NOVEMBER 19TH, 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.

Third session: November 18th and 19th, 2020:

Implications of systematic spatial planning and spatial restoration optimisation for the economics of restoration and policy design

The third 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 **97 participants** from **41 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.
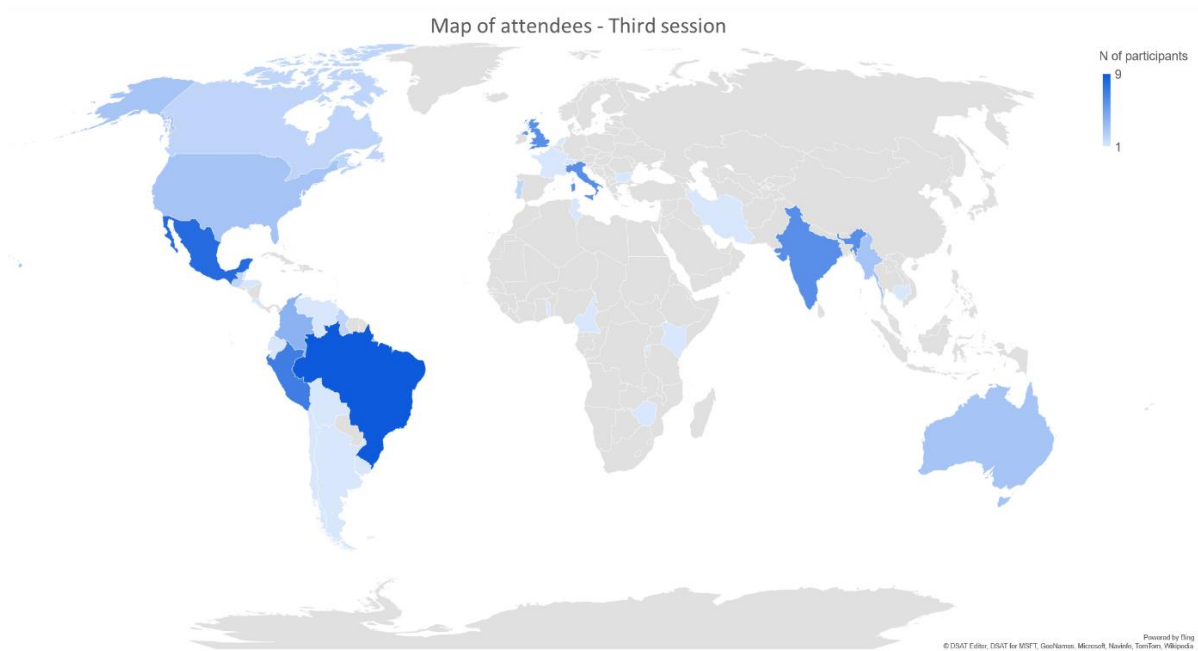
IIS

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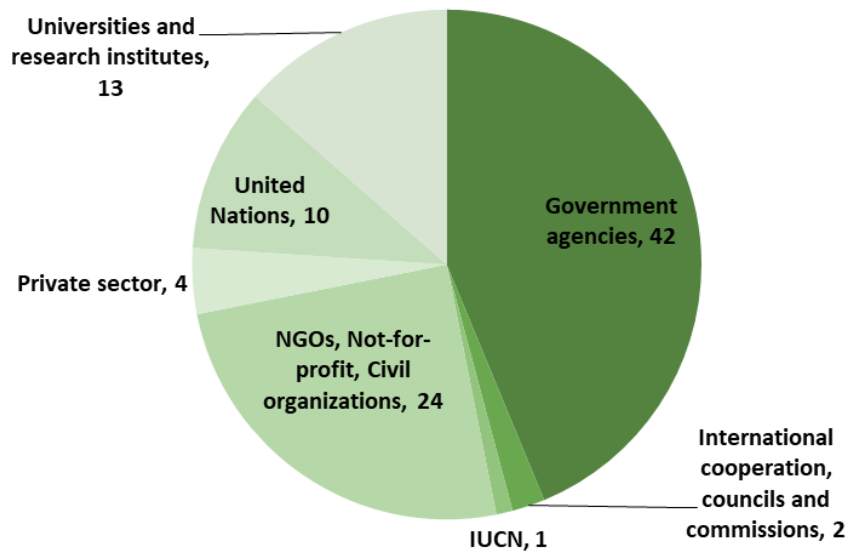

Figure 2: Distribution of attendees by type of organization. Most attendees were representatives of governmental agencies (ca. 43%)

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

Table 1: *Program of the third 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 3 - *Implications of systematic spatial planning and spatial restoration optimisation for the economics of restoration and policy design*		
Time	**Topic**	**Speaker**
10h30 – 10h40	Opening, recapitulation from the first webinar, and presentation of speakers	Blaise Bodin (CBD)
10h40 – 11h10	Economics and Forest Restoration Planning	Invited speaker: Jeffrey Vincent (Duke University)
11h10 – 11h40	Implications of systematic spatial planning for ecosystem restoration public policies: from local to global scale	Carlos Alberto Scaramuzza (IIS Rio)
11h40 – 12h10	Discussion	Blaise Bodin (CBD)
12h05 – 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 11 questions were raised and answered, either live or in writing, during the sessions. One question was asked lived. Below is a list of 6 questions and respective answers. The questions are not as phrased during the sessions but grouped in simpler, comprehensive questions for clarity and concision.

1. **Areas with low opportunity cost, where agricultural productivity is low, are frequently targeted for restoration, given that the benefits are also high. However, those areas often coincide with regions of high poverty, where landowners are heavily dependent on the income from the land and have no resources to invest on restoration. How to deal with this issue, turning restoration into an opportunity and not an extra pressure on those people?**
First, it is important to highlight that there is still a lot of uncertainty on what the costs of the restoration are. The calculations often understate the value landowners place on land. The low quality of the information on opportunity cost increases the risk of making decisions to the disadvantage of low-income smallholders. Second, although it is true in many cases that areas with low

opportunity cost are areas where landholders are impoverished, in some locations land has low opportunity cost because landowners decide not to work the land to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Finally, to avoid the negative outcomes of displacing and impoverishing people, local people need to be included in the process of restoration planning and practice, be informed and have their preferences considered. The most successful restoration programmes in avoiding such negative outcomes are those that count on voluntary involvement. Governments can plan, but the decision to restore must be made by landowners, with incentives provided by governments when needed.

2. **What are some effective methods to combine the multiple components of information (e.g., time, risk, cost/benefit trade-offs) in restoration planning?**
The purpose of *WePlan-Forests* is precisely to provide a tool for that. However, modelling forest restoration is a complex socioenvironmental issue. In WePlan, we integrate information across multiple benefits, biodiversity and carbon sequestration, and costs, opportunity and establishment, as well as a measure of risk, the potential for natural regeneration. The measure of time is not yet included, but the platform will continue to be improved in upcoming versions, as new and better-quality information is developed and made available. One main improvement we aim to include in upcoming versions of the platform is the measure of probability of forest persistence, as a measure of risk and uncertainty. We also intend on adding uncertainty related to biodiversity recovery.

3. **How to evaluate the cost/benefit of the establishment of a combination of reforestation and natural regeneration in one model, like in the case of nucleation? Does the platform account for solutions that lie between natural regeneration and active tree planting?**
WePlan-Forests in its first version does not indicate directly what is the best approach for restoration, considering a continuum from unassisted natural regeneration to active restoration. However, our model considers the potential for natural regeneration. When there is a 100% potential, there is little (e.g., fencing) to no cost to restoration, while the cost and need for interference will likely increase as the potential for natural regeneration decreases. The platform takes that into account when balancing costs and benefits. In future versions, we can start to explore other, more complex models, including cost factors such as the potential for commercial forestry. There is already a plan to start developing a tool that incorporates those components in Uganda next year.

4. **How to deal with land tenure conflict, particularly illegally occupied land, in restoration planning? There are, for example, publicly owned wastelands that have very opportunity costs to the state but are illegally cultivated by local people. How does the mode handle this?**
Areas designated as "wastelands" can actually be very important for some people, and if there is information on productivity in such lands, it should be incorporated in the models to appropriately represent the opportunity cost of the land. Land tenure conflict among local, indigenous, private and public sector is a reality in many countries. This is not included in our model or platform, but it should be factored in the planning process, from a planning and from a political

point of view, considering who pays for the costs and who receives the benefits of restoration. With land use monitoring, we can identify where regeneration is happening and overlap with available tenure information to guide policy. For example, it is possible to establish forest restoration concessions, where public land is restored via private concessions with different sources of income being produced (e.g., agroforestry, commercial forestry). In order for restoration to be promoted with social justice, tenure clarity needs to be improved.

5. **There is evidence that forests under regeneration after 20-30 years have very low persistence. How do you address this problem from policy point of view?**
    This is a key issue: although there is high potential for natural regeneration in some areas, these new forests keep being lost. The path to change this includes awareness, economic incentives or policies. There are sets of policies that do not favor natural regeneration and this should be changed. We discusse dit further during the second webinar, focused on natural regeneration (you can check the material here: https://www.iis-au.org/news/events-webinars/). You can also find examples in a 2020 paper by Robin Chazdon and collaborators: https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab79e6/pdf.

6. **The balance of costs and benefits as usually measures rarely favour forest restoration. How can restoration create more financial benefits and be incentivized with landowners?**
    There are many examples of planning and policy strategies to create economic benefits for restoration. Payment for ecosystem services initiatives are a well-established form of compensation for landowners. But we also need to work on promoting the value of biodiversity and on innovating restoration benefits planning, creating strategies that are effective and promote social justice.

Live Poll

A live poll was conducted at the end of the sessions consisting of six 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?

(a) Government official (ministry or public agencies) – National level
23 (48.9%)

(b) Government official – subnational level
1 (2.1%)

(c) Not-for-profit (local or national)
2 (4.3%)

(d) Not-for-profit (International)
6 (12.8%)

(e) Private sector
1 (2.1%)

(f) Academia/research
7 (14.9%)

(g) International organisation
5 (10.6%)

(h) Other
2 (4.3%)
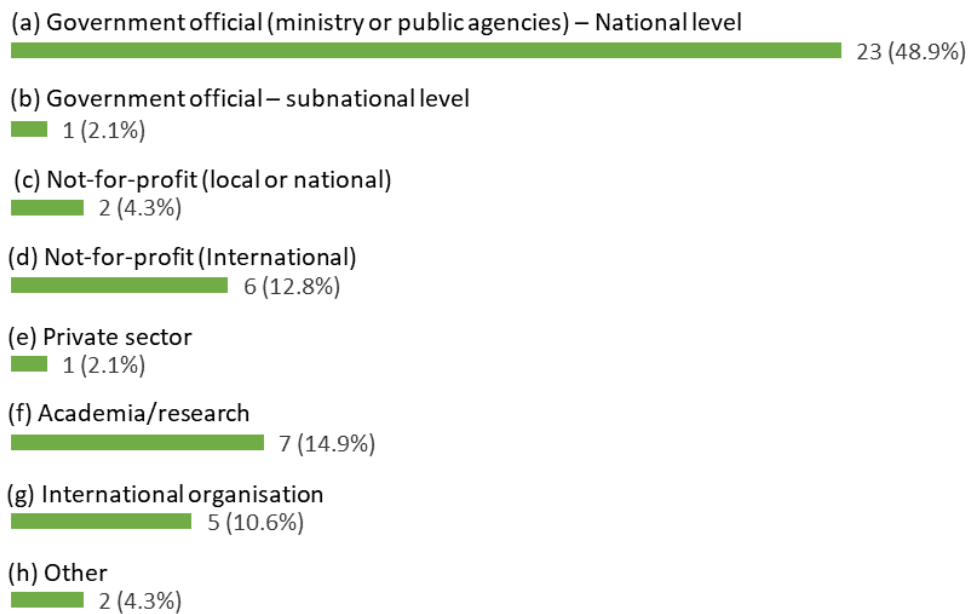
2. Which of these costs is likely to be more significant in your restoration context?

(a) Opportunity cost of foregone productive land
12 (24.5%)

(b) Implementation cost of restoration interventions
28 (57.1%)

(c) I don't know
9 (18.4%)
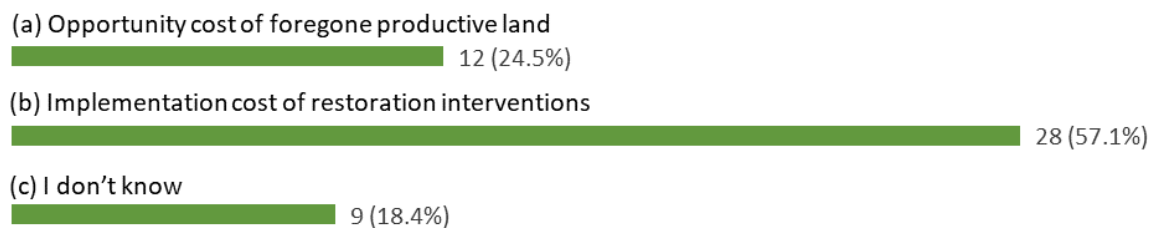
3. Which of these benefits from restoration is likely to have the highest economic value in your restoration context?

(a) Carbon sequestration
7 (15.2%)

(b) Biodiversity conservation
15 (32.6%)

(c) Hydrological services (freshwater provision and flow regulation)
8 (17.4%)

(d) Erosion control
4 (8.7%)

(e) Benefits to agriculture (increased fertility, pollination)
5 (10.9%)

(f) Employment
3 (6.5%)

(g) Other
4 (8.7%)
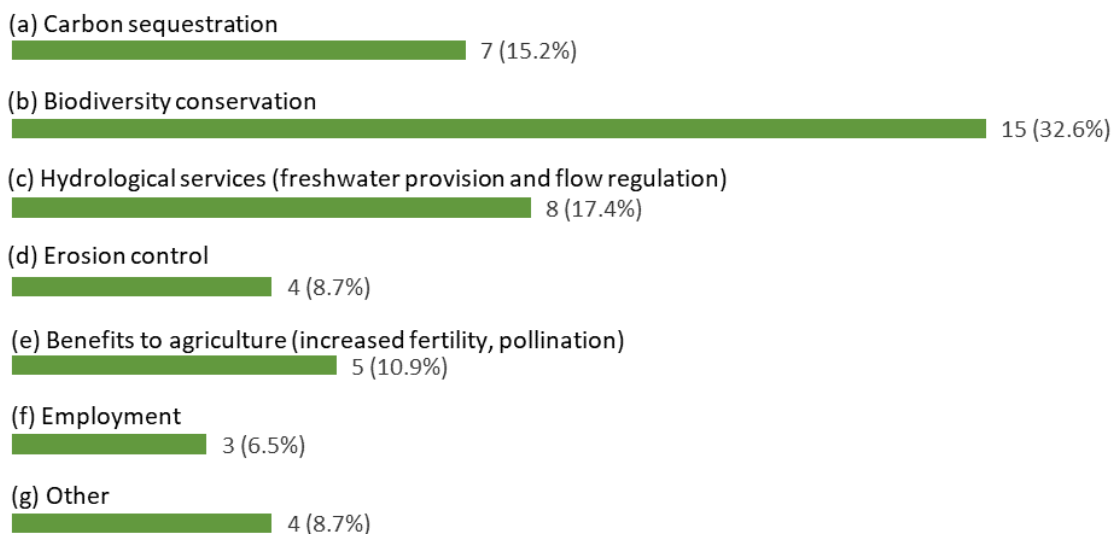
4. Which of these benefits from restoration is most likely to be financially realized (have an actual market value) in your restoration context?

(a) Carbon sequestration
12 (29.3%)

(b) Biodiversity conservation
8 (19.5%)

(c) Hydrological services (freshwater provision and flow regulation)
6 (14.6%)

(d) Erosion control
1 (2.4%)

(e) Benefits to agriculture (increased fertility, pollination)
8 (19.5%)

(f) Employment
3 (7.3%)

(g) Other
3 (7.3%)
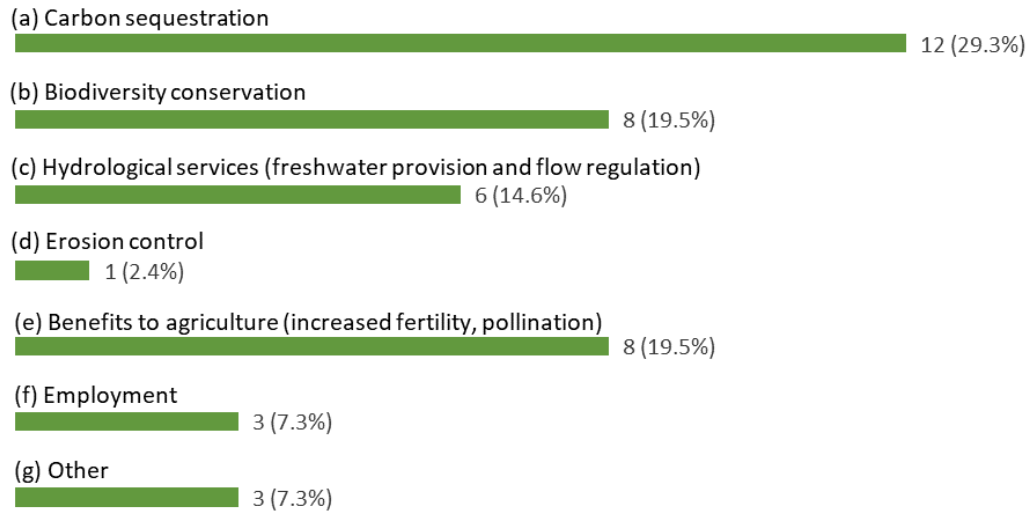
5. How much information do you have on the costs of restoration (opportunity, establishment, monitoring) in your restoration context?

(a) I have access to detailed and representative information on all cost categories
0.0%

(b) I have access to information on all cost categories but it may not be representative (too few data points)
8 (19.0%)

(c) I have access to information on some of the cost categories and not others
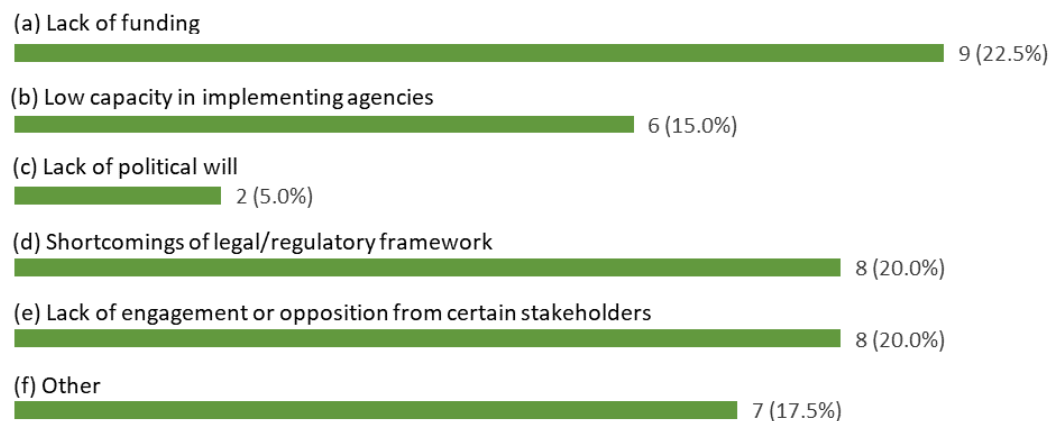19 (45.2%)

(d) No information on the costs of restoration is available
6 (14.3%)

(e) We are in the process of collecting such information
9 (21.4%)

6. What is the main obstacle to forest restoration planning in your country?

(a) Lack of funding
9 (22.5%)

(b) Low capacity in implementing agencies
6 (15.0%)

(c) Lack of political will
2 (5.0%)

(d) Shortcomings of legal/regulatory framework
8 (20.0%)

(e) Lack of engagement or opposition from certain stakeholders
8 (20.0%)

(f) Other
7 (17.5%)

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, 88 in the second and 97 in the third session). Representatives from 67 countries have participated in at least one of the three sessions, while 23 countries were presented in all three. 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 third 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		**6**
	Cameroon	1
	Kenya	1
	Rwanda	1
	Togo	1
	Tunisia	1
	Zimbabwe	1
Asia		**18**
	Cambodia	1
	India	6
	Iran	1
	Myanmar	3
	Singapore	7
Central America		**8**
	Antigua and Barbuda	1
	Bahamas	1
	Belize	1
	Costa Rica	1
	Guatemala	2
	Honduras	1
	Sao Tome and Principe	1
North America		**13**
	Canada	2
	Mexico	8
	USA	3
South America		**28**
	Argentina	1
	Bolivia	1
	Brazil	9
	Chile	1
	Colombia	4
	Ecuador	1
	Guyana	2
	Peru	7
	Uruguay	1

	Venezuela	1
Europe		**20**
	Bulgaria	1
	France	1
	Germany	1
	Italy	6
	Malta	1
	Netherlands	1
	Portugal	2
	Switzerland	1
	United Kingdom	6
Oceania		**4**
	Australia	3
	Fiji	1
Total		**97**