Annex 4. Working Groups

Some working assumptions and general remarks were provided to the working groups:
1. The general definition of forest degradation (a reduction in the capability to provide goods and services) is broad enough – and we keep this as an overall framework definition
2. Degradation is location-specific
3. Degradation is scale dependent (spatial and temporal)
4. Degradation is both a state and a process (the opposite process is "improvement" which can happen through natural recovery, restoration or rehabilitation). Assessment of the state requires thresholds, monitoring of the process can be done focusing on trends
5. While we should allow flexibility in some interpretation of definitions (to suit local circumstances), there need to be a common definition and comparable data for some indicators of degradation (e.g. when linked to a financial mechanism)

Guidance for the working groups:
1. The questions are suggestions for how the discussion could be guided – the group is free to discard or modify these
2. As a general guide we suggest that you:
    - Do not re-invent the criteria and indicator processes and spend time coming up with a long list of potential indicators
    - Look at the ideas on the Blue Wall and those presented in the case studies. Focus on a few of those (those that can be used as proxies for more than one aspect and a few essential specific indicators)
    - Decide whether a common/global definition exists/is needed (and provide ideas if appropriate)
    - Identify suitable assessment methodologies for these
    - Identify further actions needed

Questions:
1. Building on the cards, the presentations and your own knowledge, list the most critical/best indicators of forest degradation in terms of your working group theme
2. Which of these might be used as proxy indicators for several different aspects of forest degradation?
3. Which indicators would this group recommend as key indicators for national level reporting by all countries?
4. For which of these do adequate definitions and proven assessment methodologies exist?
5. What further actions are needed to facilitate regular monitoring of these indicators? (e.g. harmonization of definitions, capacity building, R&D) By whom?

Working Group Discussions

Working Group 1:   Forest Degradation in terms of forest extent, condition and health
Key words: Fragmentation, forest cover, structure, dynamics, forest health and vitality

Facilitator(s): Val Kapos, Michael Kleine
Note taker: Jean-Louis Blanchez
Members:
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Main conclusions
- The first step is to define forest using the already agreed indicators and definitions. After, degradation and restoration potential are going to be defined as qualification of the existing forest
- Degradation is considered as a process in time
- Restoration is the vice-versa process (in time)
- Degradation and restoration are related to a specific management or use objective. The group identified the following possible management or use options:
    o Biodiversity conservation
    o Scenic beauty
    o Cultural value
    o Carbon management
    o WFP
    o NWFP
    o Water
- Therefore in determining which are the relevant indicators for measuring and assessing forest (landscape) degradation and restoration depends directly to the management or use objective
- The indicators only make sense depending of the management use options. Therefore the main recommendation for the countries is to define their management priorities even before collecting data.

Working Group 2:   Forest Degradation in terms of reduced capacity to provide ecosystem services
Key words: Biodiversity conservation, Protection of soil and water, Forests and the carbon cycle

Facilitator(s): Ian Thompson, Stewart Maginnis
Note taker: Victoria Heymell
Members:
Thomas Baldauf, Sally Bunning, Martin Herold, Lars Laestadius, Pema Wangda, Jenny Wong, Eliakimu Zahabu

Key issues/conclusions:
- Degradation is location-specific
- Degradation is scale dependent (spatial and temporal)
- Degradation is both a state and a process (thresholds)
- Obvious need for flexibility but also need for some indicators that permit cross site comparability

Categories of Ecosystem Function were defined as: Carbon (biomass), Biodiversity, Food, Water and Soil. These align broadly with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

Possible Indicators (as identified from cards):
- Soil / water quality, Watershed quality
- Species composition, Species richness, Species presence / absence
- Stand density, Canopy cover / structure, Deadwood structure
- Comparison to «natural» reference, Biomass

Thresholds may exist and they need to be examined over time with data trends. Thresholds may be different for different indicators; they might be set for socio/political reasons. Their utility is more apparent at the local level and less apparent at higher levels.

Levels or scales for measurements defined as: global, regional, national, sub-national by forest type, local by landscape or by stand. Landscapes can be defined biophysically, functionally, or as a social or local level construct. However there needs to be some level of sub-national forest typing. The appropriate scale is relative to the goods and services being determined.

The time scale of reporting depends on what you are measuring. It is relative to the indicator or process which you are measuring.

Indicators	Scales				
	Global	Regional	National	Forest type	Local
Soil quality				X	X
Erosion rate				X	X
Water quantity		X	X	X	X
Water quality		X	X	X	X
Species composition	X	X	X	X	X
Forest stand variables (canopy stocking)				X	X
Landscape variables (land cover, fragmentation)	X	X	X	X	X
Carbon pools (5)	X	X	X	X	X

It was agreed that adequate definitions and assessment methodologies are available for all of these indicators. Lund's proposed common ground indicators (soil, biodiversity, biomass (carbon)) provide a good starting point. As a minimum to define degradation we need to measure species composition, landscape pattern, and carbon pools in some way.

Further actions are needed to facilitate regular monitoring of these indicators (e.g. harmonization of definitions, capacity building, R&D). National Forest Inventories for example are not in all countries and not standardized.
By whom? Who would undertake the further actions?

Working Group 3:   Forest Degradation in terms of reduced capacity to provide goods and socio-economic services
Key words: Wood and non-wood forest products, recreation, education, protection of cultural values, livelihoods, employment

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Note taker: Rebecca Tavani
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Concluding points:
1) Lots of factors that affect forest state (and degradation) (such as policy, markets, globalization, institutional setting, land tenure etc) – important for forest degradation, but out of reach in terms of measurability for these purposes
2) We can develop indicators for forest goods measurable at local level and which can be aggregated at national level (ex/ ration of sustainable production/gross)
3) Socio-economic indicators more appropriately measured at local level (need for capacity building from FAO) and more appropriately assessed locally (particularly for restorative purposes). These indicators linked to goods, but cannot be aggregated meaningfully at national level. Need to develop meaningful macroeconomic indicator at national level. Some examples of socio-economic indicators: employment, household income, population increase in forested areas, etc. (socio-economic drivers important because theory behind REDD based on clear analysis of drivers of deforestation & FD)
4) Capacity building needs – building awareness of those tools that already exist