

Assessing governance in the landscape of the Upper Suriname River Area

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The Upper Suriname River Area (USRA) is a dynamic, multi-functional forest landscape. The area offers ecosystem services and products to the Saamaka maroons, who are directly influenced by land use decisions and activities. Within the traditional Saamaka decision-making system, there are rules and customs on land use, but this system is not formally recognized by the government. The absence of formal land rights is also an issue. To address overlapping claims and conflicting interests in the USRA, improving local landscape governance is essential.

We conducted a two-day participatory Landscape Governance Assessment workshop in December 2018 to determine the status of landscape governance in the USRA. The workshop was part of our Working Landscapes Programme¹ (WLP), which promotes transformational change towards climate smart landscapes.

The workshop was structured around four performance criteria on landscape governance and 4-5 indicators for each criteria, which were discussed by different stakeholders.

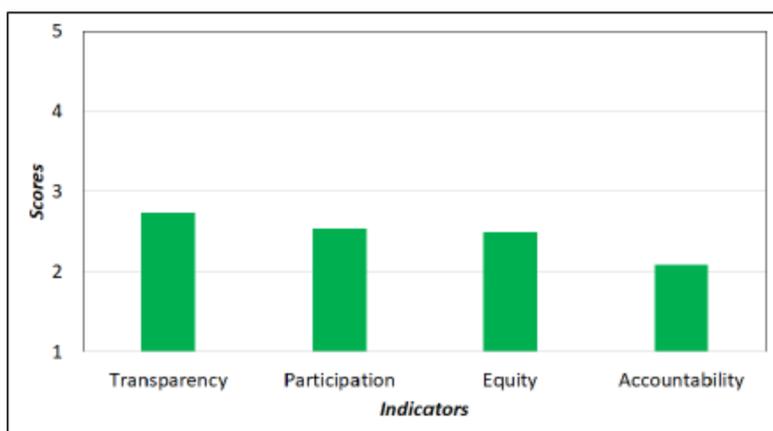
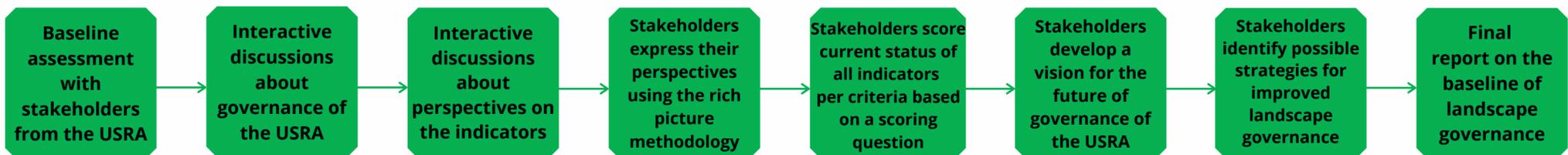


Figure 1: Graph of the scored indicators of criterion 1 'Inclusive decision-making'

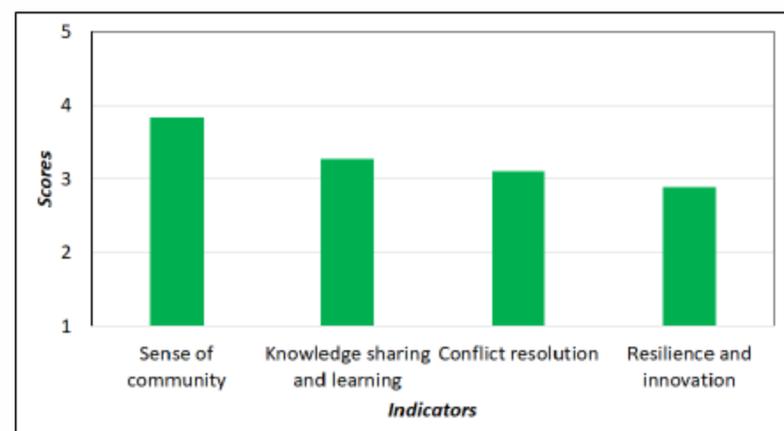


Figure 2: Graph of the scored indicators of criterion 2 'Culture of collaboration'

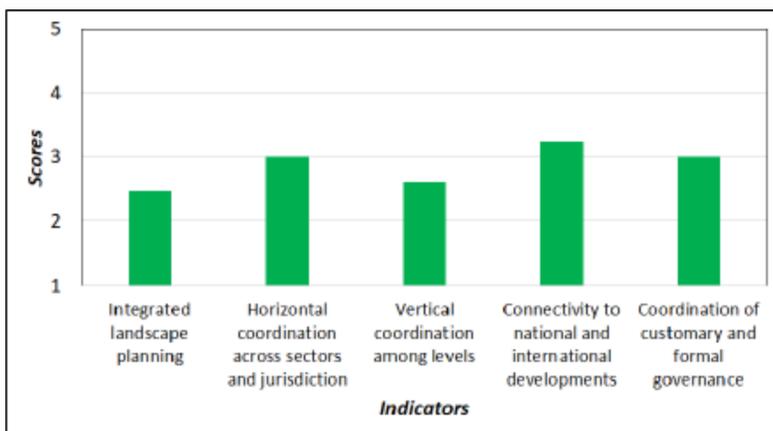


Figure 3: Graph of the scored indicators of criterion 3 'Coordination across landscape sectors, levels, and actors'

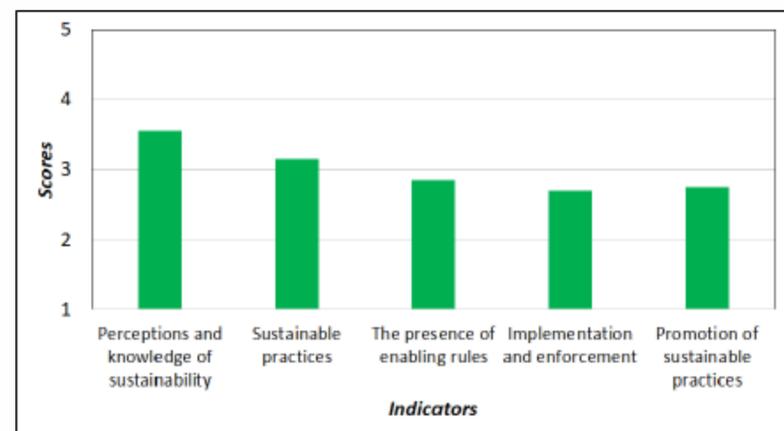


Figure 4: Graph of the scored indicators of criterion 4 'Sustainable landscape thinking and action'

Main findings show that stakeholders perceived their 'culture of collaboration' and 'sustainable landscape thinking and action' to be a bit stronger than 'inclusive decision-making' and 'coordination across landscape sectors, levels, and actors'. The lower scores for criterion 1 and 3 reflect that decision-making processes and policy implementation are not occurring in an inclusive manner, in particular with regards to participation of the Saamaka, and that there is insufficient coordination across sectors and between community level, district level, and government level.

The assessment prompted dialogue between stakeholders and the aim within the WLP is to establish a multi stakeholder's platform. The stakeholders expressed that this participatory approach is useful to raise awareness of the state of landscape governance and that it is a good method to quantify changes over time.

The end line assessment will be conducted in 2021. In the mean time, different interventions are taking place under the WLP, such as: the formulation of a land use plan for the development of the USRA and strengthening the traditional authorities and community members in managing their territory.



¹The participatory Landscape Governance Assessment approach (download [here](#)) was developed by Tropenbos International and EcoAgriculture partners as part of the CGIAR research program on Forests, Trees, and Agroforestry.