



RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
Forests, Trees and  
Agroforestry

## Capacity Development Plan of Action 2020-2021



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Forests, Trees and  
Agroforestry

# Capacity Development Plan of Action 2020-2021

Program Document

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## Summary

The Forest, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) Capacity Development (CapDev) Plan of Action for 2020/2022 specifies a set of objectives and activities that are aligned to CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity International and FTA's CapDev strategies. It benefits from the analyses of the CGIAR–IEA CapDev evaluation findings and recommendations; CIFOR and CGIAR System Management Board's responses to the same; a capacity needs assessment of CIFOR, ICRAF and their partners for the implementation of the CGIAR Research Program on Forestry, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) Phase II, 2017–2021; lessons learned during the implementation of IFPRI's *Capacity Strengthening 1985–2010*; ICRAF's *Capacity Development Strategy 2013–2018*; Bioversity International's *Gender Research Fellowship Programme* and *Forest Genetic Resources Training Guide*; and a literature review. It is a living document and will change to reflect changes in strategies of FTA Centers and the CGIAR.<sup>1</sup>

Strengthening the capacity of forestry, trees and agroforestry research, policy and implementing institutions and their staff is critical to FTA's mission and theory of change. Organizational capacities remain one of the most common bottlenecks in the development process. An overall lack of capacity and poor use of existing capacities constitute enormous challenges for research, analysis and implementation. Addressing these challenges is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, where sustainable management of forestry and agroforestry resources can play a crucial role. CapDev can be considered as a long-term process whereby individuals, organizations and their networks improve their systems, resources, skills and knowledge as reflected in their capabilities to perform functions and solve problems to better address national and sub-national development objectives.

FTA aims to leverage CapDev for forestry, trees and agroforestry, resulting in increased capacities for evidence-based policy making; and to increase the impacts of forestry, trees and agroforestry related policies through its research, CapDev, outreach and communications activities. This will be accompanied by tracking a set of CapDev indicators using the MARLO database.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, CIFOR–ICRAF Institutional Linkages Update, June 2018; CIFOR–ICRAF Institutional Viability and Prospectus Survey, 8 June 2018; and “At the intersection of gender and generation: Engaging with ‘youth’ in the CGIAR Research Programme on Forest, Trees and Agroforestry” (Clendenning, Elias and Basnett 2018).

# 1. Introduction

This document outlines priority areas of capacity development (CapDev) for forest, tree and agroforestry research, policy development and implementation for 2020/2021. It also specifies where FTA, led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in partnership with Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD), Bioversity International, the International Organization for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), Tropenbos International, Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, CATIE), and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), could increase their CapDev investments based on their respective comparative advantages and how to improve the quality of CapDev activities across the program.

The FTA theory of change hinges on CapDev as a critical pathway facilitator for bringing research results into development policy and practice. Various forms of CapDev are relevant at stages of discovery, proof of concept, outscaling and influence.

This Plan of Action benefits from the analyses of the CGIAR–IEA CapDev evaluation findings and recommendations (CGIAR–IEA 2017a, 2017b, 2017c), CIFOR and CGIAR System Management Board (CGIAR 2017) responses to the same; a capacity needs assessment of CIFOR, ICRAF and their partners for the implementation of the CGIAR Research Program on Forestry, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) CGIAR Research Program: Phase II, 2017–2021 (Bourne et al. 2018); lessons learned during the implementation of IFPRI's *Capacity Strengthening 1985–2010* and ICRAF's *Capacity Development Strategy 2013–2018*; CIFOR Annual Meeting CapDev sessions in 2016 and 2017; and a literature review. A review exercise was also conducted with young scientists from CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International in Nairobi on 30 January 2018. This was followed by a preliminary “How to write a scientific article” ICRAF–CIFOR training course for young scientists in Nairobi on 17–18 April 2018. The course benefited from comments of FTA staff and partners.

Organizational capacities remain one of the most common bottlenecks in both research and development organizations. An overall lack of capacity and poor use of existing capacities constitute enormous challenges for research, analysis and development practice, more so in the least developed countries. Addressing these challenges is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and CGIAR's System Level Outcomes. Some issues that still need to be addressed in the context of CapDev for forestry, trees and agroforestry research include the following: How can FTA research partnerships contribute toward building self-sustaining national institutions? How can the existing research and development capacity be enhanced at individual, organizational and system levels, and be put to more effective use for greater developmental impact?

A recent paper has suggested that the “best way to combine the international ‘science’ and ‘development’ mandates of CGIAR Centers and consortium research programmes is through scientific capacity development of staff belonging to national research and innovation systems” (Leeuwis et al. 2018). This was already recognized in the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD 2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD 2008) and the CGIAR's Joint Declaration (CGIAR 2009).

The document begins with Vision and Mission statements and an FTA-adapted definition of CapDev (Section 2). It then outlines the three key components of CapDev in forestry, trees and agroforestry – individuals, institutions and systems — and CapDev as a long-term nationally-owned process (Section 3). This is followed by an overview of the strategic objectives of FTA’s CapDev activities (Section 4). Section 5 presents ways of embedding CapDev into the research agendas of FTA and its partners. It concludes with an outline of how the Centers and FTA will implement the CapDev Plan of Action to achieve the intended outcomes (Section 6).



## 2. Vision and Mission

The vision and mission of FTA's CapDev Strategy is derived from and supports the strategies that guide FTA partners' research (e.g. Bioversity International 2014; CIFOR 2017a; ICRAF 2013b). As per the CGIAR CapDev evaluation recommendations 1–3 (CGIAR–IEA 2017a), CGIAR Centers (rather than programs) are best-placed to undertake and manage CapDev activities. The Centers' action may be complemented by FTA-specific CapDev activities where consortium-based approaches provide comparative advantages, notably in terms of reinforcing the impact pathways of Theories of Change for FTA and individual flagships.

**Vision:** To have capable forestry, agroforestry and sustainable land use research and development organizations, individuals, institutions and systems contributing to reducing poverty while leading to sustainable use of land, forests and trees.

**Mission:** To build the local capacity of individuals, organizations and systems at global, national and sub-national levels to undertake, communicate and apply evidence-informed forestry, trees and agroforestry policies, analysis, design and implementation, related research to promote sustainable land use, improved food security and poverty reduction in such a manner that contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.

**Capacity development** is “the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time” (UNDP 2008).



### 3. Capacity development as a long-term process

Strengthening the capacity of forestry, trees and agroforestry research, policy and implementing institutions and their staff is critical to FTA's mission and embedded in the work of Flagships, in operational priorities and in the work of cross-cutting teams. Capacity development is a long-term process whereby individuals, organizations and their networks improve their systems, resources, skills and knowledge. This becomes reflected in their capacity to perform functions and solve problems to better address national and sub-national development objectives. CapDev in forestry, trees and agroforestry may include formal (basic and higher) education delivered directly or through distance learning, experiential or activity-based learning (internships and other types of on-job learning); learning imparted through advisory and extension services; and learning through partnerships, knowledge networks and leadership development for individuals and organizations to effect change and to strengthen capabilities for innovation, discovery and delivery. It may also encompass supporting, facilitating or catalyzing access to knowledge, overcoming bottlenecks in change processes and creating spaces for learning by doing. The emphasis in CapDev should be on process and functionality: "what matters is not only the methods and tools themselves but how they are applied" by learners (Kuyvenhoven 2018: 0114). CapDev thus needs to be a life-long learning process that supports transformational processes among individuals, organizations and systems.

FTA's comparative advantage is in focusing on CapDev related to forestry, trees and agroforestry challenges at various scales (local, sub-national, national, regional and global). The intended target groups for such CapDev efforts are:

- global multi-stakeholder forums to consult and learn from the research results generated by FTA partners for devising and improving global policies and programs on FTA-related issues
- national researchers and analysts to engage in research-based analysis of relevant issues to generate relevant, credible and high-quality research that can guide policy and practice on forestry, trees and agroforestry in developing countries
- national academic institutions to review and revise curriculums, adopt fit-for-purpose research methods, discuss case studies generated by FTA as a part of their academic and research training
- policy-making and implementing organizations and regulatory institutions to consider the research findings in designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programs
- policy makers, development partners and media organizations engaged in policy processes and development programs to ensure effective use of forestry, trees and agroforestry research results;
- farmer associations, cooperatives and other federated community-based organizations that effectively represent the interests of smallholder producers, and their facilitating organizations, to benefit from the findings of what works where and how.

## 4. Strategic objectives of capacity development in forestry, trees and agroforestry

CapDev is a key strategic pathway that facilitates uptake of research results to achieve forestry, trees, and agroforestry impact by aligning with partners' CapDev objectives and strategies. While capacity itself is internal to individuals and organizations, its further progress can be supported by external actors, such as FTA partners, through appropriate interventions and networks. However, as these external interventions form only a small part of change processes, they require constant adaptation to internal and external contextual changes (Callo-Concha et al. 2017). The (then) CGIAR community of practice on CapDev developed a CapDev framework that specified key elements of capacity development (Box 1).

Most CGIAR Centers had at the time of writing dismantled their Capacity Development Units owing to financial constraints and mainstreamed CapDev into their research programs. An impact evaluation of CapDev across CGIAR's Common Research Programs (CRPs) stressed that CapDev is best undertaken through Center-owned functions and strategies (CGIAR–IEA 2017a). Center-led evaluations, such as Kuyvenhoven (2014, 2018), led to similar conclusions as well. In line with these recommendations, FTA recognizes that CapDev is a Center-led function that cuts across FTA research. It is implemented through bilateral research portfolio by the participating institutions. However, at the program level, certain cross-cutting CapDev activities will be carried out to support CapDev across the program.

CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International, and their partners, through their bilaterally-funded projects, will all strengthen both individual and institutional capacity for policy research and development through a broadened base of partners in developed and developing countries. This will also require bringing in new actors and partners, as well as adoption of innovative approaches to CapDev. These could include new ways to provide evidence and analyses; improve understanding of CapDev needs of partners (see, for example, Babu 2017); conduct systematic reviews of institutional and budgetary frameworks; strengthen social science research, including gender integration research methods; identify key decision-making nodes in national and international policy processes; use information and communication technologies; pursue e-learning and development of massive open on-line courses; reform curriculums for interdisciplinary teaching; and adopt alternative strategies for presenting research results using multi-media in sub-national, national and international multi-stakeholder platforms.

## 5. Embedding CapDev in Centre and FTA operational priorities

FTA's CapDev strives to facilitate its impact pathways in following ways:

- a) engagement with policy processes with influencing partners
- b) setting-up and contributing to communities of practices and evidence-sharing platforms
- c) targeting of partner and stakeholder capacity development through bilateral projects mapped to FTA
- d) knowledge co-production with National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), line ministries, universities, development agencies, and private sector
- e) participatory action research
- f) partnering with development groups, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and embedding research within their programs.

To this effect, seven broad types of CapDev activities, highlighted below, are of major relevance to FTA.

### Box 1 Key elements of capacity development

1. Capacity needs assessment
2. Design and delivery of innovative learning materials and methods
3. Development of CGIAR research programs' capacity to partner
4. Development of future research leaders through fellowships
5. Gender-sensitive approaches throughout capacity development
6. Institutional strengthening
7. Monitoring and evaluation of capacity development
8. Organizational development
9. Research on capacity development
10. Quality control.

*Source: CGIAR 2015*

### 5.1. Developing capacity through research collaboration on bilaterally-funded research projects and programmes

This has been the key mechanism to build local research capacity by CIFOR, ICRAF and Bioversity International's staff and partner institutions. FTA encourages greater emphasis on CapDev needs assessments of partners. This process would provide more evidence about the role of CapDev in national and sub-national development processes, identify cost-effective methods for building capacities, and develop tools and country-level databases.

## 5.2. Strengthening research and policy processes through thematic workshops, seminars and multi-stakeholder processes

FTA encourages and facilitates the development of policy seminars and engagement in new multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs). These involve multiple actors — government, researchers, NGOs, private sector and civil society — with the aim of developing new ways to develop capacities and contribute to FTA’s mission. The FTA “Cool Water” symposium in 2017, for example, was an excellent way for researchers from many organizations and scientific backgrounds to present scientific findings and get feedback on their work (Ellison et al. 2017). This model could be adapted and used at the national level in some countries.

## 5.3. Training individuals and groups at professional and technical levels for forestry, trees, and agroforestry scientists and policy makers, including through fellowships

FTA supports strengthening partnerships with both NARS and new networks by aligning with priorities of NARS. These networks include the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Africa; and the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education. Aligning priorities may encompass identifying new CapDev needs, as well as adding value by provision of content. This content could include training materials (e.g. CIFOR’s Tenure Rights and Access to Resources – A Training Manual for Research Parts 1 and 2 and Bioversity International’s Forest Genetic Resources Training Guide (Box 2); scaling-up initiatives such as Bioversity International’s pilot Gender Research Fellowship Programme (Box 3); the DAAD-ICRAF<sup>2</sup> partial fellowships programme in East Africa (Bourne et al. 2018); and ICRAF’s co-learning with smallholder farmers to accelerate the restoration of degraded land for food security in East Africa and the Sahel (Bourne et al. 2018).

### Box 2 Training Guide on Forest Genetic Resources

This is a set of freely available, modular training materials for trainers to help them integrate forest genetics issues into forestry teaching and on-the-job training for non-specialists.

Source: <http://forest-genetic-resources-training-guide.bioversityinternational.org/>

<sup>2</sup> DAAD: Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service), see: <https://www.daad.de/en/>

#### **5.4. Nurturing academic partnerships to strengthen institutional capacities, including specific curriculum reforms at Master's level in selected developing countries**

CIFOR and ICRAF will consolidate long-term efforts to build institutional capacities using, for example, the existing networks of the FORETS project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Box 4) and ICRAF's African Plant Breeding Academy of the African Orphan Crops Consortium (Bourne et al. 2018).

FTA partner Centers will keep facilitating the signing of new MOUs/LOAs with institutions in East Africa, South/South-east Asia and Central/South America to jointly design medium- and long-term innovative CapDev initiatives. Such new partnerships are likely to continue beyond the timeframe of FTA. They aim to build the credibility of local researchers in national policy processes and strengthen evidence-based policy making and practice. They will also assist in expanding country expertise and the local knowledge base in host countries, while strengthening linkages between national and sub-national levels of governance.

##### **Box 3 Gender Research Fellowship Programme**

Biodiversity International successfully developed a **Gender Research Fellowship Programme** to strengthen the capacity of researchers to conduct participatory gender-responsive research in the field of forest genetic resource use and management.

*Source: Biodiversity International 2015.*

#### **5.5. Holding courses and technical workshops to meet local capacity needs, such as through the Landscape Academy-Global Landscapes Forum and new Landscape Governance course(s) with WUR/Centre for Development Innovation (CDI)**

Courses and technical workshops related to forestry, trees and agroforestry will be provided through research projects working with local partners on joint research and policy analysis. FTA will support the development of three country-led CapDev Support Programmes. These are essential to achieving greater impact on the ground, while also creating international public goods. The model of collaboration will focus on strengthening the emergence of the WUR/CDI/GLF Landscape Academy. It may also develop new Landscape Governance courses for sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America drawing on the experience of the long-term collaboration with the University of Kisangani (Box 4). This will provide opportunities to offer practical policy and analytical training to policy makers in government institutions, national think tanks, university faculties and respected NGOs, and building facilitation skills (Box 4).

The emergence of regional cadres of policy researchers and policy analysts will facilitate the creation of regional *Forest, Trees and Agroforestry* community(-ies) of practice with CapDev working groups, among others.

## 5.6. Tailoring courses to build capacities of national media specialists in multi-media science communication

Media training courses and science workshops related to forestry, trees, and agroforestry will be developed in support of Center-wide communications activities. This will strengthen the emergence of networks of credible journalists and media organizations such as the Green Journalists' Network in DRC (Box 4). FTA will specifically collaborate with Global Landscapes Forum events such as thematic discussion forums, side events, landscape talks, exhibitions and youth landscape learning. At the same time, it will explore alternative new pathways to engage with other platforms at sub-national, national and international levels. This may include Innovation Forum, Ethical Corporation Responsible Business Summit Europe and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

### Box 4 Improving governance by building capacity in DRC

Including using novel teaching methods, development of new Master's curriculum materials and an electronic library, joint local and international supervision of students, an annual Science Week in tandem with a media training event, training staff at the University of Kisangani and article-based theses. A local "accompanying committee" tracked student progress, helped develop scientific writing skills, submitted more than 40 articles to international peer-reviewed journals, and created the national Green Journalists' Network. The Ministry of Higher Education has since adopted the "Science Week" model for all universities and faculties in the country.

*Source: CIFOR 2015.*

### Box 5 The Stakeholder Approach to Evidence- and Risk-Informed Decision Making

This is ICRAF's specialized methodology for evidence-based decision making and decision-support on the interaction between research, practice and policy. It represents one example of the value of long-term relationship building to integrate research into policy processes.

*Source: Bourne et al. 2018.*

## 5.7. Compiling and synthesizing dispersed knowledge into practitioner-level CapDev products

FTA strives to compile dispersed knowledge into practitioner-friendly CapDev products that interested development practitioners can adapt and use easily. Such products include the revised FTA website that makes easily available a diversity of knowledge products; specific publications like ICRAF's manual on soil carbon sequestration technologies; and a compendium of restoration tools via the collaboration between FTA and the CGIAR programs on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE), and on People, Institutions and Markets (PIM) (see, for example, Box 5).



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Cover photo: Pisciculture workshop in Yanonge - DRC. Photo by Axel Fassio/CIFOR. Back photo: Environmental awareness campaign at a primary school in Yangambi – DRC. Photo by Axel Fassio/CIFOR



The CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) is the world's largest research for development program to enhance the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in sustainable development and food security and to address climate change. CIFOR leads FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CATIE, CIRAD, ICRAF, INBAR and TBI.

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