**UNEP-UNREDD Annual Retreat 2011**

**Report**

*From January 25 to 28 the UNEP-UNREDD team convened to reflect on last year’s work and to plan ahead for 2011 and the next three years. This retreat was an opportunity to discuss openly about any aspect of the work programme, at an interesting moment for the UN-REDD program: sufficient funding available for the next three years, political commitment from key countries and REDD now a climate change flagship in UNEP.*

**Participants**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Name** | **Affiliation** |
| 1 | Barney Dickson | UNEP WCMC |
| 2 | Didier Salzmann | UNEP Nairobi |
| 3 | Diego Martino | UNEP Uruguay |
| 4 | Elizabeth Migongo-Bake | UNEP Nairobi |
| 5 | Emily Dunning | UNEP WCMC |
| 6 | Florence Kahiro | UNEP Nairobi |
| 7 | Gabriel Labbate | UNEP Panama |
| 8 | Hendrica Muhonja | UNEP Nairobi |
| 9 | Ibrahim Thiaw | UNEP Nairobi |
| 10 | Isabelle Pierrard | UNEP Nairobi |
| 11 | Johannes Refisch | UNEP Nairobi |
| 12 | Josep Gari | UNDP |
| 13 | Joseph Alcamo | UNEP Nairobi |
| 14 | Julie Greenwalt | UNEP Nairobi |
| 15 | Linda Mumoki | UNEP Nairobi |
| 16 | Mario Boccucci | UNEP Nairobi |
| 17 | Massimiliano Zandomeneghi | UNEP Nairobi |
| 18 | Mohammed Sessay | UNEP Nairobi |
| 19 | Niklas Hagelberg | UNEP Nairobi |
| 20 | Pushpam Kumar | UNEP Nairobi |
| 21 | Ravi Prabhu | UNEP Nairobi |
| 22 | Richard Kaguamba | UNEP Nairobi |
| 23 | Salome Marima | UNEP Nairobi |
| 24 | Steve Twomlow | UNEP Nairobi |
| 25 | Thomas Enters | UNEP Bangkok |
| 26 | Thomas Sembres | UNEP Nairobi |
| 27 | Tim Kasten | UNEP Nairobi |
| 28 | Wahida Patwa Shah | UNEP Nairobi |
| 29 | Yemi Katerere | UN-REDD Secretariat |

**Attachments (on the workspace)**

* Agenda
* Presentations

**Reflections on retreat**

This was the first retreat of the UNEP UN-REDD team (there was a ‘mini-retreat’ in 2009). Overall the retreat (especially the opportunity to meet and interact with some colleagues for the first time) was viewed as very useful. All participants felt that they had benefited and that the meeting brought about a positive change in dynamics. It was also expected that person-to-person interactions would enhance communication in the future, and that this reason alone was enough to justify the organisation of such a retreat annually.

* The participation of representatives of the UN-REDD Secretariat (throughout the retreat) and UNDP (only on the last day) was viewed as very constructive. The hope was expressed that in the future FAO would also be able to send a representative.
* Participants had been requested to provide background documents on activities and progress in the countries that they assist. Some information was prepared rather late or not at all. In the future, the preparation of background information is to be taken more seriously and shared at least a week before a retreat.
* It was proposed to have an external facilitator in future so as to allow everyone to participate fully (in this case Ravi’s participation was limited by his facilitation role).
* The structure of the agenda can be improved. Participants recommended reducing the number and length of presentations to allow for more group work and discussions. As this was the first such retreat however, it was important to have an expose of other relevant work in UNEP. Ravi also urged participants to provide feedback on the agenda of future events and continue to take ownership of the process.
* Participants felt that more time could have been spent on national programmes (with structured discussions around specific NJPs) instead of the global programme, although it was also acknowledged during the event that national and global programmes are not stand-alone initiatives and that there are connections and clear links between both components (see ‘From national to global’ below).
* Three days may be an appropriate length, but:
  + More time was needed to take concrete planning and budgeting decisions for 2011 and beyond. Arriving at such decisions may have been possible during the retreat if proposals had already been developed had come on the first day with already advanced proposals for NP and GP activities (it happened that the GP was being budgeted at the same time as the retreat and we should have had an initial plan for this before the retreat).
  + Participants should set aside more time for a visit to headquarters so that they could have individual meetings before or after the retreat. A retreat outside of the compound would have been more conducive.

**Main points of discussion**

From national to global

The discussion alternatively focused on NP and GP activities, although it was repeatedly stressed that there should be no real divide between these, but rather a continuum of activities, ranging from country-specific activities to generic methodologies/tools applicable at national level and studies impacting global level processes.

* More emphasis should be put at regional level, especially for activities that would be relevant for various countries of the same region. The regional level is also where the UN-REDD program can really show some cohesion between the three UN agencies (more so than at the global level). Joint field missions of country or regional staff from the three agencies have proven to be very useful for improved collaboration and efficiency between UN-REDD colleagues; it is something that needs to be developed further.
* The colleagues from Latin America in particular stressed the importance of building a regional network of partners, with key institutions from Brazil or Mexico, for instance, which could be best placed to provide targeted technical assistance (e.g., spatial analysis of deforestation and multiple benefits in deforestation hot spots in Panama and Paraguay). UNEP UN-REDD HQ and WCMC would be key in helping them to dialogue with these regional partners, and provide regular quality control to such activities implemented by regional partners.
* WCMC colleagues would like to be able to respond more to country-driven demands for activities/products that can be supported by the GP.

Transformation

This topic generated a lot of discussions throughout the retreat. It is agreed that readiness activities alone are unlikely to trigger the broader and radical trajectory change that is needed to achieve the multiple REDD+ goals, and that we must work with key national champions and a critical mass of people in country to provide an economically attractive alternative to national decision makers.

*Readiness (NJP) 🡪 Transformation (REDD+ Plan) 🡪 Green Economy*

While the end goal is quite clear and agreed[[1]](#footnote-2), fully understanding the *process* of transformation should happen very soon. There is some urgency to explain what it means at country level (need to contextualize the concepts of confidence, credibility, transformative investments, etc.) and put that in a short policy note with some help of our green economists. Some of the issues to be addressed in this note are the following:

* What in practice will UNEP do with countries on the transformation agenda (come up with examples/stories easy to tell – need to find better than Costa Rica)? Can the DRC already provide a narrative for that?
* Can we get 12 month targets/milestones on transformation policies? What the incremental steps for radical change could be? What role for the private sector?
* How do we choose countries to test the ‘transformation’ process. Would it not be better for example to choose a country that has a high chance of success for example a simpler and smaller economy as opposed to countries like Indonesia and DRC?
* How differently do we deal with transformation in non-core countries (e.g., Nigeria)?
* Is there a better term than ‘transformation’? (e.g., land-based green growth, doubly-green revolution, shift to a climate-smart economy, building partnerships for change etc.)
* What is UNEP UN-REDD’s role in this agenda? A catalyst for powerful partnerships and a ‘transformation think tank’ in the global arena (TEEB, Green Economy, etc.)? Is this credible? The broadness of the transformation agenda is such that several participants expressed some concern about the boundaries of the UN-REDD program.

Ways forward:

* Ensure that transformative ambitions are considered from the outset (NJP formulation) and that upcoming REDD+ strategies are really built around transformative policies (not just classic shopping lists of sectoral reforms).
* Ensure that there is a critical mass of national and international staff working on REDD+ in country (DRC’s *Coordination Nationale* as a good example).
* Think of a sequence of actions that need to be taken to make progress on the transformation agenda, such as:

1. **Build the case** (green growth, jobs…)

**2. Generate knowledge** (ES valuation, financial flows…)

**4. Establish scenarios**

**6. Support to financing**

($50k, 3months)

**3. Convene broad partnerships** (with national champions)

**5. Support to planning**

($500k, 1 year)

(tbd)

($200k, 2 years)

* Engage with other partners to build the case for transformation (e.g., specialists in scenario analysis), much beyond our immediate family (WCMC, etc.).
* Prepare a high level event on REDD+ transformation to Green Economy.

REDD+ scenario analysis

Joseph Alcamo showed the potential of scenario analysis as a tool to achieve transformative policies. Overall, participants felt that this is really relevant to REDD+, helping to visualise the benefits and impacts of a REDD+ program in a country. This could be a powerful solution-oriented tool to help understand what transformation means for a country, and convey such message to key stakeholders.

However, it is costly and lengthy to do it well. It also remains only one input into the economic analysis needed to make decisions on REDD+ investments. Building in-house capacity for coordination of scenario analysis efforts (with WCMC, other partners, Universities, etc.) and convening of a global working workshop on scenario analysis for REDD+ were considered as possible ways forward.

Strategic country focus

UNEP-UN-REDD needs to focus on a number of countries that can lead to transformation at global level (core group), while still providing targeted technical support to all other UN-REDD countries (broader group). There was some agreement that Indonesia and DRC rightly are the first two countries where this is to be attempted, although focusing on smaller and simpler societies among UN-REDD pilots may provide quicker and more visible results. Which other countries could fall in this core group of countries for UNEP-UN-REDD remains unclear, although it was suggested to pick at least one Latin American country, possibly with a focus on multiple benefits.

Knowledge management

A number of problems related to knowledge management were identified: information exists but not shared well and disseminated in too many different formats, inefficient use of time when people requested to report on their activities, impractical UN-REDD workspace (problems of connectivity to work on shared documents in particular), redundancy of reporting requirements, etc.

Different options should be assessed looking forward: creation of a UNEP UN-REDD mailing list, using public software for information sharing (e.g. Google Docs), creation of a searchable repository of documents, organization of brown bag lunches, etc. There was a consensus that the UN-REDD workspace needs to be improved (e.g., better search function, people’s pages updates more regularly, easier access to shared documents), rather than replaced at this stage.

Demonstrating results in 2011

Signing of a NJP remains a great achievement but is becoming insufficient to assess UN-REDD’s effectiveness and impact We need to find other indicators to assess impacts (on the implementation of NJPs, on the transformative power of forthcoming national REDD+ strategies, etc.), and communicate these during Policy Board meetings.

Communication

There was a consensus on the need to scale up considerably communication efforts towards pilot countries, but also within UN-REDD, under the umbrella of the Secretariat. The UNEP UN-REDD team is in need of more capacity on communication.

* We need to reach a critical mass of people in country, not just build the capacities of a few experts.
* Country staffs need to have quicker and better access to UN-REDD and WCMC tools/publications/outputs. Country partners should also be able to access work in progress when relevant as it helps to build ownership (e.g., draft environmental safeguards prepared by WCMC to be shared with DRC partners who are already advanced in their thinking on safeguards).
* Communication at international events is usually done by people from the Global Program. Not communicating well on what UN-REDD actually does at country level.
* WCMC’s work is not always visible at country level, and is not always fully owned by UNEP colleagues either. Communication and joint work sessions should be better established with WCMC from the start of all their activities, not once products are finalized. It was suggested to have one focal person for relations with WCMC in Nairobi.

**Work program and next steps**

The working group sessions were helpful but not sufficient to make comprehensive decisions on the 2011 work program (and beyond) and budget. The different country focal points were requested to provide this information in writing with indicative budgets by Thursday February 3, 2011.

Next steps

* Finalization of 2011 work-plans and budgets based on recent individual submissions.
* Produce a policy note on transformation, clarifying the concept, its implementation at country-level in particular, and the role of UNEP UN-REDD in this agenda.
* Establish 12-month targets/milestones on the transformation agenda.
* Assess different options to improve knowledge management within the UNEP UN-REDD team.
* Discuss with Joseph Alcamo on how to build minimum in-house capacity on scenario analysis for REDD+ transformation.
* Document progress and sequence of actions implemented in DRC and Viet Nam in particular, to provide lessons for other, less advanced pilot countries.
* Establish a mechanism for country/regional UNEP UN-REDD colleagues to access funding much more quickly (flexible fund), without having to transfer the money from HQ each time.
* Discuss with WCMC about adjustments to outputs of current contract. Consider the possibility of having one focal person for WCMC in Nairobi, ensuring greater ownership of WCMC products, increased communication and contacts between countries and WCMC.
* WCMC to provide 2-3 ideas/core activities (with possible funding source) ahead of upcoming mission in Nigeria.
* WCMC to make sure they are aware of all other work on multiple benefits as they take the UN-REDD work forwards.
* Assess the possibility of organizing a global event on REDD+ transformation to the green economy.

Suggested actions to Secretariat

* Scale-up communication efforts, in particular towards a broader range of stakeholders in countries.
* Secretariat is much better positioned than any of the agencies to monitor UN-REDD activities.
* Having part-time staff responsible of UN-REDD activities at country or regional level is no longer viable. More resources should be made available to generalize full-time enrolment as UN-REDD is expanding.

1. That is, to shift land and forest resource use to one that lowers carbon emissions, while delivering other benefits such as sustainable livelihoods, food security and other economic and ecological benefits. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)