

**Global Forest Partnership: Consultation and Assessment**

**UPDATE ON IIED'S MAIN FINDINGS  
AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**Summary:** IIED has completed the first stage of its independent assessment of the World Bank's preliminary idea of a 'Global Forest Partnership' (GFP). This has involved surveys of stakeholder opinion, thorough interviews and focus groups in seven countries (Mozambique, Ghana, Brazil, Guyana, India, China, Russia), a supplementary survey of indigenous peoples, IIED-led interviews of international organizations and finance bodies, and a website-based survey open to all.

IIED is very grateful for the over six hundred detailed responses received. These confirm that some kind of global partnership is justified to greatly improve the delivery of global public goods from forests (notably carbon storage and sequestration to tackle climate change) alongside national and local needs (notably poverty reduction, economic progress and environmental services). Such a partnership would align international forestry initiatives with successful or promising local or regional initiatives. It would therefore need to be more bottom-up, more cross-sectoral and more centred on primary forest stakeholders than most previous international forest programmes – or than the World Bank's preliminary concept. Moreover, any 'gfp' would have to be the product of a participatory development process. A tentative design for such a process is suggested, building on respondents' ideas:

- a development group of intergovernmental forest institutions, civil society/private organizations, and local/regional forest protagonists;
- pilot 'peoples' forest diagnostics' in several countries exploring policies and institutions that work for global-local forest needs;
- improved networking for innovation and scale-up, linking forestry with other sectors such as agriculture and energy;
- information-sharing and confidence-building to enable improved international support and significant finance flows

The World Bank would not be a central driver, but should be encouraged to contribute through funding, convening and supporting the outcome of the gfp development process.

IIED's report will be finalized by the end of April, offering full details of the consultation findings, supporting analyses, and a more developed set of recommendations.

## **1. Introduction – seeking stakeholders' views on the idea of a Global Forest Partnership**

Views on forests are changing internationally. There is an increasing focus on climate change and some new sources of finance linked to this. Major changes in forests are expected due to huge demand growth in food and biofuels. There is also increasing frustration at the historical failure of actors in the forest community at large to successfully develop integrated approaches to forest management. Such changes have driven the World Bank to seek an innovative, action-oriented approach to the forest sector. In the World Bank's view a new approach is urgently needed to link local needs with the global forest agenda, to capture the value of forests, and to improve the resilience of forest ecosystems and forest dependent households. Believing that this would require reinforced collaboration between civil society, the private sector, governments and donors at both regional and global levels, the Bank developed an initial concept for a Global Forest Partnership (GFP).

To assess a) if other stakeholders agreed that such a major shift to effective partnership was needed, and b) to begin to explore the form that such a shift would take, the World Bank requested IIED to organize a broad consultation and conduct an independent assessment of the concept.

IIED has welcomed the chance to seek views and explore the idea. Work began in October 2007 with a concentrated three-month period of consultation targeted at primary stakeholders, but also including potential supporting institutions and the World Bank itself, with a dedicated website to make the consultation open to other interested parties. Although focused on the World Bank's proposal, the consultation has been flexible enough to allow stakeholders to suggest broader narratives and ideas. By April 2008, the assessment will be enriched by analyses of the lessons from global forest initiatives in general and partnerships in particular.

## **2. Progress to date – a significant response rate**

A seven-member IIED Team was set up to run the assessment. A further eight independent coordinators were appointed to conduct opinion surveys in key countries and of forest people's groups. Two meetings of a specially constituted, multi-stakeholder GFP Exploratory Committee appointed by the World Bank were held in October 2007 and January 2008 to offer IIED valuable process guidance.

Early priority was given to developing a detailed communications strategy, so that as many stakeholders as possible would have access to the consultation in spite of the short window available:

- A 16-page consultation document summarizing the World Bank's draft proposal, a questionnaire seeking views on that proposal, and a website ([www.iiedgfpconsultation.org](http://www.iiedgfpconsultation.org)) carrying these documents were set up in English, French and Spanish. Country processes produced their own Portuguese, Russian and Chinese consultation documents
- Dozens of global, regional and national newsletters, websites and events were used, with agreement by their sponsors, to inform stakeholders of the consultation and to encourage inputs
- IIED contacted and interviewed key figures globally, covering major players in (inter)governmental, donor, NGO, business and research fields – including World Bank Group staff in the regions
- A consistent framework for stakeholder surveys was used in seven countries – Mozambique, Ghana, Brazil, Guyana, India, China, Russia – as well as a process designed for indigenous peoples in Latin America, Asia and Africa managed by the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP). These used interviews and focus groups.

A total of 635 detailed responses were received. A very large volume of information was obtained, and IIED is very grateful to all respondents.<sup>1</sup> Stakeholder coverage was good, although many donors and investors were reluctant to offer feedback until a refined concept is developed following this consultation, and private sector inputs were lower than hoped for. Regional coverage was good, too – the biggest response came from Latin America at 34% of all responses, followed by Africa at 19%, Asia 15%, international organisations 15%, Europe 7% and Russia/former CIS 6%.

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<sup>1</sup> The responses were systematically analysed to capture views on the GFP proposal by eight stakeholder types and by country.

There were a number of constraints to the consultation process:

- The time and resources available were less than is allotted for more formal World Bank consultations (or is required for example in the Bank's Operational Procedures for consulting with indigenous peoples)
- There were a few early problems with website functionality, but these were rectified and the majority of web respondents were able to offer their opinions in full
- The World Bank's original proposal tried to provide some structure to the GFP idea, but did not want to constrain the process. But the proposal was neither loose enough to elicit a wide range of truly innovative ideas, nor detailed enough to attract precise commitments or proposals for GFP governance and operations.
- The Bank's proposal was a response to two issues – the opportunity or need for the World Bank to strengthen its forest business, and the potentials that may arise from working in partnerships at global level. Similarly, some respondents' answers conflated their views on the World Bank with their reactions to the proposal's substance.
- Few respondents answered all questions. Those who were interviewed in person were able to offer more detailed comments on the GFP proposal and deeper insights on its possible justification and added value.

In all, the exercise was well-received by respondents, who appreciated the World Bank's, IIED's, country partners' and FPP's efforts. Most respondents are keen to receive a feedback document soon.

### **3. Findings – a majority believe a global forest partnership would be of high value, but only if it is widely 'owned' and has close links to local realities**

Despite a wide spread of opinions, there was considerable commonality within and between all stakeholder groups.

#### ***Consensus that a global forest partnership (gfp)<sup>2</sup> is needed:***

*Justified:* Most stakeholders believe that a gfp is justified in principle, largely because current isolated initiatives are just not solving a large number of entrenched and escalating forest problems effectively. After 15 years of international talks – shaping ideas and agreements on forestry – the time has come for collaborative action, especially to: build capacities, improve governance and attract greater investment so that multiple forest values are developed and sustained.

*Bottom-up action:* Stakeholders would welcome a gfp if it were built around forest-dependent groups, and/or 'defenders of the forest' in other sectors. While many said that a gfp should respond to, and integrate efficiently with, existing initiatives and notably UNFF and regional and national processes such as national forest programmes, more importantly, it would need to offer a substantial and new focus on *action* involving primary stakeholders if it is to add value.

*Cross-sectoral:* Similarly, many believed that a new forest partnership would be more robust if it recognised that forests are resources that affect – and are

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term "the GFP" when referring to the World Bank's specific, original proposal, and "a gfp" when talking of the broader notion

affected by – society as a whole. A gfp would have to go beyond the ‘forest sector’ alone to cover cross-sectoral issues, recognising and enabling landscape links and multiple livelihoods.

*Designed through participation:* A majority felt that developing a highly compelling justification for a gfp, launching a gfp, and moving it forward into action, could only be achieved in a credible way through a participatory development process that builds on the current consultation.

*Better organized WB forestry work:* A majority asserted that there was a clear need and demand for forestry improvements within the World Bank itself, especially if it were to play a role within a gfp.

*A minority felt that no form of gfp is justified,* based variously on perceptions that previous global alliances have been inadequate, as well as on negative experiences with international organizations including the World Bank.

### ***Objectives, targets and activities of a global forest partnership:***

*Agreement on broad themes:* Most respondents felt that the objectives in the World Bank’s GFP proposal were sound but too broad, adding little to what has already been agreed globally through the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), and too vague to be a clear response to diverse national needs expressed through e.g. nfps. Five themes from the original GFP proposal were confirmed as important, with high levels of agreement across stakeholder categories and countries: (i) governance and capacity improvements including learning and knowledge-sharing networks; (ii) better contribution of forests to enduring poverty reduction; (iii) mainstreaming of forestry in macro level policy and planning; (iv) climate change mitigation and adaptation through forestry; and (v) resource mobilisation for sustainable forestry, especially making carbon and environmental funds and markets work for sustainable forestry and livelihoods, and innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable forestry. In terms of preferred activities, most respondents expressed the need for long-term continuity of a large menu of possible activities to suit the precise needs of different countries, in part to counteract the changing ‘fashions’ of donors and international initiatives.

*Express the intended outcomes in bottom-up terms:* The proposed *targets* were also thought to be too broad, ambiguous and unrealistic, although they did embrace a valid set of actions. A preference was expressed for targets based on specific national and thematic outcomes that would be agreed under a gfp.

*Need for a unifying vision:* A majority felt the need for some kind of shared, overarching vision, principles or goal to unite partners – with an overall focus on increasing forest value for stakeholders, especially for poor groups.

### ***Risks in establishing a global forest partnership:***

*Need to slow the process to promote inclusion (but not too slow):* There was widespread concern that any ‘global’ construct risks domination by powerful actors and/or the exclusion of other stakeholders/initiatives – notably disenfranchised forest stakeholders. These risks were thought to be highest if the gfp establishment process is rushed and/or led by one organisation alone, reflecting the World Bank’s original intention to engage with others. Other risks concern inefficiencies, notably diverting effort and funds away from initiatives that currently work; and risks associated with some aspects of UN-style governance

being applied to the gfp (which a significant number of respondents feel would be too slow and unprogressive, with high transaction costs).

### ***Partners and governance of a global forest partnership:***

With the goals, targets and activities of the original GFP idea thought to be vague (and/or without strong credibility until a number of partners had agreed to them), most stakeholders felt it was premature to make specific recommendations concerning partners and governance. A number of useful governance principles were expressed both for developing a gfp and for running it, but relatively few structures were offered. The structural ideas fall into five basic groups, some of them mutually compatible:

1. a local-global multi-stakeholder platform – to improve communications and resource flows
2. a partnership with forest-dependent/poor groups at the centre – to improve relevance and equity in global forest initiatives
3. a facility to link networks and broker deals – to accelerate action
4. a group of progressive leaders in forestry and other sectors – to break through political and bureaucratic deadlocks
5. a reinvigorated Collaborative Partnership on Forests (or core of the CPF) with other players added – to make it more effective <sup>3</sup>

Many respondents suggested they would be willing to consider entering a global forest partnership were it to have such features, and to evolve in a participatory way. Several identified what they could bring to it. In addition, but not as a substitute for these, there were also significant 'votes' for a forestry 'umbrella' mechanism within the World Bank – to improve the effectiveness of its various forestry operations and partnerships.

### ***World Bank roles in a global forest partnership:***

Respondents in most categories generally agreed that it would be desirable, or at least acceptable, for the World Bank to be one of the facilitators of gfp development – but only if the Bank's declared intention to undertake this with others was carried out in practice. If and when a gfp was up and running, the Bank's comparative advantage in convening finance authorities, other sectors, and national political leaders is widely thought to be an advantage to ensuring that the gfp would be influential. Its potential role in developing and operating innovative finance instruments, and managing trust funds, was also widely identified as useful for a gfp.

The idea of a gfp was also welcomed as an instrument to improve the World Bank's own capacity and coherence for working in an increasingly complex forestry world – beyond the Forests Team alone. These dynamics have just as many implications for climate, biodiversity, water and agriculture as for the traditional concerns of wood production.

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<sup>3</sup> The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is a partnership of 14 major (mainly UN) forest-related international organizations. Its objectives are to:

- support the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and member countries
- enhance cooperation and coordination on forest issues

In spite of broad support for an active World Bank role in a gfp, there was strong opposition from certain NGOs, some government respondents, indigenous peoples, and a few donor staff in particular; they would object to the World Bank playing any kind of central 'directing' role in a gfp. (The World Bank has not, in fact, proposed any such role.) These objections were often backed up by citing particular cases of inappropriate Bank policy and incoherent operations.

#### ***Funding of a global forest partnership:***

There was strong agreement on the need to increase resource flows for pro-poor sustainable forestry, and especially to help poor groups to attract and make best use of emerging carbon funds. A gfp would be justified if it improved the efficiency and effectiveness of existing and future resource flows (public and private) through improving agreement on objectives and principles and getting resources to the primary stakeholders.

However, some said that finance should not be a major focus: either because it can distract attention from other issues (notably forest governance), or because a future partnership should be robust to financial shortfalls in an increasingly uncertain environment (in this case, a gfp being more about knowledge and information).

#### **4. IIED's main preliminary recommendation – moving towards a full participatory process to set up a 'true' global partnership**

The *status quo* in international efforts to improve forests and forest-based livelihoods is no longer acceptable – there is a real need for action now. It is clear that a predominantly 'top-down' approach to international forest initiatives has not worked– although there is value in supporting work at this level, for example, in information systems, knowledge-sharing, standards harmonisation, and financial transfers. It is also clear that 'bottom-up' approaches on their own face difficulties in achieving scale or consensus and critical mass to influence national and global institutions – although again there is value in supporting work at local levels so that forests can be truly mainstreamed into varied development efforts.

To link the various top-down and bottom-up drivers of sustainable forestry and livelihoods in a constructive way, IIED suggests two linked areas for action: a global partnership with central involvement of primary stakeholders; and transformation of key global players such as the World Bank to better meet rapidly changing needs of stakeholders. They could be treated separately, but great synergies could be achieved if pursued together:

##### ***Element 1: 'Improved World Bank capability in the forest sector':***

IIED's consultation with forest stakeholders has confirmed many urgent needs that were also identified by the Mid-term Review of the implementation of the World Bank's 2002 Forest Strategy.<sup>4</sup> We recommend that the World Bank should prepare and implement a revised Forest Sector Business Plan to achieve the following outcomes:

- improved coordination and harmonisation of forest partnerships and forest financing arrangements;

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<sup>4</sup> Respondents offered similar critiques of other international bodies working in forestry, although these were fewer in number than critiques of the World Bank.

- creating incentives and other means by which these partnerships and funds could better mainstream forests into World Bank country and regional strategies, PRSs and other development processes;
- removing contradictions created by action in other sectors that will affect forests; and
- supporting the improvement of forest governance, especially for poor groups.

These would all help to improve investment in sustainable, pro-poor forest use.

Much can be done soon to make better use of the World Bank's strengths in ensuring that global opportunities for new 'climate investment funds' and 'carbon funds' result in improved investment in forests and forest-based livelihoods. High-level champions are needed in the Bank and its Board for this.

***Element 2: 'Peoples forestry' – a multi-stakeholder gfp:***

This is the major recommendation. Building on what respondents have suggested, the partnership would link primary forest stewards and 'defenders of forests' in any sector with both international sources of support (notably but not only the CPF) and a diversity of networks, innovators and funders. It would: enable stakeholders to keep better track of forests through linking and strengthening information systems; influence forest and extra-sectoral policy both nationally and globally; identify and mainstream local actions capable of producing global public goods; attract investment so as to realise multiple forest values; and promote the improved coordination and effectiveness of global initiatives. This is a long-term, ambitious vision, entailing significant and unprecedented responsibilities on the part of the multiple stakeholders who hitherto have had little part in global initiatives. Hence this kind of gfp is necessarily the result of a further participatory process. It would in effect be a voluntary 'action-oriented response' to the UNFF. The World Bank could continue to be one facilitator of such a gfp, and ideally would help to fund its participatory development, but it would not be (and has never intended to be) the sole institution at gfp's centre. We explore this further below.

**5. Exploring what a 'true' global forest partnership might look like**

***Tentative vision for a 'gfp':***

Building on what respondents have said, but contingent on proposed multi-stakeholder discussions, a tentative vision might be: *'A mechanism to facilitate multiple partnerships that combine the best local action with global action – in order to improve the value and resilience of forest resources and the livelihood benefits and global public goods obtained from them.'*

***Suggested principles for developing and running a gfp:***

Respondents expressed appreciation for the World Bank having opened up the original GFP idea to consultation – many contrasting this to other current forest and climate initiatives without such consultation. Most would like further development of the idea to continue in a participatory spirit. Several principles were offered, and others have emerged in recent years that support governance for sustainable development. Such principles should guide the process of developing a gfp – and provide an initial basis for partners to work out the principles by which it might run:

- *Inclusive* – of locally-initiated activity, global public goods, and a wide range of knowledge traditions, science and technology

- *Not starting with a blank slate* – building on existing mutually beneficial partnerships, capabilities and analyses
- *Learning based* – identifying what works, what is resilient, and tracking change – so that actions and investments are more sustainable
- *Citizen action* – identifying and employing effective political agency who can drive positive change nationally and ultimately globally
- *Equity* – with a clear and credible approach to ‘who counts most’ in prioritising which issues to focus on and what action to take
- *Continuity* – a clear, understandable ‘menu’ of activities always on offer, from which stakeholders can choose
- *Phased approach* – allowing stakeholders to achieve clarity and buy-in on vision/value added first; with significant activity later
- *Ownership* – the bottom line is that a ‘gfp’ would not exist until partners design it and declare it. Donors would support stakeholder ownership in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

#### **Potential added value of a ‘gfp’:**

With many partnerships already in place for forestry at national and international levels – some but not all effective – respondents are clear that any new form of partnership would have to show real added value. IIED identifies value added possibilities in:

- *Empowerment focus.* Helps all to recognise (and improve) the rights and powers of forest-dependent stakeholders (including marginalized groups); and to disempower significant degraders of forests
- *Real cross-sectoralism.* Makes forestry a collaborative cross-sectoral enterprise with a landscape perspective (ensuring the mainstreaming of forest issues to improve key macro/sector decisions and their coherence)
- *Global public goods (GPGs) brought ‘down to earth’.* Develops and applies practical and feasible mechanisms to sustain GPGs in diverse national and local contexts
- *Catalysing resilient international ‘forest sector’ institutions for the 21st century.* Helps stakeholders to be better linked to a wide variety of information, knowledge and finance networks and institutions – to achieve balance and continuity of effort. Enables stakeholders to feedback to international organisations, improving their effectiveness. As it develops, gfp could even show how to secure more inclusive and sustainable globalisation.
- *New forest investment.* Through the above (i.e. not immediately), improves the knowledge and confidence of investors – and consequent public and private resource flows to solid investments in forests and forest stewards (e.g. ‘does the thinking’ for new climate and forestry investment funds)

#### **A possible process towards a gfp – phased and bottom-up:**

A gfp would be developed through a process that might take 3 years – during which pilot and scale-up action in several countries would be taken to rehearse what a partnership could do in the longer run in many countries. In brief:

- a) *An initial core ‘gfp development group’* (who are not necessarily the ultimate gfp ‘partners’) would drive the process and oversee progress. This might comprise an initial group of e.g. nine who share the broad vision and timescale and who have good knowledge and credibility (even if they may not all have the same views) – perhaps three CPF members, three international civil society / private organisations, plus three local/regional forest protagonists. That group may be replaced by a formal partnership in later stages. The process should not hold back from seeking involvement with those who were sceptical about the original World Bank GFP proposal – some

dissatisfaction may serve as a good driver of innovation in identifying weaknesses and proposing change. Progressive and flexible donor support would be required.

- b) *An independent, multi-disciplinary coordination unit* would work with the group to facilitate the following steps for shaping the gfp using the above principles and aiming at the above value added.
- c) *Pilot country 'peoples' diagnostics' with coherent international support.* The group will engage with stakeholders in selected countries or sub-regions, notably forest-dependent and vulnerable groups, helping to consolidate learning about 'policies and institutions that work' for forest-based poverty reduction, ecosystem service provision and local economies – both in the forest sector and extra-sectoral. This will be followed up by key support to stakeholders' identified priorities – whether they are innovative areas or proven areas ready for significant scale-up.
- d) *Better informing international initiatives of local/national needs and potentials.* The early pilot action in selected countries will help to generate a menu of activities that would become open to many countries, that would be workable and sustainable, and able to attract substantial international funds for investment on a significant scale. It would also improve policy narratives about global funding, standards and support mechanisms.
- e) *Launch of the partnership and its full modus operandi.* This is likely to include governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, private sector, donors and foundations, linked to CPF and other international organisations. An equitable but efficient governance structure would need to be agreed. At this point, the 'gfp development group' would be dissolved (although some kind of continuing independent review function might then be installed).
- f) *Innovative mechanisms developed and rolled out* – to link the top-down and bottom-up elements that are needed for securing livelihoods and forests, e.g. a forum, tiered fora from national to regional to global levels, a (real-time) information system that influences investment decisions, learning and knowledge sharing mechanisms, a facility to support and link up local and thematic partnerships, shared task forces on top issues, monitoring networks, a menu-based mechanism for technical and financial support, and links to a global forest financing mechanism. It could also assimilate activities of some existing forest partnerships, include some involving the World Bank. In such a way, the gfp is more likely to become a continuous facilitation process for shaping effective 21<sup>st</sup> century forestry – rather than an organisation.
- g) *Possible schedule – three overlapping phases:*
  - 0-12 months: gfp development group to convene, agree on initial governance arrangements and plans; initiate perhaps 5 country or subregional processes; develop means to inform intergovernmental processes
  - 6-30 months: 5 country/subregional multi-stakeholder diagnostics and vision exercises, development of menu of pilot activities based on learning, linking in knowledge and finance networks, assessment of international institutions in relation to local needs
  - 18-36 months: to develop full gfp operations – a menu of options for multiple countries to attract major investments, knowledge and finance networking facility, improvements in international institutions

In line with the views of the majority of respondents and with World Bank stated intentions, the Bank would *not* play a central role in a gfp, although it should be encouraged to contribute through funding, convening and supporting the outcome of the gfp development process.

## **6. Next steps**

The GFP consultation process to date has been a serious and credible attempt to solicit stakeholder opinion on forest priorities and stakeholder roles in a highly dynamic context – where, for example, some major climate funds are expected to be launched during 2008-9 and will have huge significance on the world's forests. The key challenge now is to move from stakeholders asserting the need for a participatory development of gfp, towards key institutions coming forward to make its potential – to support the combined delivery of global, national and local needs – a reality.

By the end of April 2008, IIED will complete its consultation and assessment report. This will include: compiling detailed analyses of the 635 responses; integrating lessons from other partnerships and from mapping existing initiatives; submitting a draft report for Exploratory Committee consideration; discussions with some key players missed by the consultation to date; and possibly preparing a 'Prospectus' to inform potential partners of the gfp development idea.

*Further updates and IIED's detailed report will be available in the coming weeks. In the mean time, feedback is welcomed – please email [gfpconsultation@iied.org](mailto:gfpconsultation@iied.org).*