoration, as opposed to creating new legislation. In this paper: https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab79e6/pdf Dr. Robin Chazdon and collaborators show how farmers can be encouraged to protect trees and allow forest regeneration.

11. **How long does it take for an area to start regenerating after a strong disturbance, such as the latest fires?**
   It depends on the ecosystem in which the fire occurred and on the intensity of the fires. In some cases, natural regeneration may never be possible, while in others it could begin within weeks following the fires. Other factors that influence the potential for natural regeneration, such as proximity to forests, can also interfere.

Live Poll

A live poll was conducted at the end of the sessions consisting of five questions designed to understand the needs of potential users of the DST to best adjust the system to their demands. The questions were read and explained by a team member, after which participants were given about a minute to answer. Immediately after, the results of each question were shared and discussed before moving on to the next. The results of the polls are presented in detail below.

1. Which of these stakeholder groups do you belong to?

Other
2 (3,8%)

International organisation
7 (13,5%)

Academia/research
12 (23,1%)

Private Sector
2 (3,8%)

Not-for-profit (International)
7 (13,5%)

Not-for-profit (local or national)
3 (5,8%)

Government official - Subnational level
1 (1,9%)

Government official (ministry or public agencies) - National level
18 (34,6%)
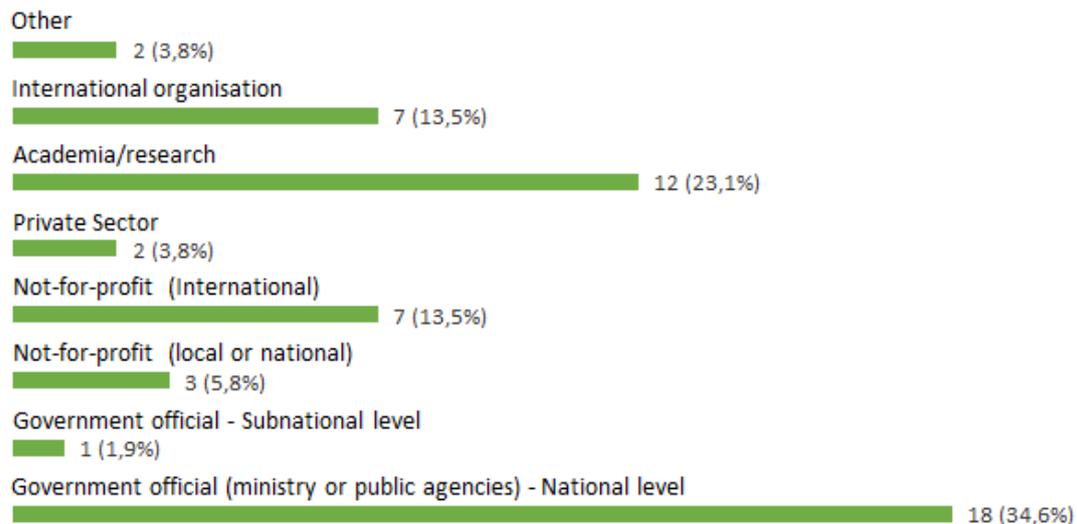
2. Which of the following information is most relevant to the planning of forest ecosystem restoration in your context?

Identification of areas with potential for natural regeneration
11 (27,5%)

Identification of the trade-offs between restoration and agricultural activities
16 (40,0%)

Identification of areas with potential for above-ground carbon sequestration from forest restoration
7 (17,5%)

Identification of areas that can help prevent species extinctions
6 (15,0%)
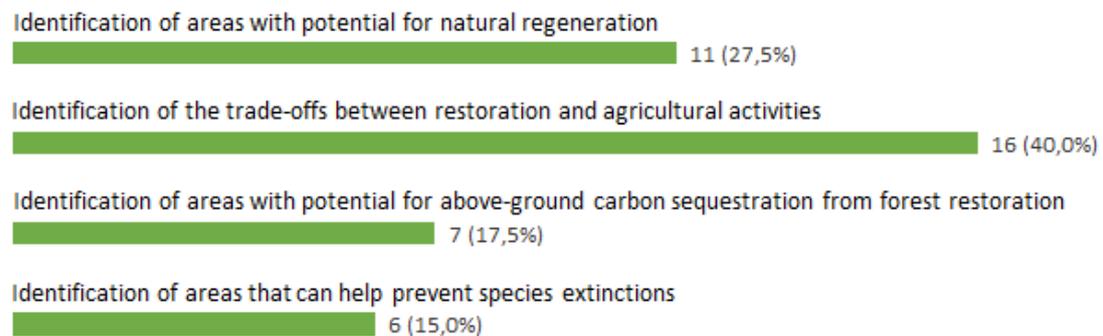
3. Has the potential for natural forest regeneration been assessed in your country?

This has not been considered
10 (21,7%)

Assessment is planned but has not started
8 (17,4%)

Assessment is in progress
5 (10,9%)

Yes, locally
9 (19,6%)

Yes, at national scale
14 (30,4%)
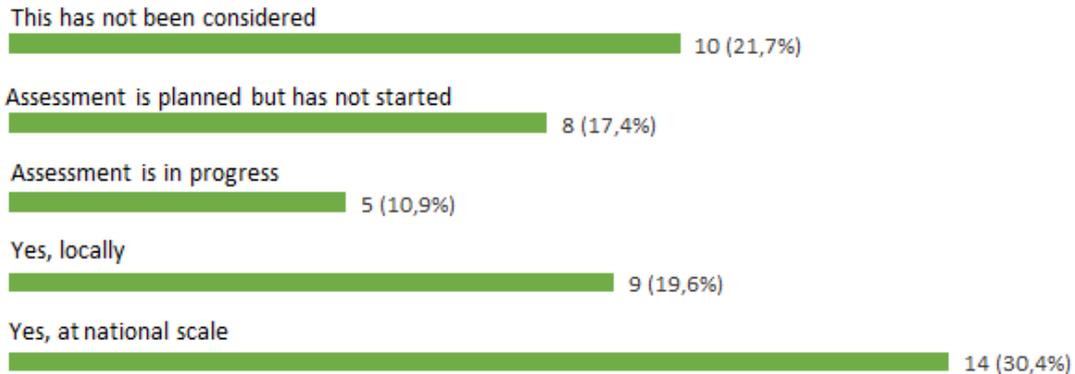
4. Which method has been preferred to implement restoration actions in your country?

I don't know
2 (4,1%)

A mix of both, depending on location
28 (57,1%)

Natural forest regeneration (including assisted)
7 (14,3%)

Tree planting
12 (24,5%)
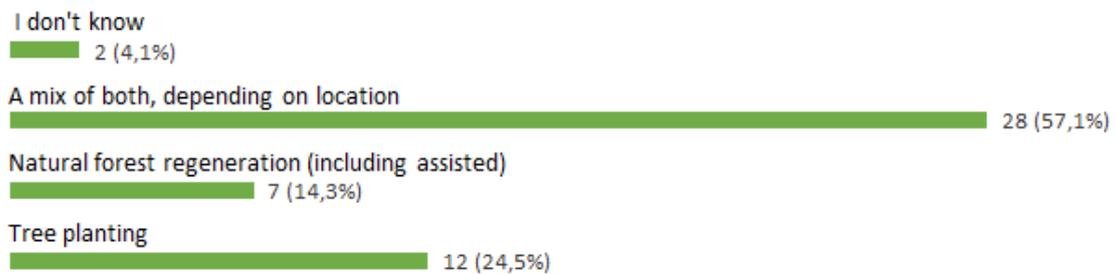
5. Which of the following barriers to natural forest regeneration are most relevant in your context?

I don't know
4 (9,3%)

None of the above
8 (18,6%)

The right knowledge is lacking to sustain, assist and enrich natural regeneration
10 (23,3%)

It is not included/promoted as an intervention in restoration planning
7 (16,3%)

It is viewed as poor land management
6 (14,0%)

The benefits of tree planting are considered to be higher, at least in the short term
8 (18,6%)
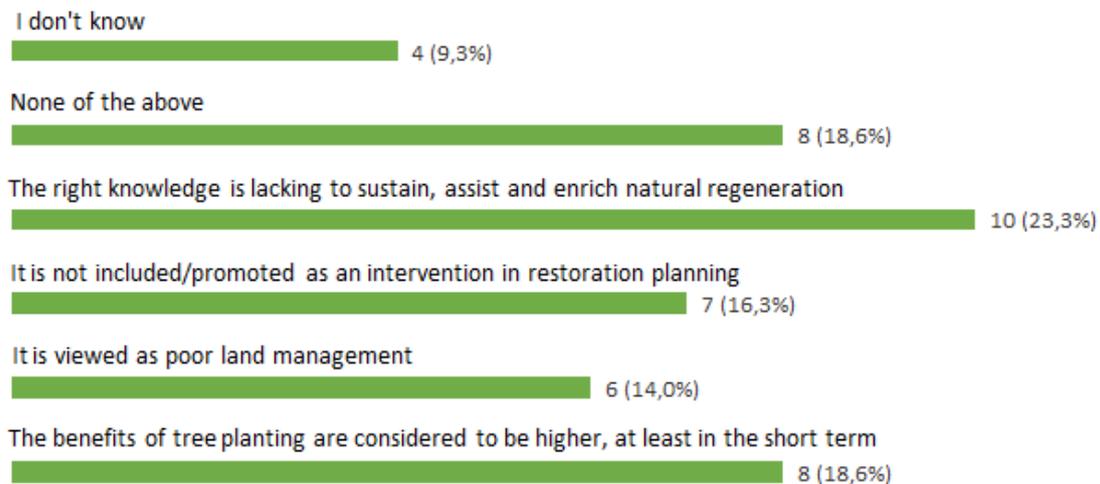
Conclusion

To achieve the goal of the series of webinars to prepare stakeholders for using the WePlan - Forests decision support platform and improve the interface to integrate user demands, webinars must have high attendance, participation, and good feedback. In the

first two sessions, participation and engagement were significant across sectors and countries, although there was a slight decrease in participation (113 attendants in the first session versus 88 in the second session). However, countries that had not engaged in the first session, such as Ghana, the Bahamas and Sri Laka, had representatives present at the second session. By making these results available, we expect to improve the understanding of participants and non-participants and provide additional material on the platform. All material will be free to access on the webinar series webpage: https://www.iis-au.org/news/events-webinars/, and more information on the project can be found at https://www.iis-au.org/projects/decision-support-tool-for-the-spatial-planning-and-implementation-of-tropical-forest-ecosystem-restoration.

Annex

Full list of countries with representatives attending the second session of the series of webinars on *WePlan – Forests:* A decision support tool for the spatial planning and implementation of tropical forest ecosystem restoration, with the respective number of attendees.

Continent	Country	Number of attendees
Africa		**8**
	Ghana	1
	Kenya	2
	Madagascar	1
	Malawi	1
	Rwanda	1
	Tunisia	1
	Zimbabwe	1
Asia		**9**
	Cambodia	2
	India	1
	Indonesia	2
	Japan	1
	Myanmar	1
	Singapore	1
	Sri Lanka	1
Central America		**8**
	Bahamas	1
	Barbados	1
	Belize	2
	Costa Rica	1
	Honduras	1
	Panama	1
	Trinidad and Tobago	1
North America		**14**
	Canada	1
	Mexico	6
	USA	7
South America		**3**
	Argentina	1
	Brazil	12
	Colombia	4
	Ecuador	3
	Guyana	3
	Peru	6

	Suriname	1
	Uruguay	1
	Venezuela	1
Europe		**15**
	Belgium	1
	Bulgaria	3
	France	1
	Germany	1
	Italy	3
	Netherlands	1
	Spain	1
	United Kingdom	4
Oceania		**2**
	Australia	2
Total		**88**