Results of the El Salvador workshop: Regional workshop of Forest Landscape Restoration: from policies to practice.

Held: 20-21 September 2016

Hotel la Terraza, San Salvador

DRAFT, 22 September, for consultation between partners.

Within the framework of an agreement between the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), IUFRO, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of El Salvador (MARN) and the Tropical Agriculture Center for Research and Higher Education (CATIE) organized a workshop to analyze national and regional experiences in restoration and prepare recommendations for the scaling up of restoration initiatives in the region and El Salvador in particular. El Salvador was chosen as host for the workshop, due to its advances in the development and implementation of a national restoration strategy. El Salvador was the first country in the Latin America region to present a restoration commitment to the Bonn Challenge.

The workshop hosted 48 participants from 5 Latin American countries, eleven international organizations: Christian Relieve Services (CRS), Environment and Development Action in the Caribe (ENDA-Caribe), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Institute for Sustainability (IIS), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), IUFRO, People and Reforestation in the Tropics, a Network for Education Research and Synthesis (PARTNERS), World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF, through skype), the World Resources Institute (WRI) and CATIE.

Considering that restoration of landscapes is a complex issue, the workshop discussed experiences around the topics of governance, monitoring, different approaches towards restoration (agroforestry, natural regeneration, conservation agriculture), incentives and planning tools for restoration and the achievements and challenges regional initiatives such as 20x20 and in-country efforts (examples from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru) as well as learning of some Asian experiences and the results of the Rwanda workshop held in July 2016 and experiences in Ethiopia and Kenya.

As a result of the discussions, the participants identified the following enabling conditions for up-scaling of restoration efforts:

- **Political support.** This could consider the coordination and harmonization of the normative framework between different sectors, as well as the coordination of incentives for different land uses. Developing appropriate incentives should be the role of governments, since many of the benefits of restoration are perceived by society while initial costs are born by local landowners and managers. Political support could also form a framework for increased leadership and significant participation of local actors in restoration planning, implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, it could consider setting a framework for integrated monitoring of results and impacts of restoration activities at different scales (national, landscape/watershed and local). Further political
support is necessary to strengthen land tenure security in the priority areas for restoration and for the engagement of other ministries in landscape restoration planning and implementation, in particular of the Ministry of Agriculture.

- **Strengthened local governance and leadership.** Successful experiences of governance at a landscape level have in common a local leadership and different forms of governance that achieve local appropriation of the activities. Such governance above all has been important in negotiating objectives, building trust, managing conflicts and identifying priority areas, planning of the activities within the landscape and in coordination with other land uses, as well as in identifying needs for funding, access to information, capacity building and research. Defining clear objectives for restoration is an essential step to sustainability of the initiatives. Local governance platforms that offered spaces for reflecting on past, present and future actions and their impacts, have shown to help change attitudes and land use practices. In some cases the private sector was involved, increasing the financial sustainability of the initiatives as well as increasing the diversity of the initiatives implemented.

- While most forest landscape restoration initiatives receive direct or indirect support from the national environmental authorities, participants expressed the need for a greater integration of the agricultural and livestock ministries in restoration initiatives. In addition, there is a need for greater engagement of the private sector, possibly through their social and environmental responsibility initiatives.

- **Gender issues** were hardly highlighted in the presentations, but in one case from the Philippines, women’s participation in planning and implementation of the activities turned to be essential for success. Restoration initiatives in Latin America could also greatly benefit from considering gender issues in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring. This will probably require strengthening capacities in addressing such issues.

- Due to its complex nature and the need for technical and scientific approaches to restoration, extension services should be strengthened and integrate restoration into their programs. Farmer field schools and farmer to farmer exchanges have been very successful in different initiatives.

- **Information management.** Successful restoration is heavily dependent on accurate, spatially explicit information on different aspects of the landscapes, related to the different objectives of restoration and landscape management. The availability of planning tools (such as ROAM) and further development of additional prioritization and resource allocation tools (such as INVEST), other tools or similar efforts currently being implemented in Guatemala that can be used for scenario analysis and development of strategic plans is strongly recommended. Such information could be the basis for baseline generation and integrated monitoring. Generation and sharing of data and information have proven to support successful restoration efforts, in particular in cases where the information covered locally relevant elements of the different dimensions (ecological, social, economic and institutional) of restoration.

- **Monitoring of results, efficiency (costs versus benefits) and the effectiveness of the proposed activities in achieving the proposed goals is considered essential in order to be able to show the benefits of restoration to both investors and potential implementing groups and organizations. While many initiatives already incorporate result monitoring,
monitoring of the benefits, such as changes in the availability and quality of ecosystem services, is still very limited. Technical and financial support is required to elaborate a framework of relevant indicators that can measure changes in ecosystem services and track if such changes are due to the restoration activities or to other external factors. Current restoration plans recognize the need for immediate monitoring while allowing for gradual improvement over time in the number and type of indicators to be monitored.

- Both information management and monitoring results can contribute to effective communication of the success stories and the multiple benefits of restoration activities. This communication will be essential for the up-scaling of restoration activities within the countries, as well as for involvement of a greater variety of relevant actors in existing and future restoration initiatives. Farmers should be at the center of any such communication strategy. In addition, participants stressed the importance of being able to achieve active involvement of local authorities, local NGOs, local church leaders, as well as the private sector and local land managers and owners.

- Forest landscapes are inhabited by people and they themselves are the first ones responsible for the state of the resources in their surroundings. While they interact with outside drivers, such as markets and national policies, they themselves make choices that affect their resources. Formal and informal education initiatives that incorporate healthy nutrition (consumption and preparation) and environmental management aspects will help raise the awareness of their capacity to make changes in their habits in favor of a healthier, more productive and more resilient landscape.

- Including forest landscape restoration as a topic in formal academic curricula will increase the number of researchers in forest landscape restoration, as well as the number of decision makers aware of its potential to contribute to sustainable development.

- Although the presentations in this workshop show that already much is known on the benefits of and methods for forest landscape restoration, participants felt that many aspects of landscape restoration still need further research. Forming new researchers and setting up adequate monitoring systems will facilitate future research, but in addition, more funding will be necessary to stimulate research into innovative restoration tools and mechanisms, impacts of restoration on the ecosystem services, measuring the benefits of ecosystem services, as well as a wider range of potential species for successful restoration under different environmental and climate conditions. Every restoration program is an experiment, and much can be learned from understanding the impacts of different practices and local contexts.

- Forest landscape restoration is a long-term process. Support to such initiatives and their enabling conditions should, therefore, also consider long-term investments, support networks and institutional arrangements that can permit continuation of restoration practices beyond the usual short-term time frames of projects.

In addition several approaches towards and elements of forest restoration were highlighted:

- Forest landscape restoration initiatives should consider the time to build up trust with and between local actors, consider an “un-learning” curve of habits and customs, as well as the need to strengthen a common vision at landscape level. In particular time should be spent to understand and, where necessary, improve motivation of the local actors to
engage in forest landscape restoration initiatives. Involvement of local organizations that have good relations with all local actors right from the design phase of the restoration initiatives will greatly contribute to rapid progress and lasting success.

- Participants observed that many of the successful initiatives that were presented and discussed had important restoration achievements, but were not initially established as restoration initiatives. This shows the potentially very positive impact on landscapes of the integration of restoration initiatives into existing programs of local and national organizations, in response to locally felt needs and to emerging restoration opportunities created by legislation or other mandates. It is, therefore, worthwhile to more deeply explore the manifold routes towards forest and landscape restoration, for example through comparative studies. It also shows the usefulness of a gradual approach: it is not necessary to put the entire package of goods in place all at once.

- Integration of a wide range of different types of restoration approaches within one single landscape will increase effectiveness and social and environmental resilience of the landscape. This should be based on characteristics of the landscapes and allow local actors to meet their different needs for energy, water, food and nutritional security. Where the benefits of restoration to these different needs were perceived, local participation was greater and more durable. Thus agroforestry, silvo-pastoral systems and soil conservation measures can as much contribute to restoration as natural regeneration or plantation of trees, depending on the local circumstances and expected benefits. Restoration activities that were transformative and compatible with actual land uses facilitate adoption by local actors.

- Urban restoration is a relatively new concept which needs to be better documented, analyzing its potential to improve access to ecosystem services. This is in particularly important for the Latin American landscapes, many of which incorporate urban environments or are heavily influenced by the demands for ecosystem services from nearby urban environments.

- Forest landscape restoration occurs within a dynamic temporal and spatial context. Urban development, changes in the economic structures of the countries, market changes and climate change, to name some of the most obvious changes that may occur, will change the way that people need to manage their immediate environment. This will require that FLR takes place as part of adaptive management strategies, build on participative planning and monitoring processes.

- Networks of nurseries with access to known, diverse and appropriate sources of germplasm need to be planned and designed considering the expected demand for plants as well as the present and future local environmental conditions.

- Economic differentiation has contributed greatly to the opportunities for forest landscape restoration. Incentives for economic activities that do not directly involve land cultivation can contribute as much to landscape restoration as direct protective or re-establishment of the vegetation. Value chain development as well as alternative employment opportunities in tourism or other services have shown their potential to contribute to restoration efforts.

- Landscape restoration has to have a human face.
- It was also suggested that there is a need for regionally produced manuals of best practices in FLR, which incorporate examples and case studies within a local context.

At closing the workshop, the technical and scientific organizations present expressed their support for El Salvador’s initiative to make the country a real life laboratory for forest landscape restoration.

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