

**CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA)**

**14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Independent Steering Committee (ISC)**

**22 April 2020 (virtual)**

**FTA Document No.1 (rev. 1)**

**Note by the FTA Director**

**First POWB revision to mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on FTA workplan and delivery in 2020**

**Executive Summary:**

FTA reviewed its entire W1-2 POWB 2020 in light of the COVID-19 risks.

There is enough certainty already today that some planned activities, in the FTA w1-2 funded 2020 workplan, cannot be undertaken. Therefore, a revision of the workplan is necessary.

This paper explains the overarching objective of the revision and how it was conducted.

As a result, following proposals by Flagships teams, the FTA Management Team (MT) hereby submits to the ISC a POWB revision for activities representing a total of USD 362,400. Activities and deliverables removed are replaced by new activities to ensure maximum output delivery and programmatic outcomes achievement in line with previously agreed FTA's priority objectives.

96% of the w1-2 funded POWB is unchanged change at this stage. The proposed revisions have minor impact on allocations to partners and to priorities, detailed in Table 3. USD 20k are redirected from CIFOR to ICRAF, and USD 22.5k are directed from Bioversity to the lead center for re-programming in 2021.

Given the limited nature of the changes, the POWB narrative to the CGIAR is not to be modified at this stage. FTA is waiting for instructions from the SMO, as a specific CGIAR template for POWB change is in the making by SMO teams.

A second revision will take place early June 2020.

**1) COVID-19 situation and operational constraints on FTA**

The COVID-19 pandemic has already had a significant impact on our activities, with travel disruptions, cancelation of international events (latest to date are the postponement of SBSTA-SBI of UNFCCC from June to October and of the COPs of UNFCCC and CBD to 2021) and, in an increasing number of countries, confinement measures that make difficult or impossible field work and meetings. Most of the offices of FTA participating partners are currently closed, with staff working from home, and most partners have currently stopped all international travel for now. A number of countries are under lock-down with no clear end date and associated return-at-work conditions.

Such disruptions and the related uncertainty will go on for some time. Throughout 2020, most likely we will see coexist countries where the epidemic is more or less controlled, and countries where it is not. Countries are at different stages of the epidemic and have different strategies and resources to combat it. Many countries will probably conserve measures to restrict travel, either excluding travellers from some countries and/or submitting travellers to a mandatory quarantine of 14 days on arrival (as is the case now in China, Singapore, Indonesia and Italy for instance). The situation is evolving rapidly, in different ways depending on the countries, making projections on consequences on travel and field work difficult. Moreover, until there is a vaccine or an efficient treatment, international face-to-face meetings will bring risks. Finally, there is a great deal of uncertainty of when and how CGIAR centres and other FTA partners will allow (and be able to allow) international travel of their staff, participation to international meetings (even when these will be programmed), and/or in-country activities (fieldwork and meetings).

**Regarding the COVID-19 implications, as per the situation at mid-April 2020, we expect that :**

- 1. Until at least September it will be impossible to organize international meetings and very difficult to impossible to conduct field work and workshops in most countries.**
- 2. Until the end of the year activities dependent on international travel will be at substantial risk and jeopardy.**
- 3. In the second semester, local field work depending on national/resident staff to be implemented are likely to be less at risk than those activities dependent on international travel , but they will however depend on local epidemic status and on local confinement episodes.**

There is enough certainty already today that some planned activities, in the FTA w1-2 funded 2020 workplan, cannot be undertaken. Therefore a POWB revision is necessary to remove activities that can't be delivered and re-direct resources to new activities that contribute to FTA's overarching objectives and can be delivered in the COVID-19 context.

For other activities it is too early to cancel them at this point in time, but the potential delivery risks needs to be carefully followed and the decision to keep them in the workplan periodically reviewed, both in light of the COVID-19 situation, but also in light of other internal constraints.

This paper explains the overarching objective of the POWB revision, and how the first revision was conducted.

**FTA will look at the revision of its 2020 workplan in a sequential way, and will propose three revisions at regular intervals: now (first revision), at the beginning of second semester (second revision), and towards the end of the 3rd quarter (third revision).**

## **2) Objective of the POWB Revision**

The overarching objective of the budget revision is to enable FTA to deliver, despite the new operational constraints, to the maximum possible in 2020 on the approx. USD 10m W1-2 workplan outputs, respecting the program's original objectives and outcomes..

In doing so the program aims at :

- Avoiding underspending and under-delivery in 2020

- Minimizing delays of output delivery into 2021.
- Minimizing financial carry-over in 2020, as it is likely to accumulate in 2021 and be lost for partners at program closure in 2021.
- Avoiding an unmanageable “traffic-jam” of work that is likely to accumulate and pop-up for immediate delivery when all things start again, especially the paused bilateral projects.

The revision respects the program and flagships’ theories of change: new activities and outputs are to contribute -albeit in a different way- to the same overarching objectives and outcomes of the program, of its flagships, and of its operational priorities. The revision maintains the coherence of the workplans of FTA’s operational priorities.

### **3) Steps and methods for the POWB revision**

FTA organized its POWB revision in the following way:

- Step 1: agreement by the FTA Management Team (MT) on a common approach to assess operational risks, and initial assessment of risks by Flagships (FPs) teams.
- Step 2: agreement by the MT on a common approach to mitigation measures, and on method and criteria to remove and substitute activities within the FPs and CCTs workplans.
- Step 3: identification by FP/CCT teams of mitigation measures, including when necessary making proposals to the MT for removal and substitution of activities within their workplans, and assessment of the mitigated (residual) risks for the revised workplan proposed.
- Step 4: endorsement by the MT of the revised workplans by the MT, and agreement on a way forward for further revisions.
- Step 5. Submission of the revised POWB to the ISC

### **4) A common grid to assess operational risks (Step 1)**

FTA’s annual powb is priority-based and activity based. Therefore, it is possible, in each of FTA’s operational priority, to review the entire list of activities and related deliverables against the operational constraints induced by COVID-19.

#### **Activities are under risk for the following typology of reasons (a-b-c):**

- a. field activities that cannot take place as planned
- b. participations or engagement in international conferences, meetings, events that are cancelled (or re-programmed in 2021)
- c. FTA own workshops, conferences that cannot take place as planned.

Were identified 4 levels of risk to be applied to each activity (Table 1).

**Table 1: Risk assessment matrix to deal with COVID-19 Impact**

Risk level	Description
0	Activity and output devoid of delay risk: no impact of COVID-19 on delivery.
1	Some delay due to COVID-19 but the output still can be delivered in 2020.
2	Serious delay, output will be delivered in 2021 only.
3	Activities cannot take place at all in 2020, output cannot be delivered.

FTA FP and CCT teams were requested by the MSU to use the risk assessment matrix to assess the situation for each of the outputs under their responsibility.

The result of the risk assessment expressed in the budgetary weight of activities by risk level, in the original W1-2 POWB is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 : Risk exposure of the original FTA w1-2 powb (estimated at 16 March 2020, before the mitigation measures (USD))**

Risk level	0	1	2	3	Total
FP1	378,000	546,000	25,000	0	949,000
FP2	763,000	150,000	177,000	0	1,090,000
FP3	182,700	741,600	166,000	0	1,090,300
FP4	541,000	391,000	5,000	0	937,000
FP5	500,000	290,000	85,000	15,000	890,000
Gender	338,200	100,400	60,000	196,400	695,000
MELIA	252,220	542,480	110,000	0	904,700
Data	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
CapDev	95,000	27,000	28,000	0	150,000
Comms	300000	0	0	0	300,000
SP Initiatives	180,000	726,400	348,600	20,000	1,275,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,730,120</b>	<b>3,514,880</b>	<b>1,004,600</b>	<b>231,400</b>	<b>8,481,000</b>
Share of budget	44%	41%	12%	3%	100%

**5) A common approach to mitigation measures, and method and criteria to remove and substitute activities within the FPs and CCTs workplans (step 2)**

The following harmonized approach to mitigation measures was decided, as per the response matrix in (Table 3)

**Table 3** Response matrix: Activity/output level risks and mitigation measures

Risk level	Mitigation measure
0	<b>0) No change : activity and output kept as before in the POWB</b>
1	<b>1) No change</b> , but recommendation to try to minimize delays by replacing face-to-face workshops by virtual conferences, and use alternative measures to field work (e.g. telephone interviews for surveys) when possible, or similar measures.
2	<b>Inclusion in the POWB will have to be reconsidered.</b> Possibility offered to :  <b>2a) Keep the activity and deliverable into the POWB for now</b> , but with invitation to monitor closely the situation, preparing for an eventual revision at the beginning of second semester, or if the activity is maintained and started, by taking measures to minimize delays and under the clarity that there won't be new funding for this in 2021 (as the funding is provided in 2020).  OR  <b>2b) Remove the original activity/deliverable</b> , and re-direct resources to a new activity and deliverable contributing to programme outcomes, pending the new output can be delivered in 2020.
3	<b>3a) Remove the activity/deliverable from the 2020 POWB</b> (could eventually be re-inscribed in 2021). Funding re-directed to a new activity and output.  OR  <b>3b) In the exceptional cases</b> when the w1-2 funding is attached to a bilateral project as a hard co-funding commitment (inscribed in the donors' agreement) and the bilateral project suffers a no-cost extension, the activity is kept together with its funding in the 2020 POWB, in order to be carried over (either at programme-level <b>or by the respective partner</b> ) into 2021.

Teams were requested to attribute a risk level to each individual activity, identifying the activities at risk using the typology or reasons for delays as presented in the preceding section, and to propose alternative activities, especially in order to:

- eliminate activities under risk level 3 (save the exceptional case 3b), and
- minimize the amount of activities under risk level 2.

In addition, team were invited to factor in the delivery risks linked not necessarily to each individual activity, but to *an accumulation of delayed activities* later in the year (or in the beginning of 2021) and therefore to look already for alternative ways as much as possible: for instance replacing physical meetings and workshops by digital events.

The following categories for alternative activities were identified:

- desk studies (synthesis, papers, briefs, stocktaking reports, guides, training material etc),
- toolkits and datasets assembly
- webinars instead of face-to-face conferences.

**To propose their revision, teams were requested to** find alternative activities contributing to the same theory of change within the operational priority, meaning contributing to the same overall outcomes and objectives, but in different ways than the original activities, and with a lower level of risk. For the elaboration of these new activities, the same original criteria were applied than for the elaboration of the original POWB, but teams were invited to consider their substitution by desk studies or synthesis products (inferior in pure production of new knowledge but almost as valuable for FTA's theory of change), and redirecting expenditures towards staff time or experts, instead of travel or field expenditures.

Also, in case an activity was in contingency planning tier 3 but at a lower COVID-19 risk level, it was allowed to swap contingency planning with a higher COVID-19 risk level. From a workplan implementation perspective, teams can give now to activities in Tier 3 a higher priority in the work if they are less at risk of being delayed by COVID-19 than activities in Tier 1 or 2.

The Flagships were requested to do these changes at constant overall budget per FP. The case being, new activities could be undertaken by different partners than the ones before (in agreement with them). As explained above, FPs were invited to keep the activities within their original operational priority and contributing its outcomes. As an exception to this rule, teams were allowed, with proper justification, to propose new activities inscribed in a different operational priority than the one of the removed activity, such as when the alternative was a more suitable and impactful option according to the overall prioritization criteria and program-level outcomes.

Teams were invited to list the proposed **removed activities and outputs (cases 2b and 3a in Table 3)** and to list the new activities/outputs.

**Box 1: Dealing with delayed bilateral projects that had w1-w2 co-funding**

It is to note that some of the bilateral projects will be delayed: research teams and centers are currently in liaison with donors on a project-by-project basis. Only when there is a co-funding from w1-2, will it impact w1-2 deliverables in 2020. The assessment hereby made for w1-2 risks takes into account these particular situations to the best of the teams' knowledge, knowing that a range of separate discussions is currently going on which each individual donor.

In such cases, the rule is that *if the bilateral project suffers from a no-cost extension, and if the w1-2 activity also needs to be postponed*, then w1-2 funds **are kept into the 2020 budget** but carried-over into 2021 (either at program level, or by the respective partners). **This is the mitigation measure 3b) in Table 3 above.**

This is the case for the time being for one bilateral project, the IDRC-funded project on globalization of shea value chains and gender in Burkina Faso, for which 22.5k of w1-2 will be carried-over at programme level (it will be therefore deduced from Bioversity's allocations in 2020 **and the allocation provided to Bioversity in 2021 from the programme-level carry-over funds**).

## 6) Results : first POWB revision (steps 3 and 4)

On April 14, the MT reviewed and agreed upon the set of proposed activity/output changes (Table 4 below). Overall, the revision represents a total of USD 362,400. For this initial revision, the number of activities removed and replaced (25 total) was relatively small, so both the MSU and MT could look at them one by one. However, the list of activities with residual risk for the next revision is potentially longer.

Also, the MT reviewed the residual risk (revised assessment) of the revised POWB (Table 5). With this revision, the FTA POWB is now devoid of activities in risk level 3.

**Table 4** First POWB revision, changes by FP/CCT

FP3	
Number of activities removed	3
Total USD amount	64,000
Reason for removal	Field work at risk
Number of new activities	3
Type of new activity	1 desk study, 2 tools
Impact on priorities	none (same special initiative)
Impact on funding for partners	none (changes within CIFOR)
FP4	
Number of activities removed	4
Total USD amount	41,000
Reason for removal	Field work at risk
Number of new activities	1
Type of new activity	Desk study (Additional report)
Impact on priorities	yes: from landscape governance toward climate change adaptation.
Impact on funding for partners	none (changes within ICRAF)
FP5	
Number of activities removed	4
Total USD amount	45,000
Reason for removal	Field work at risk
Number of new activities	4
Type of new activity	Desk studies
Impact on priorities	none (changes within the priority on NDCs)
Impact on funding for partners	minus 20k for CIFOR, plus 20k for ICRAF
Gender CCT	
Number of activities removed	14
Total USD amount	215,000
Reason for removal	Field work at risk (8 activities); intl. conferences (3); own workshops (3)
Number of new activities	17
Type of new activity	desk studies (14), tools (3), webinars (1); carry-over into 2021 (1)
Impact on priorities	none (changes only within the gender priority)
Impact on funding for partners	minus 22.5k for Bioversity, to be parked in CIFOR for carry-over into 2021

**In this first revision, a vast majority (96%) of the activities and outputs are not proposed for change.**

There are three explanations for this.

- First, for some activities FP/CCT teams are seriously considering replacement options and a final decision will be taken in the subsequent revision (June) for these.
- Second, for some FPs, like FP2, in 2020 W1/w2 is directed mainly to synthesis products requiring staff time rather than fieldwork, which is funded from our bilateral projects.
- Three, for many outputs, it was possible to envisage taking specific measures to ensure deliverables can be completed:
  - use virtual meetings instead of physical meetings,
  - use substitution methods: for instance, in some cases, satellite image analysis can be used instead of field vegetation surveys, or telephone interviews instead of stakeholder consultation workshops.

Most FPs decided not to change the workplans for the majority of activities in **risk level 2**, despite obvious risks. However, these will be re-examined (together with activities in **risk level 1**) end May, early June during the second revision.

**Table 5** - Risk assessment *after* mitigation measures (as per the proposed POWB revision of 14 April 2020).

	0	1	2	3	Total
<b>FP1</b>	378,000	566,000	5,000	0	949,000
<b>FP2</b>	940,000	150,000	0	0	1090000
<b>FP3</b>	182,700	776,100	131,500	0	1090300
<b>FP4</b>	541,000	300,000	55,000	0	896000
<b>FP5</b>	552,000	338,000	0	0	890000
<b>Gender</b>	519,700	95,800	57,000	0	672500
<b>MELIA</b>	252,220	542,480	110,000	0	904700
<b>Data</b>	200,000	0	0	0	200000
<b>CapDev</b>	95,000	27,000	28,000	0	150000
<b>Comms</b>	300000	0	0	0	300000
<b>Sp Initiatives</b>	200,000	706,400	368,600	0	1275000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,160,620</b> 49%	<b>3,501,780</b> 42%	<b>755,100</b> 9%	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>8,417,500</b>

The MSU is keeping the FTA science conference for the time being in the workplan, as a face-to-face event (15-17 September 2020). However we are already preparing for a virtual event. In June the final decision will be taken and the corresponding budget revision proposed as part of the second semester update.



In the second POWB revision, we will need to add a fourth reason for removing activities, which is that simply too much work will have been postponed and there will be a choice to be made on what can really be delivered. This will depend on whether some delivery bottleneck exists (for instance, too many international conferences resuming might overlap, or staff availability becomes a problem) or not.

#### **5) Conclusion and towards the next POWB revision**

The proposed revisions have minor impact on allocations to partners and to priorities (Table 4). The impact in terms of W1-2 allocations to partners is minimal: 20k are redirected from CIFOR to ICRAF, and 22.5k are directed from Bioversity to the lead center for re-programming in 2021.

These changes have been agreed by partners at the Management team meeting on 16 April 2020.

They are now embedded into the POWB that is proposed for endorsement by the ISC and by the BoT of the lead center.

Given the limited nature of the changes, the POWB narrative to the CGIAR is not to be modified at this stage. FTA is waiting for instructions from the SMO, as a specific CGIAR template for POWB change is in the making by SMO teams.

MT members have agreed to review again the 2020 POWB, risk assessment and risk mitigation measures (2nd POWB revision) by end-May 2020.