CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA)
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Title of Document: FTA's partnership strategy

FTA's Partnership strategy

Partnerships are central in the design and implementation of FTA, at every step of its theory of change (TOC) and are critical to achieving research outputs and outcomes at scale. Recognizing the importance of partnerships, the proposal for phase II dedicated its Annex 3.2 to a partnership strategy, including a typology, lists of partnership modalities and illustrative examples. The present note briefly summarizes its main points as regards the role of partnerships and considers how it can be strengthened in order to propose a way forward.

1) Partnerships in FTA

Co-designing, implementing and delivering FTA research together with partners enhances FTA's internal capacity to generate demand-driven and relevant research results. Participating in creating salient, credible and reliable research results further strengthens the outreach partners' capacity to deliver research findings and approaches in their outreach and influence spheres. In addition, partnerships enable to develop capacities of relevant actors in FTA geographies at various scales to benefit from and apply FTA-generated research results.

Partners are strategic and long term 'allies'; e.g. organizations that share the FTA vision and contribute their own resources. They bring complementary research and development skills and/or outreach opportunities that may otherwise be lacking within the FTA team.

We differentiate two levels of partnerships: Partners without whom FTA cannot achieve its mission constitute FTA's managing partners, and all other types of partners are defined as contributing partners.

Managing partners are closely involved in the design, management and governance of FTA through being part of its management team. They co-invest in shared impact pathways, working together at discovery, proof-of-concept and scaling levels. FTA's managing partners are CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity, CATIE, CIRAD, Tropenbos International (TBI) and INBAR. The inclusion criteria for managing partners were a) interest in partnering; b) relevance and criticality to achieving FTA mission; c) degree of alignment of partner's mandate, vision and mission with FTA agenda; d) complementarity of expertise and geographical coverage; e) potential for joint and/or aligned bilateral resources mobilization; and f) potential for sustaining the partnership. The current managing partners were proposed by the managing

team following a one-day dialogue organized at the end of December 2015 between FTA Phase I strategic partners with institutions interested in becoming FTA strategic partner. Deliberations resulted in expanding the strategic partnership of FTA to include INBAR and TBI considering their strengths related to FTA's mission, geographical complementarity, national and regional focus, and their ability to mobilize additional financial resources. These MT recommendations were subsequently approved by FTA's Independent Steering Committee in February 2016. Current managing partners have a multi-country, regional, if not global focus.

Contributing partners have more specific roles. They may be limited to a single geography, commodity/value chain or a single research cluster. FTA's contributing partners participate in implementation and management of their own activities/roles but not in the overall management or governance of FTA. They are involved in the design and implementation of various priorities, under various flagships. Examples include: CCAFS, WLE, DCL, PIM CRPs, partners that are specific to certain Flagships, or to projects in flagships, but not to the whole of the program, for example, Ministries of Environment and Climate may be central partners to FP5, and Ministries of Economics may be relevant to FP 3, but not to the other FPs, Ministries for land planning and environment for FP4, Ministries of agriculture and development for FP2. Contributing partners could be from research, practice or the private sector. In fact, contributing partners could be characterized along two axes: from activity to program; along the theory of change continuum. While there was a list of intended contributed partners in the FTA phase 2 proposal, this has not been updated.

During the discussions on the list of managing partners for Phase II, it was recognized that though IUCN, SEI and IIASA did not qualify as managing partners of FTA, they did qualify as strategic contributing partners for various flagships based on shared interests and complementarity of mandates. Would such a notion of "strategic contributing partner" be useful in the strengthening of the partnership strategy? Should their list be established? If yes on which criteria?

Donors that are engaged in a long-term perspective with FTA share numerous characteristics and interests with partners, in fact they are "funding partners".

2) **Strengthening partnerships in FTA**

Strengthening partnerships in FTA can be conducted in several ways.

The first would be to better value and show partnerships as an essential component of the program itself and one of its important comparative advantages. This is important for donors and for numerous partners that value partnerships in themselves. It is also particularly welcome in light of the recognition in the SDGs, especially in SDG 17 -means of implementation- of the importance of concerted action and particularly multi-stakeholder partnerships. In that regard, the number and diversity of partners is a key indicator of the potential of the program to make a significant impact through the enlargement of its sphere of influence, especially given the fact that it has a systemic perspective. This richness can also be a key component of Quality of Research for Development in FTA, provided that it includes processes to facilitate the engagement of partners. The list of contributing partners however needs to be organized

and structured (c.f. the proposal for 2 axis as above, plus the FP level), and explained within a Theory of Change perspective, as some CRPs have been criticized for having too many, ad-hoc partnerships.

The second way to strengthen partnerships would be to secure long-term relations with the program with increasing and deepening joint activities and to make these relations strong enough so that they can resist to funding fluctuations.

The 3rd one would be to identify and characterize partnerships in order to identify areas where a partnership would be critical to fill a gap. Sentinel landscape is a very good example where partnerships, both at global, national, and subnational levels would be essential to ensure the sustainability of research activities. Could also be identified important organizations on which to focus efforts, to initiate or strengthen our relations, in order to increase the influence of the program. For instance RBA's and other UN agencies, international NGO's, some important national organizations…

These 3 ways complement one another and can be jointly pursued through a set of actions.

3) Exploring potential new partnerships

There could be value in identifying potential partnerships that would deserve to be explored, either to fill critical gaps, to increase our impact and/or to position ourselves strategically for the future.

4) Way forward

Hereunder some proposals for the consideration of the ISC:

- Improve internal communication with all partners, ensuring that they all receive FTA news, sending dedicated information such as the short version of the priorities…
- Invite them to have a presentation of their organization and their activities with FTA on our website (in 100 words for instance), with a link to their website, and to have a link to FTA's website on their site.
- Engage them in cross cutting activities, as appropriate.
- Nurture relations with key partners and donors through a mix of joint activities, regular meetings… It could include specific meetings, workshops, at global, regional or national levels to exchanges good practices, reflect on priorities, for capacity building…