

Midterm Review of GCS REDD+: CIFOR's Management Response

December 2019

CIFOR takes note of and welcomes the Final Report of the Midterm Review 2018, provided by *Resources & Synergies Development sia*, Riga, Latvia, of our project “**A global comparative study for achieving effective, efficient and equitable REDD+ results (2016-2020)**”, funded by Norad under *QZA-16/0010 Nr. 1500551 A Global Comparative Study for Achieving REDD+ Results*.

In this project, a midterm and an endterm review are foreseen in the project contract. The midterm review is complete and the endterm review will be conducted by December 2020. The midterm review concluded with three key recommendations, which we repeat here in full (as taken from the Executive Summary of the Midterm Review report), followed by our Management Response to each. We also respond to two other recommendations made in the report.

1st Recommendation. *Firstly, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) system should be put in place as soon as possible. It can be very useful to assess the pathways effectiveness and the contribution of the Project to final outcomes.*

CIFOR Management Response

In early 2020, CIFOR's Research to Impact (RTI) team will develop an improved Monitoring Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) system that aims to go beyond outputs to understand, document and promote project outcomes through a systematic documentation of influence on REDD+-related policy and practice decisions by our boundary partners.

2nd Recommendation. *Secondly, the core discussion is about providing information and exerting influence. In short, it seems there is “enough information” and “not enough influence”, in relative terms. Each pathway can be analysed as a decision-making process where a bottleneck – the weakest element – sets the pace to the entire system. Using the MEIA, the module leaders should be able to better identify obstacles and remedy them accordingly. It is not only about improving the flow of information and action but also positioning the product between information and influence. We can provide two examples. Policy briefs can be seen as shorter versions and more accessible written research findings. Face-to-face engagement with stakeholders, policy-makers in particular, including providing technical assistance, was acknowledged as an impacting behaviour. It is highly recommended that the Project continues to alleviate these two “bottlenecks”.*

CIFOR Management Response

We at CIFOR are aware that knowledge products, which are available at the right time, and in the right format and language for our partners, are one important key to impact. We support our boundary partners by providing targeted analysis, data, knowledge, and tools that reflect their needs and demand. We intend to produce an increased number of targeted InfoBriefs and policy briefs in the final project year (2020), including briefs focused on the four policy impact stories mentioned in the next section. In 2018 we published a book, “Transforming REDD+”, which in 16 short chapters, written by 60 authors, analyses the last ten years of REDD+ research and summarizes our recommendations for the way forward. In December 2019, we have just published a version of this book translated into Spanish (<https://www.cifor.org/library/7446/>), and we are preparing a French version for 2020.

Our planning for 2020 also aims to enhance the interactions with policy actors at all levels. This includes providing technical assistance through in-country stakeholder workshops and strategic one-on-one meetings with key policymakers. We held several national stakeholder workshops in 2019 (e.g. in Ethiopia on REDD+ policies, and in Democratic Republic of Congo and Guyana on technical MRV). Additional in-country stakeholder workshops in Peru, Indonesia and Brazil are planned to be held in 2020.

3rd Recommendation. *Thirdly, we recommend not to engage into developing country-specific theory of change. The generic theory of change can still be used for the remaining implementation period of time. Instead, the Project should select and closely monitor up to four selected policy trajectories in order to enrich the body of knowledge on the process (stories of change).*

CIFOR Management Response

CIFOR is satisfied to learn that our Theory of Change, developed as “Results Framework” in close interaction with Norad at the beginning of the project, still holds up to scrutiny. We understand that there is no need to develop country-specific theories of change, but we are currently in the process of identifying at least four policy impact stories where evidence can be compiled to demonstrate that CIFOR’s work is making a relevant contribution to outcomes and impact. We will work closely with CIFOR’s RTI team on these impact stories and to monitor the project’s progress along the theory of change in the final project year. In 2020, we will also ensure that the final project evaluation will be carried out in a timely manner by an external evaluator.

Other midterm review recommendations with responses

a) Opportunities to increase project’s contribution to outcomes. *Interviewed stakeholders have given a long list of opportunities to increase the project’s contribution to outcomes. They are being discussed in Key Questions 1.2 and 2.4, and given in detail in Annexes 2 and 6. Some are owed to special circumstances or conditions found in single countries. In general, stronger*



stakeholder participation and capacity development are coming out as important opportunities that could be addressed in the last project phase. (...)

Obviously, there is room for improvement as evidenced by the long series of suggestions. Above all, these numerous opportunities show how relevant the project is. They also show how demanding and engaged are actors involved with REDD+.

CIFOR Management Response

We have carefully reviewed these comments and suggestions and thank the interview respondents for their effort in providing this feedback. We will address these comments as much as possible in the remaining year's work. Some more far-reaching requests, such as those asking for more CIFOR in-country presence, will have to be assessed in the light of the reality of limited project funds.

b) Comment on the previous ODI review from 2014. *The review of the previous GCS REDD+ carried out by ODI listed twenty recommendations. Out of these, nineteen have been fully or partly addressed. We found no evidence that the recommendation "Produce a short strategy document outlining what makes for the best 'match' between CIFOR and its collaborating organisations (type of partnership being sought)" was addressed. We encourage the Project teams to implement most recommendations made by ODI.*

CIFOR Management Response

Indeed, CIFOR has not produced a short strategy document specifically addressing the best match between CIFOR and collaborating institutions. However, our partner relations have been assessed in the context of the 2016 efforts to develop a phase II proposal for FTA (Forests, Trees and Agroforestry) where GCS REDD+ is part of the activities under Flagship Program 5 (Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Opportunities in Forests, Trees and Agroforestry) (e.g. <http://foreststreesagroforestry.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/FP-5-FTA-Phase-II.pdf>, Table 4, page 177). CIFOR is constantly developing its partnership base. For instance, in the current phase of GCS REDD+ in particular, we have developed a whole new partnership with Earth Innovation Institute (EII), the Governors' Forests and Climate Task Force, and the Climate Community and Biodiversity Alliance on assessing jurisdictional approaches, which complement our previous work under Module 2 (Impact Assessment) and broaden our influence. This partnership was not to be foreseen when the project was drafted earlier, but it has resulted in subnational governments leveraging our research as they develop their REDD+ and low emissions development strategies. We can use this and other stories to develop a short strategy document on strategic partnerships.



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