2020-2022 GEO Work Programme

Implementation Plan for the Global Forest Observations Initiative

1. Executive Summary

While the land sector is a significant source of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it also offers significant potential for reducing emissions and removing GHGs from the atmosphere. To inform national policy development, improve international reporting, and transparently track progress towards their GHG emissions reduction commitments, developing countries are working to establish self-sustained National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) and associated emissions Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) procedures. The need for NFMS is emphasized by the Paris Climate Change Agreement and associated decisions on guidance, transparency and MRV taken during the recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) 24th Conference of the Parties (COP 24) in Katowice, Poland.

The Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) was established under the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) in 2011 as a forum to coordinate forest monitoring activities through the use of earth observation data. In 2015, GFOI was endorsed as one of the first GEO Flagships.

In 2016, GFOI partners commissioned a holistic external review of the Initiative. The review found that while GFOI had succeeded in achieving many of its initial goals, it needed to evolve to meet the changing global context, including supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the rapidly evolving information needs of developing countries. Subsequently, a second phase of GFOI was developed which reprioritizes the Initiative, expands its memberships and seeks to improve collaboration for the benefit of forested developing countries. GFOI Phase II is now in the early stages of implementation and is scheduled to run for the foreseeable future, including the period the GEO Work Programme 2020-2022 period.

GFOI constitutes an informal partnership of countries and institutions who collaboratively and consistently assist developing countries to operationalize or improve their NFMS. Together, GFOI provide a larger and more detailed package of support than any one partner could provide alone. GFOI's collaborative efforts seek to help developing countries to address multiple different needs, including establishing MRV procedures for REDD+[1] , monitoring progress towards Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the Global Stock Take process under the UNFCCC, confidence in performance based emissions reduction finances, supporting the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA), and informing national policy development and GHG inventories.

GFOI is the product of the collaborative actions of its partners. Under its second phase, the Initiative will facilitate the following key activities, which seek to help developing countries to accelerate progress in their NFMS:

[1] [1] Reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

a) Collaborative assessment of countries' needs, gaps and priorities
b) Coordinated work planning to address priority country needs for improving or operationalizing NFMS and support their application to relevant reporting frameworks, including UNFCCC
c) Facilitate collaborative implementation of forest monitoring support
    i. Complementary or consistent capacity building assistance delivered directly to developing countries
    ii. Development and dissemination of user friendly guidance for REDD+ that is IPCC and UNFCCC compliant, and consistent with other international reporting requirements
    iii. Coordinate and influence the availability, accessibility and capacity to use remote sensing and other key datasets and tools
    iv. Coordinate R&D activities to fill knowledge gaps, overcome obstacles to progress, align the work of the research community with country needs, and enable continuous improvements.
d) Other joint resources and mutually beneficial collaboration that provides targeted support and deliver tangible benefits to developing countries.

The Initiative is guided by a Leads Group, currently comprising of the Governments of Australia, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) as well as the international Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), the European Space Agency (ESA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. It is implemented in close collaboration with developing countries and many other partners including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, Non-government Organizations (NGOs), academia, the private sector, individual experts and others.

GFOI partners coordinate the delivery of their forest monitoring assistance across four interlinked components (i) capacity building, (ii) methods and guidance documentation (MGD), (iii) data and tool (data) coordination and; (iv) research and development (R&D) coordination. Furthermore, through the work of CEOS as a leading partner of the GFOI's Data Component, the Initiative is also working to provide assured availability of annual wall-to-wall coverage of all the world's forested regions with remote sensing data.

The GFOI Office provides day-to-day management and secretariat services for the Initiative on behalf of the Leads Group and other GFOI partners. The Office is based at the FAO in Rome and can be contacted via GFOI-Office@fao.org.

2. Purpose

Rationale

With the Paris Climate Change Agreement now in place and a growing interest in using data to inform decision-making, there is an ever-increasing need for developing countries to access credible information about their forest resources and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which are believed to be a significant contributor to global climate change. However, in a sector where emissions have traditionally been difficult to quantify, developing countries are seeking to develop national forest monitoring systems (NFMS) to help inform their policy development, international reporting, transparency measures and, ultimately their efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

Furthermore, this increased demand for improved information from forests has been coupled with a boom in the supply of data, tools and other forms of international support available to developing countries to help them improve their forest monitoring capabilities. Without global coordination and a targeted effort to align the boom in both the demand for forest information and the supply of new technology, developing countries would likely be inundated with different approaches and subsequently the development of their NFMS would be at risk of paralysis.

The Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) is a global partnership for coordinating the delivery of international support in forest monitoring to developing countries. GFOI provides a forum for collaboration and consistency for multiple different purposes. This includes but is not limited to emissions measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) for REDD+[2], monitoring progress towards Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national inputs to the Global Stock Take under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), confidence in performance based emissions reduction finances, supporting the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA), and informing national policy development and GHG inventories. Through the collaborative action of its partners, GFOI aims to facilitate a larger and more targeted package support to developing countries than any one international partner could provide alone.

Policy mandate

Established in 2011 under the GEO umbrella, GFOI became one of the first GEO Flagships in 2015 and has continued to be recognized as a Flagship ever since. With a global scope, extensive membership, strong user connections, well established procedures and several years of operational experience, GFOI is considered be a mature Initiative.

GFOI's primary goal is to assist developing countries to improve their forest monitoring capabilities to support their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation, forest degradation, the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) under the UNFCCC. GFOI support also seeks to help developing countries to generate credible national data and address multiple other international reporting and transparency needs.

[2] Reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

GFOI has a strong global presence and is recognized by multiple international bodies and UN Agencies. In particular, the UN FAO is a Lead Partner to GFOI, jointly manages the Capacity Building Component and hosts the GFOI Office which provides secretariat services and day-to-day oversight of the Initiative on behalf of the Leads Group. The GFOI Office is a formal FAO project and hence is recognized in official documentation of a UN Agency.

Furthermore, GFOI's members include the World Bank as a Lead Partner, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat as a member of the Advisory Group (AG), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Secretariat also as a member of AG, UNDP as a participating member and various other intergovernmental organizations.

The GFOI's technical standing in this field has recently been reflected in the strong role the Initiative has played in supporting the 2019 Refinement of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. Several GFOI representatives have played a leading role in drafting the land use chapters of the Refinement where they have drawn on their experience in developing the GFOI's Methods and Guidance Documentation (MGD) which is referenced heavily in late drafts of Refinement.

Outputs

With GFOI being a coordination partnership, the Initiative itself is a product of the collaborative efforts of its partners. Ultimately, GFOI aims to facilitate effective international cooperation which leads to a coherent global package of support for developing countries. A detailed list of deliverables is included in the tables provided with this submission but in summary, the major outputs from GFOI's collaborative efforts include:

1. Joint understanding of country needs for international support
2. Collaborative plans to address priority country needs for improving or operationalizing NFMS for multiple different applications
3. User friendly methods and guidance for the development and operationalization of NFMS
4. Complementary or consistent capacity building activities delivered directly to developing countries
5. Improved access to operational data, tools, and other technologies
6. Worked with the broader community of space-data providers to assure the availability of annual wall-to-wall coverage of all the world's forested regions with remote sensing data
7. Targeted R&D to fill knowledge gaps and overcome to progress
8. Targeted communications and information exchange
9. A network of experts who can be assigned to assist countries and address challenges
10. A global Inventory of GFOI partner's forest monitoring support activities in developing countries
11. A registry of operational level tools that can be used for forest monitoring and associated MRV procedures

Overall, GFOI seeks to facilitate efficient and effective international coordination in forest monitoring that delivers tangible benefits to developing countries.

Users

GFOI aims to facilitate effective collaboration between international partners, so that their support can be efficiently and effectively delivered to developing countries and avoid the risks of duplications, overlap and inconsistency of approaches. Developing countries with ambitions to reduce GHG emissions through the reduction of deforestation and degradation and increased forest restoration are the primary target beneficiaries of GFOI.

Outcomes

Through the effective implementation of the GFOI, developing countries will receive streamlined and targeted support, which allows them to accelerate development of their NFMS, which in turns helps them to generate information to support a range of different needs. This includes but is not limited to; MRV for REDD+[3], monitoring progress towards Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), potential support of the Global Stock Take, confidence in performance based emissions reduction finances, supporting the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA), and informing national policy development and GHG inventories.

Impact

Through GFOI support, developing countries can produce improved information on national forest resources, as well as improve reporting to the UNFCCC and related forums on GHG emissions and removals from the atmosphere. This information will aid in transparent and evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making for improved forest management and reduced GHG emissions in accordance with their own national circumstances and goals.

Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of GFOI will be developing countries working to improve forest and other land use management and reduce GHG emissions. Citizens of these countries will also have improved information and resources to engage in sustainable land use activities and improved livelihoods. This includes land owners and minority communities living in and depending on forest lands.

3. Background and Previous Achievements

The GFOI was founded in 2011 under GEO and follows the pilot of GEO-Forest Carbon Track tasks (GEO-FCT), which was founded in 2008. In facilitating global coordination on forest monitoring, GFOI partners have achieved the following:

a) Built technical capacity in developing countries and provided operational guidance to support countries to meet their international reporting requirements, including to the UNFCCC and under multilateral initiatives such as the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)
b) Published methods and guidance on MRV for REDD+ which is IPCC compliant and supports countries to design and develop systems and procedures that meet their national reporting requirements, in particular to the UNFCCC
c) Worked with the broader community of space-data providers to assure the availability of annual wall-to-wall coverage for all the world's forested regions with multiple remote sensing data sources in support of reporting by countries
d) Contributed to the development of scientific best practices, and enabled scientific institutions to address necessary scientific advancements identified by developing countries and capacity developers.

[3] Reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

In 2016, the GFOI Leads commissioned a holistic review of the Initiative. The review found that while GFOI has succeeded in achieving many of its initial goals, it needed to evolve to meet the changing global context and streamline collaboration between partners. Subsequently, a second phase of GFOI was developed which takes a greater focus on identifying and addressing country needs, and incorporates more structured mechanisms of coordination between GFOI partners. GFOI Phase II is anticipated to continue through until the end of 2022 at the earliest.

GFOI's Capacity Building partners provide the interface for the rest of the GFOI community's support to developing countries. For example, the US SilvaCarbon Programme, in close partnership with other GFOI partners has supported:

- 24 countries with accurate and sustainable national forest inventory methods
- 18 countries with upgraded cost-efficient remote sensing tools and 16 countries with capacity in place to manage them
- 13 countries that have increased the tier for their GHG reporting (moved from Tier 1 to Tier 2)
- 13 countries that have presented their Forest Reference Emission Levels (FRELs)

Furthermore, FAO has supported 70% of developing countries who have submitted their FRELs to the UNFCCC.

4. Relationship to GEO Engagement Priorities and to other Work Programme Activities

GFOI aims to support developing countries to establish their own sovereign NFMS to generate credible information about their forests which can be used for a range of different purposes, including but not limited to decision making, policy development and international reporting.

Paris Agreement

The primary forum that GFOI seeks to support is the UNFCCC, including helping to countries to implement the commitments they've made under the Paris Agreement. The role of forests features prominently in the Paris Agreement. Recognizing this, GFOI seeks to help developing countries to monitor changes in their forests and resultant GHG emissions, so they can develop interventions to reduce their emissions and track progress towards their NDCs. The Initiative contributes to three pillars of the Paris Agreement, as follows:

1. Capacity Building / Technology Transfer:
    - All GFOI activities ultimately seek to build sovereign capacity in forest monitoring and associated MRV procedures in developing countries.
        - Specifically, GFOI's Capacity Building Component seeks to coordinate the delivery of capacity building assistance in to a targeted and coherent package
    - The primary goal of GFOI's Data Component is to streamline the availability and useability of data and tools for use in countries NFMS and associated MRV procedures
2. National Reporting / Global Stocktake:
    - The policy mandate of the GFOI is completely aligned with the UNFCCC Framework for Transparency.
    - Interactions with countries seek to support countries to achieve their NDCs
    - A major feature of GFOI's methodological support is sustainability and sovereignty, therefore allowing countries to operationalise their own systems and use these to deliver regular reports to the UNFCCC, including for future global stocktakes.
3. Mitigation:
    - In supporting developing countries to establish their own NFMS, GFOI is helping to empower them with information to make informed decisions on the development, implementation and monitoring of mitigation policies and programs in the forest sector.

Sustainable Development Goals

GFOI activities and outputs directly or indirectly support developing countries to create their own credible forest and GHG data sets, which can be used for tracking progress against multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- As a forest monitoring Initiative, GFOI contributes to the delivery of **SDG 15.1, SDG 15.2 and SDG 15.3** for improved forestland management.
- The GFOI, specifically its Capacity Building Component, is entirely focused on the delivery of **SDG 13.3** for climate change capacity building.
- The GFOI is a global partnership aimed at ensuring efficient and effective technology exchange as defined under **SDG 17.6, SDG17.7 and SDG 17.9** for technology transfer.

Furthermore, GFOI maintains a close connection to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), as facilitated by FAO as a GFOI Lead partner, joint manager of the Capacity Building Component and host of the GFOI Office. FRA is used to monitor and report on two of the three forest-related SDG indicators:

- 15.1.1: Forest area in proportion of land area;
- 15.2.1: Progress towards sustainable forest management.

Sendai Framework

GFOI has also played a central role in establishing an Early Warning Working Group (EWWG) to explore opportunities for coordinated international assistance to developing countries on technologies for promptly detecting the destruction or illegal use of forest resources. This technology should also be capable of detecting other landscape changes that could be of use for implementing Disaster Risk Reduction policies.

Other GEO activities

Over the course of this forward workplan, GFOI will explore opportunities for working more closely with other GEO activities where mutually benefits can be achieved. Specific collaborations will need to be further considered, however opportunity is working with GEOGlam to ensure the consistent use methodologies and complementary support across GEO Flagships, to help map the transition between forest and agricultural land uses in developing countries.

5. Stakeholder Engagement and Capacity Building

GFOI has a broad and diverse network of stakeholders. This includes but is not limited to international development partners, developing countries, donors, academia, NGOs, the private sector and individual experts. The major contributors to the Initiative all hold a position on the GFOI Leads Group. Lead partners are also responsible for nominating Component Managers for each of the Initiative's four components.

All of GFOI's activities seek to improve the global package of capacity building support that forested developing countries receive from international partners and thus improve their capacity in forest monitoring and associated MRV capabilities. Conscious of the need to ensure international support is targeted at the needs of developing countries whilst also well-coordinated between international partners, GFOI is in the process of developing a systematic Country Needs Assessment (CNA) process. This includes a holistic self-evaluation by developing countries to identify their own tangible needs for improving or operationalizing their NFMS and communicating these to GFOI's international development partners where support is needed. Priority needs will be captured as discrete 'work packages' and considered during coordinated work planning between GFOI partners. Where resources are available, these work packages will form the basis for GFOI's collaborative capacity building activities. As a result, GFOI's support will be targeted at tangible needs, which will vary from country to country and include individual, organizational or institutional capacity building or a combination thereof, which can ultimately help the country to operationalize or improve their NFMS.

GFOI uses its annual Plenary and associated side-meetings to bring together its partners to reflect on recent progress and plan for the foreseeable future. All GFOI stakeholders are welcome to participate in this event to help shape the priorities for the Initiative. Developing country participation in the Plenary is supported by the GFOI Office and capacity building partners.

6. Governance

GFOI is guided by a Leads Group, currently comprising of the Governments of Australia, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) as well as the international Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), the European Space Agency (ESA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. Membership of the Leads Group is based on partners who make significant financial or in-kind contributions and/or those who seek to coordinate large scale activities through the Initiative. The Leads Group is open to new members from partners who make substantial contributions in either of these categories.

The Leads Group sets the strategic direction for the Initiative, identifies new opportunities, assesses progress against deliverables, and oversees activities and funding. Each member of the Leads Group is responsible for ensuring that their organization actively participates in the coordination activities of the Initiative and seek to deliver a harmonized package of support with other partners to developing countries. The Leads Group meets in-person twice per year and monthly by teleconference.

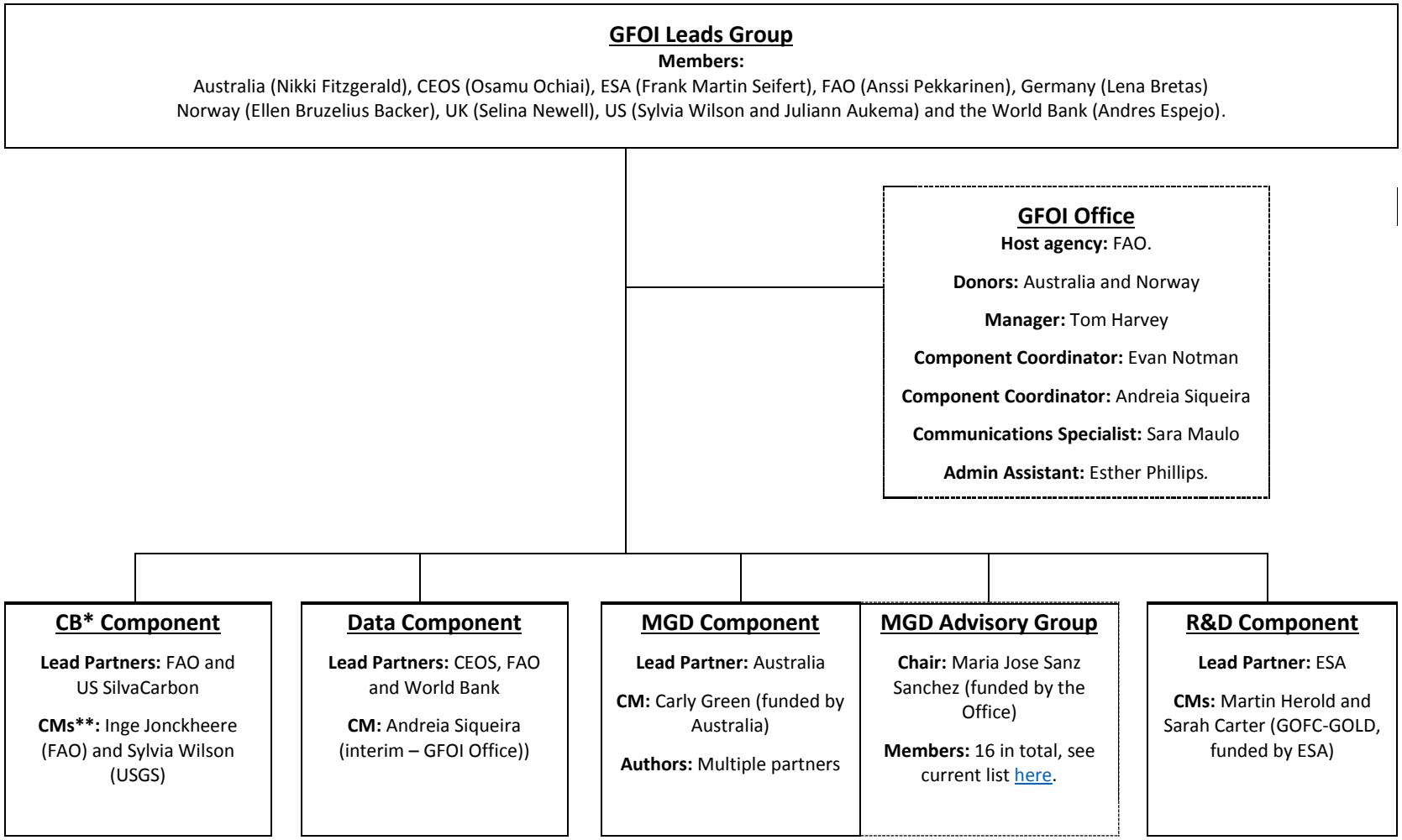
The Leads also appoint managers of each of GFOI's four components. The Component Managers are responsible for the planning, delivery and reporting of component activities. Representatives from FAO and SilvaCarbon jointly manage the Capacity Building Component, a member of the GFOI Office is currently acting as the manager of the Data Component, Australia funds the MGD Component Manager and GOFC-GOLD manages the R&D Component with funding from ESA.

The GFOI Office provides day-to-day management and secretariat services for the Initiative on behalf of the Leads. It supports the Leads Group, Components, and partners to deliver on the objectives of the GFOI. The Office oversees GFOI-specific activities, facilitates coordination between partners, and supports developing country involvement in events and manages the annual GFOI Plenary. The Office is based at the FAO in Rome and staffed with a team of project managers and content specialists.

Collectively the Leads Group, Component Managers and GFOI Office are responsible for the main operations of GFOI and constitute the three management layers. Facilitated by the GFOI Office, the Leads Group meets monthly via teleconference and twice yearly for face-to-face meetings to progress the strategic direction of the Initiative and take management decisions as needed. The Component Managers and the GFOI Office also convene teleconferences and meetings to plan and progress the collaborative activities of the Initiative. These teleconferences will become monthly in 2019 and be accompanied by at least two face-to-face meetings as well. These stakeholders also meet frequently to pursue the collaborative activities of the Initiative.

GFOI also entails the MGD Advisory Group, which is a structured as an independent body for providing expert advice and guidance to GFOI. Specifically, the Advisory Group directs the development of the MGD and related materials. The Group ensures that the MGD continues to align with the priorities of developing countries and provides guidance on operational methods and approaches in support of GFOI activities. The Group consists of a broad range international experts from both developing and developed countries as well international organization and individual experts. It is chaired by a senior expert appointed by the Leads and supported administratively by the MGD Component Manager.

See Figure 1 below for the GFOI's organization chart.



*CB – Capacity Building
**CM – Component Manager

Figure 1. GFOI Organization Chart as of May 2019.

Communications

To date, GFOI's communications have been conducted in a somewhat ad hoc manner. However, in 2019 the GFOI Office recruited a communications specialist to oversee a scale-up in the nature and frequency of GFOI's communications. This will include targeted communications between partners as a key pillar of GFOI's own internal coordination efforts, as well as external communications to promote the Initiative and forest monitoring more broadly. A new GFOI Communications strategy is under development, however the Initiative is expected to utilize a range of different communications techniques and platforms. This includes but is not limited to, the newly developed GFOI website, social media, the GFOI Inventory of Activities, news posts, short videos, factsheets and targeted communications around GFOI events.

GFOI has found that face-to-face interactions is the most effective form of communication and coordination. For this reason, GFOI focus a lot of efforts on facilitating constructive, interesting and enjoyable events for its partners. The major GFOI event is the annual GFOI Plenary, complemented by frequent component meetings, training workshops, capacity building summits, expert workshops and other events to progress GFOI activities. The GFOI Plenary is attended by 100 to 150 people from across the forest monitoring sector and provides an opportunity to foster the global network of practitioners, connect international development partners with developing countries implementing partners, identify opportunities for new collaborations, reflect on recent progress and plan for the year ahead. The attendance and participants feedback from the Plenary is growing year on year, with the event now a major feature in the international calendar for the forest monitoring sector.

M&E

Given the voluntary nature of the Initiative, GFOI has sought to minimize any additional M&E burden on its partners. Instead the GFOI Leads have adopted a basic process for setting key performance indicators (KPIs) each year and assessing progress against these at the end of each calendar year. Furthermore, the GFOI Office maintains its own M&E procedures as part of its funding arrangements with its donors. This is complemented by GFOI partners' own monitoring procedures, which are often conducted in partnership with other GFOI partners and the results shared across the Initiative. However, in 2019 GFOI is seeking to strengthen its M&E procedures. The exact nature of which is still under consideration, however a focus will be placed on developing some key indicators of success, failure and delay, whilst minimizing the transaction costs for partners.

Risk management

GFOI faces a range of different risks that could threaten the successful implementation of the Initiative. With risk being the product of likelihood by severity, the overall risks to this project are considered low. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Partners are unable to make sufficient in-kind contributions to the core activities of the Initiative.
2. Countries are not willing to assess their needs and/or communicate these to international partners.
3. Partners work plans are not sufficiently flexible to be aligned with the plans of other partners.
4. Countries are not willing to help test open-source tools in full.

5. International policy changes impacting obligations under REDD+ and other reporting forums.

Figure 2 below outlines the identified risks to the project, their score and mitigation actions.

Risk description	Worst case consequence for the project	Risk Score		Mitigating action	Action owner
		Impact	Likelihood		
1. Partners are unable to make in-kind contributions to the core activities of the Initiative	Difficult to align international support with country needs and reduced ability to coordinate	Major	Unlikely	1. Conduct targeted communications on the importance of needs assessments and targeted work planning 2. Ensure needs assessments are conducted collaboratively to allow partners to see value and utilize outputs 3. Ensure partners receive appropriate recognition for their contributions, including through targeted communication conducted by the GFOI Office	Leads Group and GFOI Office
2. Countries not willing to assess their needs and/or communicate these to international partners	Difficult to align international support with country needs and reduced ability to coordinate	Moderate	Unlikely	1. Conduct targeted communications on the benefits of needs assessments 2. Emphasize that CNA is a country led process, with guidance available from GFOI experts when requested 3. Offer communication support to promote needs	Leads Group, Component Managers and GFOI Office
3. Change in international reporting obligations relevant to REDD+	Loss of motivation by countries results in	Moderate	Unlikely	1. Promote multiple benefits of forest monitoring and GHG	Leads Group, Component

Risk description	Worst case consequence for the project	Risk Score		Mitigating action	Action owner
activities	disengagement in GFOI Office activities			accounting 2. Work with REDD+ forums (UNFCCC, FCPF and GCF, etc.) to align assistance with REDD+ MRV requirements	Managers and GFOI Office
4. GFOI partners' work plans are not sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to identified country needs and align with other partner's work programmes	Coordination efforts are not fully utilized	Moderate	Unlikely	1. Ensure all partners are aware of GFOI procedures, so they can factor these in to their long term planning 2. Ensure all partners are either involved in country needs assessments and harmonized work planning, or are made aware of the outputs	Leads Group, Component Managers and GFOI Office

Figure 2. GFOI risk management.

7. Resources

GFOI operates on a combination of direct and in-kind contributions. Direct contributions include financial assistance to core GFOI functions, such as funding for the GFOI Office, Component Management, funding for GFOI events and secondments etc. In-kind contributions include staff time, alignment of existing programs, sharing of resources and any other costs incurred by partners as part of their participation in GFOI.

The scope and nature of GFOI's total resources are too large and diverse to quantify, and hence the Initiative does not collect these figures. As a voluntary partnership, GFOI relies on its partners to provide, deliver and report on their own funding resources as per the internal procedures of their own organizations. The GFOI Leads Group is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Initiative is sufficient resourced to meet its operational requirements.

The nature of GFOI as being the product of collaboration between its partners, means the Initiative itself does not require a large central budget. Instead, the Initiative draws upon the existing resources of its partners and seeks to provide additional value for these partners through constructive collaboration with others, such as facilitating access to additional resources, specialist expertise, existing in-country relationships and networks and minimized waste through avoided duplication of effort. By facilitating structured coordination, GFOI aims to make cooperation between its partners easier to attain and extract net benefit from.

In recent years, GFOI has sought to highlight the unique nature of the Initiative as being small budget and relying on in-kind contributions which delivers additional value for partners. This has proven a successful strategy for GFOI with the membership of the Leads Group, as the major contributors to the Initiative, doubling in the past two years.

More specifically, the development of the GFOI's systematic Country Needs Assessment (CNA) process will also be key to helping GFOI partners to identify appropriate levels of funding and target this at clear needs for operationalizing or improving forest monitoring systems in developing countries. This holistic country led process in close consultation with international partners should help to build strong justification for the allocation of new funds to address remaining gaps, improve traceability, confirm value for money and effectively monitor progress and expenditure.

Finally, while GFOI's target audience is developing country governments, and its major contributors are donors, international organizations, academia and NGOs, the Initiative also interacts with the private sector. This includes commercial providers of satellite data, consulting firms and other experts. GFOI does not currently have a specific strategy for engaging the private sector but instead welcomes them to participate in the same way the Initiative is open to all partners who have a mutually beneficial contribution to make.

8. Technical Synopsis

GFOI has developed the Methods and Guidance Documentation (MGD) to provide the best available guidance on scientifically sound and operational technology for developing countries to design, build and deliver their NFMS focused on meeting MRV requirements of the UNFCCC. The MGD is globally recognized as an authoritative resource for helping developing countries to meet their international GHG reporting obligations compliant with the IPCC Good Practice Guidance and UNFCCC rules, specifically for REDD+ activities. The MGD, which is available in English, French and Spanish, is used by all GFOI partners to guide their assistance to countries in a coherently and complimentary manner.

The MGD Component of GFOI has also developed the REDDcompass platform, which seeks to make the content of the MGD available in a user-friendly format. REDDcompass also links the guidance to other supporting resources, training materials and tools of GFOI partners within a systematic framework.

GFOI supports developing countries to use the best available data in their NFMS. This is predominantly biophysical data and a combination of remote sensing data and ground data. The most commonly used remote sensing data is medium resolution optical data that is cost effectively or freely available, which currently predominantly from Landsat and Sentinel. To complement these data, many countries also use high-resolution data which are generally acquired from commercial sources either with funding from international support partners, their own resources or other arrangements. Ground data, often depends largely on what data already exists for each country, and can include national forest inventory, research, soil, rainfall, elevation, production and/or any other data set that characterizes the extent and condition of the forest and how it changes. In many countries, ground data availability is still a real obstacle to progress. In which case, default data provided by the IPCC and other mandated authorities are often used.

GFOI's R&D Coordination Component is responsible for considering solutions to address scientific or technical challenges. The Component fosters a network of experts who can be assigned to help address these challenges through targeted literature reviews, expert workshop and/or commissioning new research where it is needed. If the Component believes it has identified a suitable solution to a challenge, it then submits its findings to the MGD Advisory Group for consideration. The Advisory Group consists of a broad range of independent international experts. If endorsed by the Advisory Group, the solution can then drafted in a new MGD module, FAQ or other resource and published on the REDDcompass platform for use by capacity building partners and ultimately developing countries.

9. Data Policy

GFOI does not generate or provide data itself and as such, it does need its own data policy. Nonetheless, as a GEO Flagship, GFOI will advocate for the GEOSS Data Sharing and Data Management Principles wherever possible.

In seeking to support developing countries' participation in the Paris Agreement and related UNFCCC decisions, GFOI partners support countries to conduct their international reporting in a manner, which is consistent with the IPCC's Principles of Transparency, Accuracy, Completeness, Consistency, and Comparability (TACCC). Adherence to the TACCC Principles is seen a key principles for countries to following in preparing and reporting GHG inventories and are also internationally recognized as indicators of inventory quality.

The major outputs from GFOI are all accessible via the GFOI website (www.gfoi.org). This site is hosted by FAO, as the host agency for the GFOI Office. Therefore, the preservation of the information is supported by FAO's own international systems and web management policies. GFOI also maintains the REDDcompass platform (www.reddcompass.org) as a central repository for GFOI's methods, guidance, training materials, tools and other resources. This platform is supported by the Australian Government as a direct contribution to GFOI.