DECEMBER 10TH, 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.

Fourth session: December 8th and 9th, 2020:

Launch of WePlan-Forests: A decision support platform for spatial planning of forest ecosystem restoration

The fourth 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 **71 participants** from **32 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.

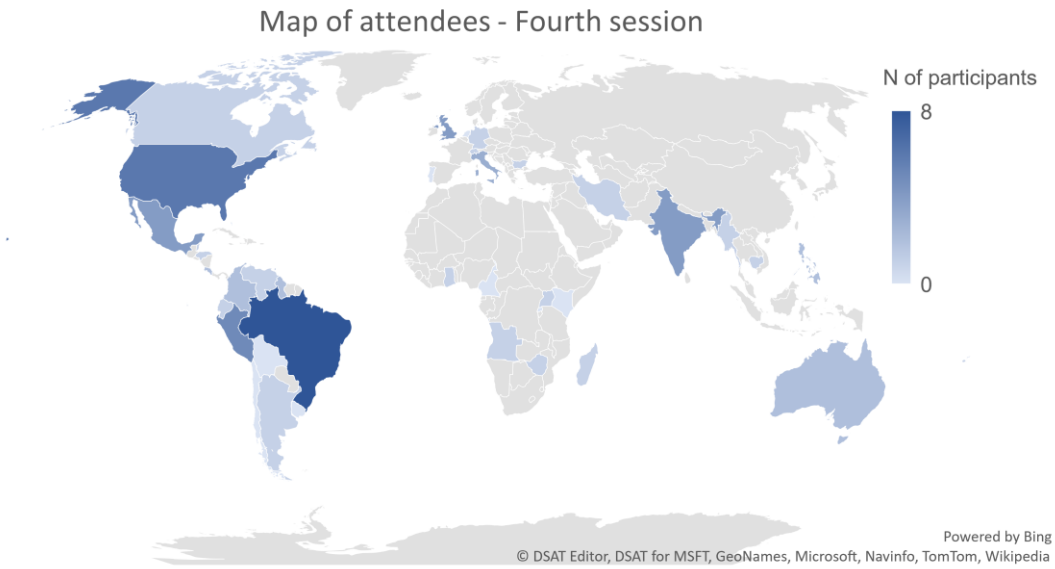


Figure 1: *Map representing the countries of origin of the attendees of the fourth webinar of the series on WePlan – Forests. Darker shades of blue indicate a higher number of attendants. Grey indicates no attendants from the country.*

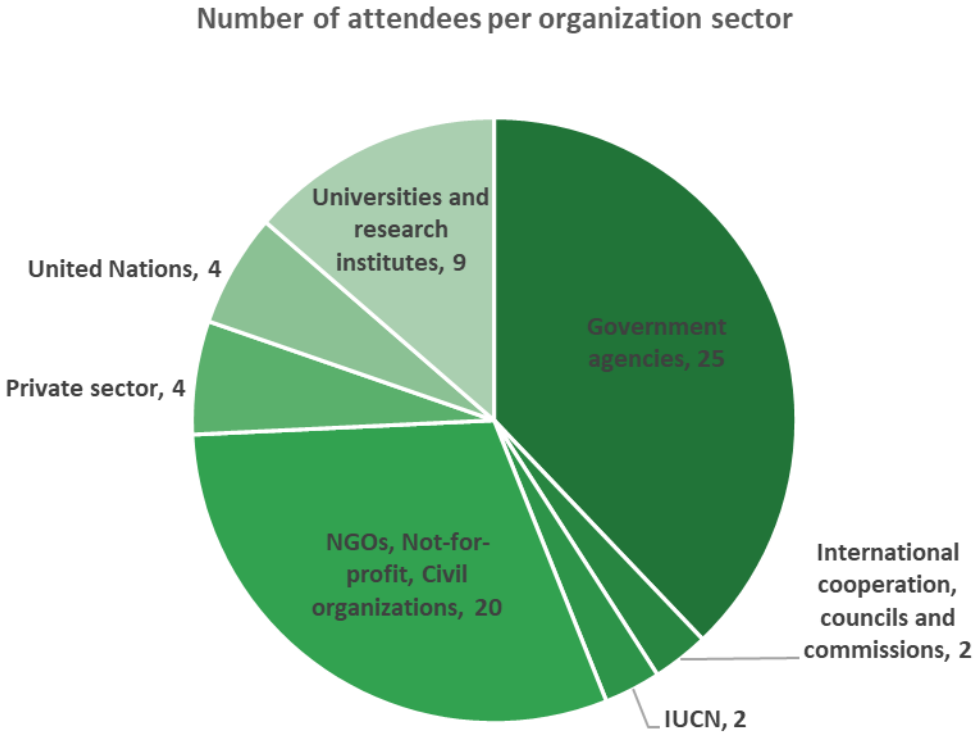


Figure 2: *Distribution of attendees by type of organization. Most attendees were representatives of governmental agencies (ca. 35%). Two attendees did not declare their organization, and are not presented in the graph.*

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 fourth and last session of the webinar training series for WePlan – Forests decision support platform. Times, shown in the first column, are in Brazilian standard time (GMT-3).*

Webinar 4 - *Launch of WePlan-Forests: A decision support platform for spatial planning of forest ecosystem restoration*		
Time	**Topic**	**Speaker**
10h30 – 10h40	Opening, recapitulation of the first webinar and presentation of speakers	Blaise Bodin (CBD)
10h40 – 10h45	Message from the CBD Secretariat	Lisa Janishevski
10h45 – 10h50	Message from the European Union	Karin Zaunberger
10h45 – 10h55	Message from IIS AU	Renato Crouzeilles
10h55 – 11h25	Launch of the WePlan-Forests platform	Hawthorne Beyer (IIS AU)
11h25 – 11h55	Discussion and Q&A	Moderator: Blaise Bodin (CBD)
11h55 – 12h05	Message from CONABIO - Mexico	Wolke Tobón Niedfeldt
12h05 – 12h30	Live Poll	Moderator: 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 18 questions were raised and answered, either live or in writing, during the sessions. One question was asked lived. Below is a list of nine questions and respective answers. The questions are not necessarily as phrased during the sessions but grouped in simpler, comprehensive questions for clarity and concision.

1. **Can we have access to the full data and reports, and to the videos of previous webinar sessions?**

   The reports generated from WePlan-Forests are available at the platform webpage: http://weplan-forests.org/. The full spatial data derived and used in the platform will also be made available there soon. The videos and reports from the webinars are available at https://www.iis-au.org/news/events-webinars/.

2. **Are there video tutorials on how to use the platform?**
   The webinars were designed to serve as a support and tutorial for using and understanding the platform and its results. The links to the webinars are available on the IIS AU website https://www.iis-au.org/news/events-webinars/ and will be linked to in the platform. In the future, other support materials and tutorials will be added.

3. **Can countries customize the platform, using their own data and additional data as opposed to global datasets, or changing parameters of the optimisation framework to adjust to national targets and contexts?**
   In the current version of *WePlan-Forests* it is not possible for users to upload their own data. The platform is based on global data in order to streamline access and provide resources to countries without available national databases. However, we at IIS-AU are interested in working with anybody who might be interested in using their own data, or in developing and implementing solutions at the national or regional scale. We encourage you to contact us if that is your case.

4. **Do you foresee scenarios that provide information on "returns of investment" in terms of material and non-material benefits?**
   In the current platform, there is potential for doing *posthoc* analyses, that is, additional analyses with a given solution from the platform. With the solution, it is possible to quantify a further range of material and non-material benefits, provided they are quantifiable. In the long term, the ideal is to incorporate those benefits into the framework, going from three objectives/benefits to a multi-objective optimisation framework.

5. **Apart from climate mitigation, reforestation also promotes adaptation and resilience against climate change, but climate change is also a problem for restoration planning. How does the platform account for climate change?**
   Yes, there are many other benefits from restoration not indicated by the platform. Regarding the problem posed by climate change, it is critical to quantify the risks to build them into the framework, but that has not been done for this version. With the risks of climate change incorporated to the framework, areas with higher risk (where it is too arid, for instance, or likely to become due to climate change) have lower probability of being prioritized for restoration.

6. **Have you explored trade-offs with any other objectives in addition to biodiversity and carbon? For example, water and soil?**
   This is not explored in the platform itself but is being developed for country-level projects. In Brazil, we are developing a framework that includes benefits for water availability. In a project with Uganda, we plan to include poverty alleviation and wood production, because that is important in the context of the project. Other customizations of the platform for country-level projects can be done as long as there is data available.

7. **Are there plans to include other data, such as satellite data, landowner conflicts and low interest of the local communities for restoration?**
   Many climate variables and other satellite-derived variables (such as distance to water) are already included in the natural regeneration model and in the

potential for carbon sequestration model that go into the optimisation. We plan on updating these models and our outputs over time as information changes and more data becomes available. Data on landowner conflict and local community interest is not as simple to obtain and integrate. It is important to highlight that *WePlan-Forests* is not a panacea. There are decisions to be made beyond the platform to improve restoration planning, which cannot be formally included in the platform. If there are good available datasets at the country level, it is possible to include land owner conflict in country-level projects, implementing a problem formulation that accounts for land ownership and compares the benefits of restoration in public and private lands, excluding areas where restoration is not feasible due to conflict, etc.

8. **Is the model considering those areas in which natural regeneration appears to be occurring already? These would constitute the low hanging fruit on matters of implementation, would need measures for consolidation and represent huge opportunities for learning about their enabling conditions in order to try and replicate them elsewhere, if possible.**
   IIS-AU is developing a fine-resolution model of the potential for natural regeneration in tropical forests, based on work by Matthew Fagan (University of Maryland), who identified patches of forest regeneration in those areas. These models will feed into the calculations of costs in the second version of the platform, to be launched in early 2021. Version 2 of the platform will also present rates of natural regeneration in space, which will provide additional decision support.
9. **How do we deal with areas that are important in terms of ecosystem restoration at a high cost, with also low return?**
   In theory, the optimisation framework should point out important areas for high return. If the areas are important for reasons not considered in the model (biodiversity, carbon sequestration), it is necessary to discuss how that importance has been calculated and, possibly, adapt the framework to adequately reflect importance.

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
13 (46.4%)

(b) Government official – subnational level
0 (0.0%)

(c) Not-for-profit (local or national)
4 (14.3%)

(d) Not-for-profit (International)
3 (10.7%)

(e) Private sector
1 (3.6%)

(f) Academia/research
3 (10.7%)

(g) International organisation
3

(h) Other
1 (3.6%)

2. The decision-support platform provides results in three main ways: (1) trade-off curves (2) maps and (3) table of outcomes. Please evaluate each type of results

I. Trade-off curves

(a) This is relevant to my decision-making process and I understand how to interpret and use this result
12 (46.2%)

(b) This appears relevant to my-decision making process but requires further support for interpretation and use
13 (50%)

(c) I understand this result but it is not relevant to my decision-making process
1 (3.8%)

II. Maps

(a) This is relevant to my decision-making process and I understand how to interpret and use this result
13 (48.1%)

(b) This appears relevant to my-decision making process but requires further support for interpretation and use
12 (44.4%)

(c) I understand this result but it is not relevant to my decision-making process
2 (7.4%)

III. Table of outcomes

(a) This is relevant to my decision-making process and I understand how to interpret and use this result
12 (41.4%)

(b) This appears relevant to my-decision making process but requires further support for interpretation and use
16 (55.2%)

(c) I understand this result but it is not relevant to my decision-making process
1(3.4%)

3. Which of the following benefits would you like to see accounted for in future versions of WePlan – Forests?

I. Job Creation

(a) High interest in this benefit
19 (73.1%)
(b) Moderate interest
5 (19.2%)
(c) Low interest
2 (7.7%)

II. Wood production

(a) High interest in this benefit
10 (35.7%)
(b) Moderate interest
14 (50%)
(c) Low interest
4 (14.3%)

III. Water Quality

(a) High interest in this benefit
21 (75%)
(b) Moderate interest
6 (21.4%)
(c) Low interest
1 (3.6%)

IV. Soil erosion

(a) High interest in this benefit
21 (72.4%)
(b) Moderate interest
6 (20.7%)
(c) Low interest
2 (6.9%)

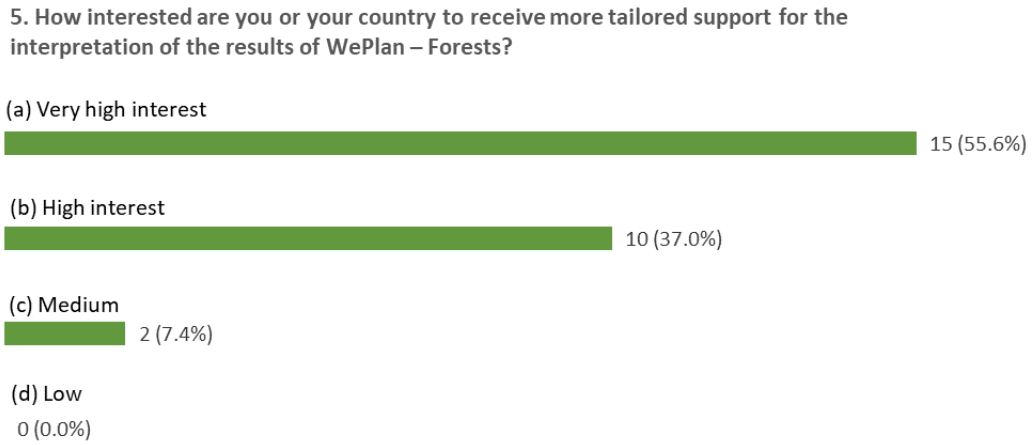
4. What should be the most essential innovation to develop and include in the second version of this DSP?

(a) Include degraded forests within the potentially restorable areas (instead of only converted areas)
3 (12.5%)

(b) Expand the geographic scope of the analysis to include other types of forests/natural ecosystems
9 (37.5%)

(c) Incorporate climate change risk into the spatial optimisation planning for forest ecosystem restoration
8 (33.3%)

(d) Ability to run the analysis at sub-national scale
4 (16.7%)



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. Throughout the four sessions, participation and engagement were significant across sectors and countries, although participation varied from 69 to 113 attendees per session. Representatives from 68 countries have participated in at least one of the three sessions, while 21 countries were presented in all four. 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 is 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, as well as on the WePlan-Forests platform webpage: http://weplan-forests.org/.

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. Two attendees did not declare a country of origin.

Continent	Country	Number of attendees
Africa		**5**
	Angola	1
	Ghana	1
	Madagascar	1
	Uganda	1
	Zimbabwe	1
Asia		**14**
	Cambodia	1
	India	4
	Iran	1
	Myanmar	1
	Philippines	2
	Singapore	5
Central America		**6**
	Belize	1
	Costa Rica	2
	Honduras	1
	Trinidad and Tobago	2
North America		**11**
	Canada	1
	Mexico	4
	USA	6
South America		**20**
	Argentina	1
	Brazil	8
	Colombia	2
	Ecuador	1
	Guyana	2
	Peru	5
	Venezuela	1
Europe		**10**
	Bulgaria	1
	Germany	1
	Italy	3
	Switzerland	1

	United Kingdom	4
Oceania		**3**
	Australia	2
	Fiji	1
Total		**69**