info brief

¿Cómo vamos?

A tool to support more equitable co-management of Peru's protected areas

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Key messages

- Comparative research in four countries has shown that multistakeholder forums (MSFs) are viewed across sectors as a means of fostering a 'transformational change' that will address the environmental and social impacts of the climate crisis.

- In Peru, the Protected Areas Service (SERNANP) requires the establishment of management committees (MCs) or MSFs involving various stakeholders in the management of protected areas.

- CIFOR and SERNANP co-developed and tested the tool *¿Cómo vamos?* (How are we doing?), which enables participatory reflective monitoring in MSFs. The tool was tested with eight of SERNANP's MCs.

- Given the positive reception and widespread interest in the tool by stakeholders, SERNANP decided to publish the tool as one of its official documents and to stipulate its annual implementation by the MCs of its 75 protected areas.

- This brief details the findings of an assessment to understand and verify the adoption, outcomes and potential impacts of the tool in Peru.

This research and engagement strategy focused on the participatory development of a reflexive learning tool for management committees (MCs or *Comités de Gestión* in Spanish) in Peru's natural protected areas. The Story of Change presented here summarizes the results of CIFOR's efforts to verify the achievement of high-level outcomes of its research and engagement activities. This assessment – coordinated by CIFOR's Research to Impact evaluation team – was based on a theory of change and featured the collection of pertinent evidence (e.g. interviews with six key stakeholders by an independent consultant), a review of secondary data, and a sense-making workshop with key researchers to discuss these findings.

Drawing on comparative research on multilevel governance in four countries by an earlier phase of the Global Comparative Study on REDD+,[1] CIFOR developed a review of multistakeholder forums (MSFs) in collaboration with partners from the Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru; comparative research on subnational landscape-scale MSFs in four countries (including Peru); assessment reports on each forum completed for internal use; and a series of journal articles, flyers and feedback workshops with the MSFs.

Building on this research, Global Comparative Study on REDD+ worked with two multistakeholder MCs of protected areas in the Peruvian Amazon and with the Provincial Council on Climate Change in East Kalimantan (*Dewan Daerah Perubahan Iklim*), Indonesia, to co-develop *How are we doing?,* a tool that enables participatory reflexive monitoring in MSFs. By supporting more meaningful participation of underrepresented actors – including Indigenous Peoples and local communities and women within them – in governance processes, this tool aims to improve their livelihoods and encourage more effective conservation of their traditional forest territories.

Peru's Protected Areas Service (*Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado, SERNANP)* became interested in customizing the tool to support its policies expanding participatory governance through MCs, which are legally mandated in all protected areas managed by SERNANP.

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1 REDD+ is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) initiative for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

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To adapt *How are we doing?* to MCs, CIFOR and SERNANP collaborated to develop *¿Cómo vamos?* with the two MCs that had been part of CIFOR's earlier research on MSFs, then further validated and tested it with six other MCs. The tool was customized with specific indicators developed during decentralized participatory workshops with MC participants and non-participant stakeholders. The research team presented the tool at SERNANP national events attended by presidents of MCs and heads of protected areas.

Given the positive results and widespread interest in the tool, SERNANP published the tool in collaboration with CIFOR as an official institutional document (SERNANP 2020a). In addition, through an upcoming ministerial decree, all MCs will be required to implement the tool each year.

Early research

Global Comparative Study on REDD+ Phase 1 and Phase 2 work on multilevel governance found considerable interest in MSFs as a solution for landscape challenges (Larson et al. 2018), leading to an MSF study in Phase 3. These forums are "purposely organized interactive processes that bring together a range of stakeholders to participate in dialogue, decision-making and/or implementation" aimed at improving land-use practices (Sarmiento Barletti and Larson 2019a, 1). Currently,

there is much optimism that MSFs can lead to collaboration and coordination processes that are more equitable and inclusive than mainstream decision-making, fostering a 'transformational change' that will address the environmental and social impacts of the climate crisis (Atmadja et al. forthcoming).

In Peru, there is significant interest in widening stakeholder participation in environmental management, exemplified in its environmental laws and the national plan for REDD+ (Sarmiento Barletti and Larson 2020). Coupled with donor expectations, this has led to an increased presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots and producer organizations in spaces for environmental decision-making. For example, the MCs of protected areas – commonly composed of representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, different government levels and sectors, NGOs, researchers and sometimes private companies – support the management of protected areas as part of broader integrated landscapes. In some landscapes, MC meetings are the only spaces where different actors meet to discuss their common interests and land-/resource-use priorities.

However, this interest in participation has not been accompanied by much comparative analysis of MSF processes and outcomes and how to make them more equitable and effective. To study MSFs, CIFOR undertook a synthesis desk review of past experiences (Sarmiento Barletti et al. 2020) and designed and implemented a study of 13 subnational forums in four countries: Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Peru (see Sarmiento Barletti and Larson 2019a and 2019b for the project's methods handbook and analytical framework).

Research and engagement interventions

Two MCs were selected as part of the comparative study: for the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve (Reserva Comunal Amarakaeri, Madre de Dios region) and for the Alto Mayo Protected Forest (Bosque de Proteccion Alto Mayo, San Martin region), both in the Amazon. In both MCs the research found that stakeholders had different ideas of what their MSF's objective should be, or of who should be participating in it and who should not. This is unsurprising given the different priorities that participants brought to the table, but we also found that these and other important issues had not been discussed openly, which was then interpreted by local peoples as a lack of transparency. Furthermore, both MSFs faced funding problems, and many participants lacked the means to travel to or stay overnight in the urban areas where meetings were held. And finally, neither MSF reflected the diversity of actors in their area (albeit in different ways), nor were they at all gender balanced. Notably, research across the

13 study sites found that most organizers thought their MSFs would solve problems of inequality simply by inviting people to the table (Sarmiento Barletti et al. 2021).

Responding to the challenges facing the MSFs and their desire to explore ways to address them, CIFOR began a collaboration with MSF participants to develop a monitoring tool.[2] This tool would be participatory in two ways: (i) it would be developed with forum participants representing different actors, and (ii) it would be designed to be implemented by MSF participants themselves rather than by external evaluators.

The collaboration with two Peruvian and one Indonesian MSF in 2019 led to the development of 4 research-based indicators derived from CIFOR's own analysis and 16 'local' indicators. The latter were developed in workshops with the MSFs and a separate workshop with Indigenous women (who had said during focus group interviews that they felt unrepresented). Based on reflections on the ideal characteristics of their forums, statements were derived to serve as indicators: participants would indicate agreement or disagreement based on their own perceptions of the MSF's activities and outcome(s). Further, the tool was designed to invite participants to discuss and reflect on their answers; reflection questions for each statement, to guide deeper conversations about each issue, were derived from the workshops. Finally, the reflections would be used to inform the MSF's work plan.

Research results and tool development were well received at a series of meetings with SERNANP's Participatory Management Unit. They recognized the need to support the MCs, which are not only legally required but also a key player in SERNANP's current shift from a more top-down approach towards participatory governance. In response, CIFOR organized a workshop in Lima with the participatory management team to develop a customized version.

After CIFOR implemented the customized version of the tool with the first two MCs and discussed the results, SERNANP became further interested in adopting the tool as its own. In early 2020, CIFOR and SERNANP agreed to jointly hire a consultant to develop and test the tool further. By then, however, COVID-19 had emerged, and the tool – developed to be applied in person – was adapted to be implemented online. SERNANP requested testing implementation with six additional MCs (two each from Peru's Andean, Coastal and Amazonian regions), thus assuring its relevance in different contexts. CIFOR carried out trainings for facilitation and, in the end, implemented the tool with more than 100 participants

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2 SERNANP also has a tool to monitor the management of its protected areas annually, including the performance of their MCs. However, monitoring is not undertaken with participants, nor with the same goals as the co-developed tool described here.
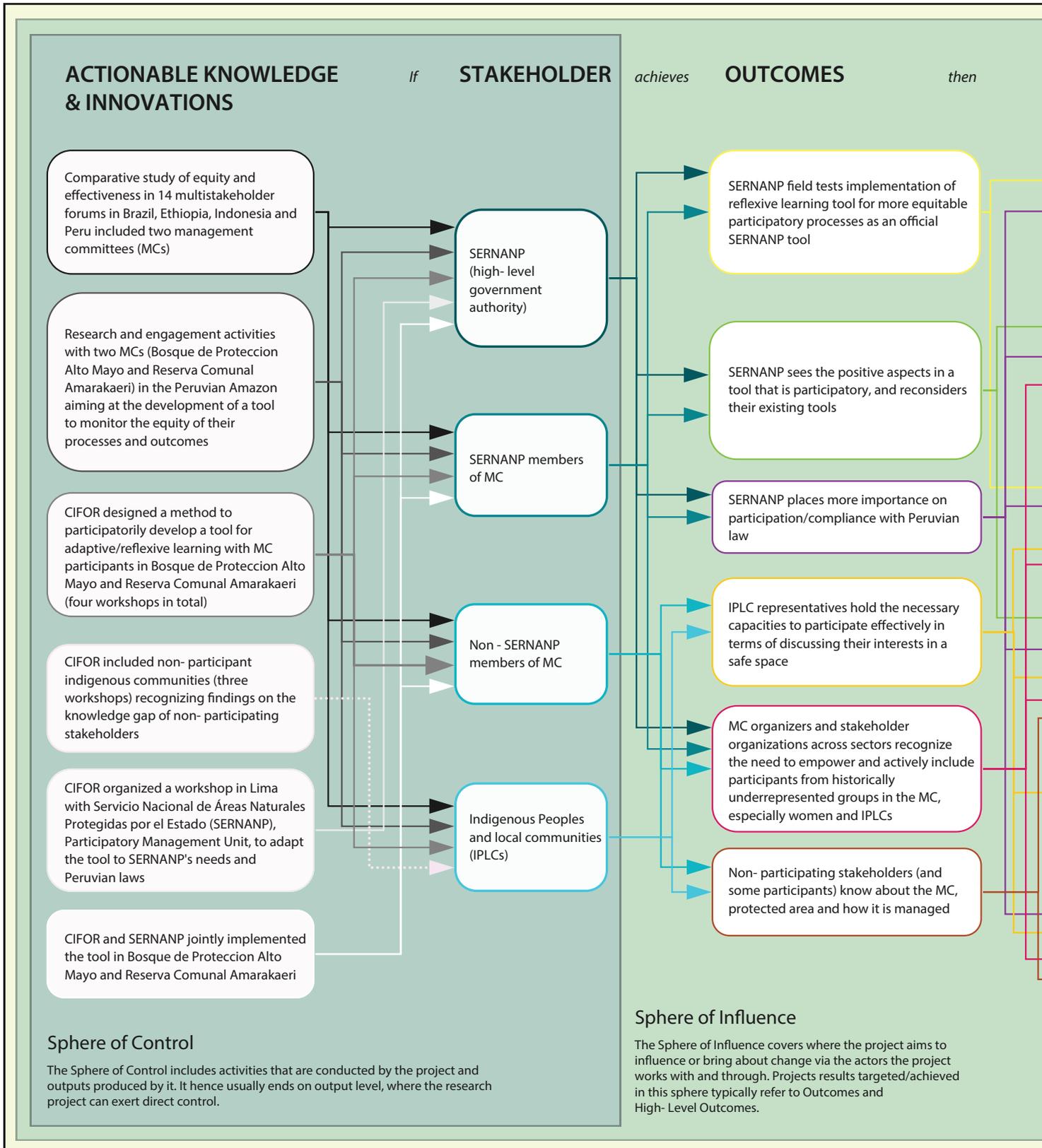
from government and non-governmental organizations in eight MCs: in person with the two that had participated in its development, and online with six others selected by SERNANP. *¿Cómo vamos?* was published in December 2020 (SERNANP 2020). CIFOR was also invited to present the tool at national events for the heads of protected areas and the presidents of their MCs.

Uptake of the tool and scaling up

This work contributed to more equitable environmental governance processes, which are likely to result in more sustainable and equitable land management/use practices. *¿Cómo vamos?* supports trust-building among MC members and greater collective reflection on challenges and how to solve them, and supports greater engagement of grassroots actors such that they will exert greater influence on, and ownership of, the management decisions made. Ultimately, this should contribute to improved livelihoods and food security for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including women, as well as to the protection and conservation of their traditional territories, including forests (Figure 1). Interviews with representatives from national government (SERNANP), subnational government (protected area offices) and the MCs provide insights into the degree to which this research has achieved or is likely to achieve its goals, noting that the responses below are based on only a single round of the tool's implementation.

Given the positive results and interest in the tool, SERNANP published it as one of its official documents (SERNANP 2020a), crediting the Director of SERNANP and the National Coordinating Council of Management Committees, among others. At the time of writing, SERNANP intended to adopt *¿Cómo vamos?* through ministerial decree and to require its annual implementation by its 75 protected area MCs. Based on communications with a senior staff member of SERNANP's participatory management team, the decree will be passed in the coming months: "SERNANP is making [the tool] its own for its only participation platform, the [MCs]. […] We are [taking] a tool that has been tested, edited and implemented by CIFOR, and adapting [it] to the Protected Areas System." SERNANP organized a webinar to co-present the tool with CIFOR (SERNANP 2020b) and presented a paper on the tool at a conference organized by the Latin American Model Forests Network (Red Latinoamericana Bosques Modelo 2020).

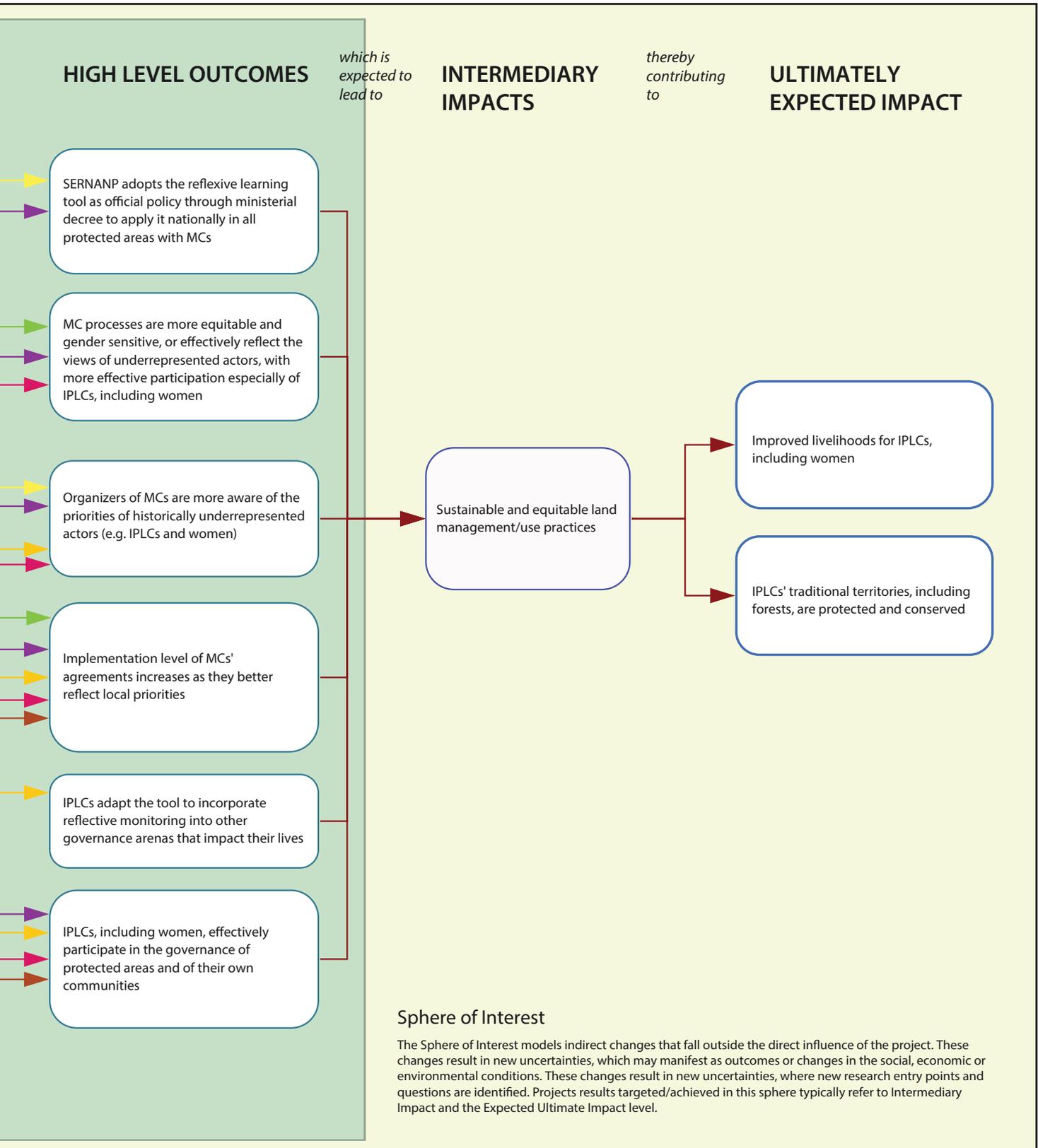SERNANP's representative also stated that the application of the tool allows MCs to improve participation as it brings out the invisible issues of women and other vulnerable groups, adding that greater involvement of civil society is critical in helping the Protected Areas System achieve its conservation goals. This person also confirmed that the tool allows SERNANP to place more importance on participation

ACTIONABLE KNOWLEDGE & INNOVATIONS   *If*   STAKEHOLDER   *achieves*   OUTCOMES   *then*

Comparative study of equity and effectiveness in 14 multistakeholder forums in Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Peru included two management committees (MCs)

Research and engagement activities with two MCs (Bosque de Proteccion Alto Mayo and Reserva Comunal Amarakaeri) in the Peruvian Amazon aiming at the development of a tool to monitor the equity of their processes and outcomes

CIFOR designed a method to participatorily develop a tool for adaptive/reflexive learning with MC participants in Bosque de Proteccion Alto Mayo and Reserva Comunal Amarakaeri (four workshops in total)

CIFOR included non-participant indigenous communities (three workshops) recognizing findings on the knowledge gap of non-participating stakeholders

CIFOR organized a workshop in Lima with Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado (SERNANP), Participatory Management Unit, to adapt the tool to SERNANP's needs and Peruvian laws

CIFOR and SERNANP jointly implemented the tool in Bosque de Proteccion Alto Mayo and Reserva Comunal Amarakaeri

SERNANP (high-level government authority)

SERNANP members of MC

Non-SERNANP members of MC

Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs)

SERNANP field tests implementation of reflexive learning tool for more equitable participatory processes as an official SERNANP tool

SERNANP sees the positive aspects in a tool that is participatory, and reconsiders their existing tools

SERNANP places more importance on participation/compliance with Peruvian law

IPLC representatives hold the necessary capacities to participate effectively in terms of discussing their interests in a safe space

MC organizers and stakeholder organizations across sectors recognize the need to empower and actively include participants from historically underrepresented groups in the MC, especially women and IPLCs

Non-participating stakeholders (and some participants) know about the MC, protected area and how it is managed

Sphere of Control

The Sphere of Control includes activities that are conducted by the project and outputs produced by it. It hence usually ends on output level, where the research project can exert direct control.

Sphere of Influence

The Sphere of Influence covers where the project aims to influence or bring about change via the actors the project works with and through. Projects results targeted/achieved in this sphere typically refer to Outcomes and High-Level Outcomes.

Legend: MC = Management Committee; SERNANP = Peru's Protected Areas Service (Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado); IPLCs = Indigenous Peoples and local communities

Figure 1. Theory of Change graph

Source: Authors' illustration

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES

which is expected to lead to

INTERMEDIARY IMPACTS

thereby contributing to

ULTIMATELY EXPECTED IMPACT

SERNANP adopts the reflexive learning tool as official policy through ministerial decree to apply it nationally in all protected areas with MCs

MC processes are more equitable and gender sensitive, or effectively reflect the views of underrepresented actors, with more effective participation especially of IPLCs, including women

Organizers of MCs are more aware of the priorities of historically underrepresented actors (e.g. IPLCs and women)

Implementation level of MCs' agreements increases as they better reflect local priorities

IPLCs adapt the tool to incorporate reflective monitoring into other governance arenas that impact their lives

IPLCs, including women, effectively participate in the governance of protected areas and of their own communities

Sustainable and equitable land management/use practices

Improved livelihoods for IPLCs, including women

IPLCs' traditional territories, including forests, are protected and conserved

Sphere of Interest

The Sphere of Interest models indirect changes that fall outside the direct influence of the project. These changes result in new uncertainties, which may manifest as outcomes or changes in the social, economic or environmental conditions. These changes result in new uncertainties, where new research entry points and questions are identified. Projects results targeted/achieved in this sphere typically refer to Intermediary Impact and the Expected Ultimate Impact level.

Alto Mayo Protected Forest MSF (Shampiyacu Indigenous Community) – Monitoring tool development.
Photo by Juan Pablo Sarmiento/CIFOR.

and compliance with Peruvian law (Law for Protected Natural Areas, Law 26834), as it helps to reflect the legitimacy, representativeness and participation of the most vulnerable groups and facilitates greater involvement of civil society in the management of protected areas at different levels.

Interviewees for this assessment found that indigenous organizations and community representatives began developing the necessary capacities to participate effectively in terms of discussing their interests in a safe space. A SERNANP staff member at the *Santuario Nacional Manglares de Tumbes* (a Ramsar wetland) confirmed this in an event to implement *¿Cómo vamos?*. At an MC meeting, with the support of CIFOR and SERNANP staff, many of the stakeholders identified with the process and showed support for the implementation of this tool. A senior representative of the MC of *Parque Nacional Huascarán* stated that the tool allows MC participants to see the reality of where they are and to identify weaknesses, strengths and future challenges.

Among MC organizers and stakeholder organizations, the tool's implementation heightened recognition of the need to empower and actively include participants from historically underrepresented groups, especially women and Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Five of the six interviewees from SERNANP and MCs agreed with this development, highlighting that the tool helped SERNANP to identify stakeholders with little participation or visibility, and pointed out the need to apply this tool continuously to facilitate participation and direct engagement regarding the protected

area. There is evidence that the tool contributed to a higher awareness of MC organizers of the priorities of historically underrepresented actors. All interviewees noted that the tool helped them to recognize gaps in the representation of certain stakeholder groups and their priorities in their MCs. There were also positive remarks that this is expected to support MCs' processes to become more equitable, gender sensitive and/or more reflective on the views of underrepresented actors.

The assessment also found that, as a result of the tool's implementation, the MC would improve relations with non-participating stakeholders (and some participants), who would have greater awareness of the MC, the protected area and how it is managed. A senior staff member of SERNANP noted that "[the tool] allowed me somehow to have knowledge of how we are doing with regard to other stakeholders who are not very close to the Executive Committee. […] At the end of each period we have to evaluate […] how have we worked with others. How do [stakeholders] see us? As an opportunity for sustainability, as an opportunity for improvement, what can I achieve with my stakeholders and my strategic allies? Of course, [applying the tool] allows us […] to measure our progress." Other stakeholders expected this to emerge over time. For example, they suggested that the tool might be implemented with other organizations with which they have not yet worked, and that this would help greatly in assessing the management of the protected area. It was also critically claimed that not all vulnerable groups participated adequately in the tool's implementation and that this still requires further follow-through.

Another high-level outcome relates to an increase in the implementation level of MC agreements because they better reflect local priorities. A SERNANP representative considered this to be achieved, as the tool supported standing processes to ensure the consideration of local priorities. Other stakeholders expected this outcome to emerge over time. It was stated by other SERNANP representatives that the reflection allowed by the tool would support their annual workplan and eventually allow them to seek other sources of financing for projects with indigenous populations.

Interviewees expected that the outcome that indigenous communities would adapt the tool to incorporate reflective monitoring into other governance arenas that impact their lives would emerge over time. For instance, one person claimed that the tool would support local communities in learning how to foster local development through the area's resources and programmes. A senior MC representative argued that the tool could contribute to indigenous tourism and agricultural initiatives. A related anticipated outcome is that women and Indigenous Peoples and local communities will participate more effectively in the governance of protected areas and of their own communities. While some interviewees expected this outcome to emerge over time, one SERNANP staff considered that the tool had already supported a process that was previously underway working with peasant communities.

Interviewees anticipated that the tool's implementation would foster more sustainable and equitable land management/use practices, and thus would protect indigenous traditional territories, including forests. Its particular value for planning effectively and for generating lessons learned from projects was highlighted by various stakeholders. A senior staff member of SERNANP's participatory management team described the expected impact of *¿Cómo vamos?* as follows: "[the tool] will bring greater returns, and the investment will be reflected in a greater effort that achieves the long-awaited effective management. […] Participation could contribute to improved conservation of around 11 million ha [of natural protected areas], and with the tool, we are improving participation and collaboration."

Conclusions and lessons learned

The extent to which the envisaged impacts will actually manifest in the long run depends on a variety of assumptions. Given that the interviewees are optimistic that these results will emerge, CIFOR is confident that they will be achieved. Of utmost relevance is that SERNANP is willing to promote and apply this tool going forward. The 2021 presidential election is not expected to affect SERNANP's decision to adopt the tool.

Findings from CIFOR's fieldwork and desk research showed the importance of crafting MSF processes in order to generate more equitable processes and outcomes (Sarmiento Barletti et al. 2020; Gonzales Tovar et al. in press; Yami et al. 2021). The interviewees for this Story of Change saw MSFs as flawed, yet with a potentially important role to play in improving decision-making and coordination in their landscapes. The tool developed through this research and engagement strategy is designed to help address those flaws and meet their landscape goals.

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