Report on the 2014 Selection Process for Civil Society Observers

To the UN-REDD Program and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

Introduction

Civil society, like the indigenous peoples movement, has been self-selecting its own observers to the UN-REDD Program and the FCPF since the inception of these international REDD initiatives. These processes have been evolving over the years in both their formality and the breadth of participation in them. The Bank Information Center has facilitated a number of these processes, for both UN-REDD and the FCPF, this was however the first time we attempted to facilitate selection of observers for both initiatives simultaneously. That decision was made in conjunction with former and current observers, other CSO REDD watchers and the UN-REDD Secretariat and the FCPF Facility Management Team, over discussions at a number of meetings, in which it was concluded that a joint selection process could potentially help create synergy between observers to both initiatives, and would be more efficient in terms of time and resources. It is also a response to the growing alignment of the UN-REDD and the FCPF in terms of back to back biannual meetings.

Other changes/innovations in this selection process included revisions to the terms of reference/responsibilities of CSO Observers, which included clarifications of what is expected of them in terms of good practice (representing all views, gathering information and CSO perspectives before meetings and feeding back information after meetings); instituting term limits for observers (a maximum of two two-year terms); instituting a recall procedure should it ever become necessary to recall an observer for poor performance and explicitly including the Carbon Fund as part the mandate of the FCPF Observers. Additionally it was decided that selection of regional observers should be through regional, rather than global, voting, as this would better reflect the constituency they are to serve, and that there should be some kind of regional representivity criteria for the observers, so it was decided that between 25% and 40% of an observers votes should come from outside their country. This last criteria was left as a range because it was not entirely clear how operational it would be in practice, but stemmed from concerns that some observers in the past were insufficiently imbedded in regional CSO networks and thus had difficulty representing views beyond their own country. These changes were all discussed among current and former observers and the CSO constituency, and are summed up here: http://www.bicusa.org/un-redd-cso-observer-selection-process/ (under the proposed revision tab).

The other main change in the observer selection process was to create regional databases of CSOs involved in REDD and/or forest issues, as a way of defining the constituencies and creating a list of eligible voters for each region. This was done in response to repeated and growing problems of voter fraud in the last two selection processes for UN-REDD and FCPF, in which a number of individuals or organizations entered fake votes, which seriously complicated the processes and threatened to undermine confidence in the results. This fraud was easy to undertake because voting was done using open-access links to google doc spread sheets which were circulated widely on international and regional list-serves. The decision then was to move to the use of a secure voting platform where only those "registered" could vote, and to establish the regional databases of CSOs working on REDD in each

region. This had the added advantage of opening the possibility of creating regional and/or global list-serves for communication and coordination, which could be used by selected observer organizations and others in support of work on REDD. The concept note for the observer selection process, which was consulted with the CSO constituency, the UN-REDD Secretariat and the FCPF's Facility Management Team is attached here as Annex One.

Lastly, it is important to note that the selection process was oriented to select new observers from Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean for both the UN-REDD and FCPF, AND additionally to select an observer for UN-REDD from developed countries. The developed countries observer for FCPF was selected earlier this year (in March) through a separate process. That process, also facilitated by BIC, was undertaken using the new secure voting platform methodology, and was carried out without incident, and so constituted something of a pilot or test for the application of the method more broadly.

Assembling regional databases

Upon securing the resources necessary in July, BIC contracted consultants in Asia, Africa, Mesoamerica and South America to assemble lists of organizations at the national and regional levels involved in REDD processes and/or working on forest issues. This resulted in three regional databases with collectively over one thousand listed civil society contacts. This included 211 contacts in Africa, 291 contacts in Latin America and 473 contacts in Asia. The databases cover most REDD+ countries active in either the UN-REDD or the FCPF, although there is uneven coverage of some, and a few gaps remaining. The databases were vetted by BIC, removing only inadvertently included organizations that were ineligible (e.g., government agencies, UN officials and the occasional private sector firm or public-private partnership). There was no attempt to verify the extent to which individual organizations were or are involved in their national REDD process or international policy work on forests, as this was deemed impractical. Neither was there an attempt to remove organizations that self identify as indigenous, as it was also deemed impractical and undesirable to distinguish between "pure" indigenous organizations and those with mixed indigenous and non indigenous constituencies. Further it was felt that participation of indigenous organizations in the CSO selection process, despite having their own observers selected through separate means, was positive in that they are an important constituency within civil society and their participation could further the already strong coordination between indigenous peoples and civil society observers to UN-REDD and the FCPF. Representatives from academic organizations (university departments and programs) were also included in the databases in recognition of their important role in civil society work around REDD, although academic representatives are not accepted as nominees for observer positions themselves.

The developed countries database of eligible voters was developed from the existing FCPF/UN-REDD list serve, which has a large number of the active organizations in the US and Europe, and contains 77 potential voters.

Nomination and Voting Process

A call for nominations was issued ahead of the opening of the nomination period, and distributed in English, Spanish and French through the most generally used REDD, forest and climate list serves, asking recipients to please forward to all those potentially interested. Nominations were opened on August 17th and kept open for a period of one month through September 11th. Nominations were received from all regions. The criteria for nominations can be found here: http://www.bicusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/EN-terms-of-Reference-UN-REDD.docx and here: http://www.bicusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/EN-Terms-of-Reference-FCPF.docx. A timeline and the voting rules are posted here: http://www.bicusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/EN-Timeline-and-Voting-Rules.docx, and were available in Spanish and French as well.

Some of the nomination criteria are more operational than others, for example our ability to determine the extent of an organization's experience, capacity and involvement on REDD issues is limited, but the assumption is that this is more or less demonstrated by the nominees responses to the nomination questionnaire, the answers to which are posted ahead of the voting and included on the voting ballots. There was then a decision to err on the side of inclusion, and list all candidates who met the verifiable criteria, with the expectation that voters in the constituency would support those organizations they deemed most qualified and effective. A few potential candidates were eliminated because they were: a) not from a country involved in the UN-REDD or FCPF (India, for example), or, b) a private sector firm. A list of all the nominees can be found here: http://www.bicusa.org/civil-society-organizations-to-vote-for-observers-to-the-unredd-programme-and-the-fcpf-2/.

In summary however, numbers of nominees per region can be found in the table one below.

Table 1: Nominees per Region

Region	UN-REDD	FCPF
Asia Pacific	9	7
Africa	36	19
Latin America	4	4
Developed Countries	3	N/A

The large number of nominees from Africa can be seen in a positive light as a result of growing awareness of, and interest in, the international REDD initiatives, particularly UN-REDD, but also has the effect of diluting the vote among a plethora of potential candidates. It is also notable that several organizations were nominated for both observer to UN-REDD and the FCPF, an unanticipated result.

The voting process was initiated on September 22nd and was open for two weeks through October 3rd. Each of the organizations in the database was sent two ballots for their region: one for UN-REDD, one for FCPF, with the exception of the developed countries constituency, which only received a ballot for UN-REDD. The ballots were developed using the survey monkey web based service, and each ballot was therefore specific to that e-mail address and could not be forwarded. The ballots asked each voter for their name, their organization, to verify that they were authorized to vote for their organization, and

allowed them to pick one candidate for each observer position. The ballot came with a link to the nomination forms of each candidate, allowing them to review the information shared therein before voting if they wished. Latin America and the Caribbean ballots were sent in Spanish, Asia-Pacific and developed country ballots in English, and Africa ballots in English and French.

The voting took place as scheduled, with results coming in over the full period. Over the first voting period (see below for discussion of re-voting in Asia), 902 votes were cast overall. It is safe to assume that many organizations participated in both UN-REDD and FCPF selection processes, so the total number of participating organizations is likely about half of that- somewhere between four and five hundred organizations. This is out of a list of one thousand one hundred and eight nine (1189) contacts, although there multiple staff from some organizations were included, so the total number of eligible voters is smaller[1]. A breakdown of total votes per region is presented in table two below.

Table 2: Total Voting per Region

Region	UN-REDD	FCPF
Asia Pacific	187	177
Africa	117	137
Latin America	144	127
Developed Countries	13	N/A

While the voting numbers were not as high as hoped, they are comparable with previous processes, including the low number of votes for the developed countries constituency. While it is unclear why there was lower participation in the process by a number of organizations from the contacts lists, several hypotheses are possible: 1) waning civil society funds/interest in REDD and/or the international REDD initiatives; 2) a sense (in the developed countries constituency) that the established observer organizations are doing a relatively good job and participation in the selection process is not urgent; 3) that there was insufficient notice/explanation of the voting process and/or there were problems using or receiving the survey monkey forms. There is little we can do about the first two issues in this context, the latter issue will be discussed further below.

Re-Voting Process in Asia/Pacific

Two distinct problems were encountered in the Asia Pacific voting that caused us to make the decision to re-initiate the process for a second attempt. The first was the disqualification of a candidate from Nepal, midway through the process, when information came to light that the observer candidate was working full time for a private sector firm also involved in REDD. After analysis of the information provided, it was determined that this represented a potential conflict of interest and the candidate

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[1] Note: Voting rules state that ""For large, multi-national CSOs, country affiliates may join as part of the Regional Registry listservs (see section below on Regional CSO Registries for more information) but nomination and voting privileges will only be afforded to one focal point per organisation per region; and for regional and national networks or coalitions, composite CSOs forming these networks/coalitions have the right to join the Regional Registries as separate entities and therefore are entitled to independent nomination and voting privileges."

should be disqualified. BIC explained the situation to the nominee organization, and offered them the opportunity to put forward an alternative candidate for the second run, which they did.

The second problem was that the voting was unfairly skewed towards Pakistan. This resulted from the fact that the regional database assembled by BIC for Asia Pacific most likely under represented Pakistan, as these organizations are less active, or at least less well known, in the regional forest/REDD networks in Asia that BIC has engaged with for many years. We therefore offered to accept a list of Pakistani organizations from one of the nominee organizations, the Sustainable Development Centre (SDC) on request of SDC to try to rectify this situation. SDC presented a list of 208 organizations resulting in 43% of the eligible voting list being dominated by Pakistan.

This was however, in retrospect, clearly an error on our part and unfair to the other candidates in Asia-Pacific as (a) Pakistani organizations dis-proportionately dominated the voting lists; and (b) the other candidates did not get the same opportunity to present such extensive lists of voters that they had access to in order to encourage them to vote for their candidacy.

For these reasons, it was decided to re-initiate the voting process. The Nepali organization was allowed to submit a new candidate with no private sector ties. However, there was a need to rectify the situation with the Pakistani voting lists to remove the unfair advantage of the Pakistani candidate. This had to be done while ensuring that Pakistani organizations were fairly represented in the voting lists.

It was therefore decided, in consultation with the four candidate organizations from Pakistan, to offer each of them, and the current UN-REDD Asia-Pacific CSO Observer organization from Pakistan, the opportunity to put forward eighteen (18) organizations to participate in the voting, which would give Pakistan a similar number of voting organizations to the other countries represented in the regional database, with a total of 80 organizations represented. It was assumed that the four candidate organizations from Pakistan were genuine candidates with equal interest in running in this process, and splitting the vote would reduce any unfair advantage of each of the candidates, as they would only have knowledge of up to 18 organizations on the list. The original additions to the database from Pakistan were removed and the new organizations added. A second round of voting was then carried out between October 15 th and October 24th, which drew one hundred and seventeen (117) votes for UN-REDD and one hundred and three (103) votes for FCPF.

In the second round of Asia Pacific voting other serious problems emerged - evidence that three of the candidates were engaged in what appeared to be vote trading (refer to annex 2). After analysis of the evidence (an e-mail chain now essentially made public, although not by BIC) and consultation with international experts on ethics, it was decided that this amounted to an unfair and unethical attempt to influence the outcome of the selection process. In our view, making decisions among candidate organizations to support one nominee for UN-REDD and one nominee for FCPF is an appropriate strategy, and this strategy can appropriately be <u>suggested</u> to regional networks. It is another matter entirely to say that a determined number of votes can be <u>delivered </u>to one candidate or another—this calls into question the legitimacy of the potential voting organizations, as well as the ethics of the candidates in trying to influence the process. We therefore disqualified the three candidate

organizations who were implicated in the unethical practices, and awarded the election to the next runner up who met the regional support criteria. A more detailed discussion of this problem can be found in Annex Two.

Additionally, an email from one of the disqualified organizations, SDC, stated that the other Pakistani candidates had decided to support SDC. The voting lists submitted by Asia-Pacific candidates were originally capped at 18 organizations per candidate to reduce the chance of unfair advantage. However, it was clear that at least two candidates had decided not to genuinely run for selection, had not notified BIC of this throughout the process, and had been collaborating to support the candidacy of one candidate, therefore resulting in a further unfair advantage for one candidate

Results

The results of the voting process, despite the problems noted above, are satisfactory in our view. All of the organizations selected have a relatively strong track record of national and/or international advocacy on REDD, clearly have the capacity to do a satisfactory job as observer, and are well situated to represent their constituencies. The announced results of the voting are presented in the table 3 below.

Table 3: Voting Results by Region

Region	UN-REDD	FCPF
Asia-Pacific	NGO Forum on Cambodia	Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN)
Africa	Zambia Climate Change Network (ZCCN)	Pan African Climate Justice Network (PACJA)
Latin America and the Caribbean	Red Mocaf	Red Mocaf
Developed Countries	Environmental Defense Fund	N/A

The voting in Africa provided clear winners, with the Zambia Climate Change Network getting over 40% of the vote, with the next runner up receiving a little less than 20% of the vote. The ZCCN received more than 50% of their votes from eleven countries outside of Zambia. The third runner up received less than 8% of the votes, and all the other candidates received fewer than 5% of the votes. For FCPF in Africa, PACJA received 43% of the vote, while the next runner up received 38% of the vote, with all of the others receiving 5% or less. PACJA received more than 25% of their votes from at least eight countries outside of Kenya.

In Latin America and the Caribbean for UN-REDD, Red Mocaf received 53% of the votes with 21% of those votes coming from six countries outside of Mexico, while the next runner up received 34% of the votes with 18% of those votes coming from outside of their home country. For FCPF in Latin America, Red Mocaf received 53% of the votes, with 27% of their votes come from six countries outside of Mexico. The next runner up received 26% of the votes, with 21% of those votes coming from outside of their home country.

For the developed country selection process for UN-REDD, the Environmental Defense Fund received 46% of the vote, while the next runner up received 38% of the vote.

In round two of voting in Asia, after the disqualification of the three candidates mentioned above, the UN-REDD seat was awarded to the candidate with the second highest number of votes, NGO Forum on Cambodia, with 18% of the votes. Almost 40% of the votes for NGO Forum were from seven countries outside of Cambodia. For the FCPF, the second place nominee was tied between three candidates each with about 12% of the votes, (Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal, Wildlife Alliance and Indus Development Organization), so the voting was awarded to the candidate that best met the additional criteria of regional representivity, in this case Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal with 58% of their votes coming from outside of Nepal (five countries). Wildlife Alliance had 50% of their votes coming from three countries outside of Cambodia, while all of the Indus Development Organization votes were from Pakistan.

Issues

It is BIC's view that there were a number of issues in this selection process that bear further discussion, identification of lessons, and incorporation of potential solutions into the next round of selection processes.

Use of regional data bases as basis for voting

The use of the regional databases undoubtedly advanced the security of the voting process and reduced the opportunity for potential vote fraud that had occurred over the last two processes. The regional databases assembled identified the majority of the groups active on REDD/forest issues in the majority of countries active in UN-REDD and FCPF. Because the process was new, it created some confusion about how to vote, which can be addressed in future processes. The databases were produced on very short timeframes and suffer from some incomplete information and did not achieve good coverage in a few countries. Due to time constraints, it was not feasible to open the regional databases to further additions without delaying the selection process past the point where observers could be selected in time to attend the fall UN-REDD and FCPF meetings. This however undermined the perceived transparency of the process. It is recommended that the regional databases now be opened to rolling admission, through some mechanism that will verify the e-mail address and contact information of the organization, and be constituted as regional and/or global list serves such that any interested CSO can join them, send and receive information about UN-REDD and FCPF to others, and be registered to participate in the next selection processes.

Use of Survey Monkey as the voting platform

Survey monkey worked well as a platform for secure voting, as it can issue customizable surveys in multiple languages that are tied to a specific e-mail address. It also has the advantage of being low cost and fairly widely known. It is possible that there were problems with voter not receiving the ballots because they had previously "opted-out" of survey monkey for some reason, or because the survey monkey forms were caught in spam filters. We did not however receive large numbers of notifications of

such problems (and responded to those which we did receive), and additional notification and reminder e-mails were sent to all voters from personal e-mail accounts to try to mitigate this potential problem. It is recommended that survey monkey, or a similar secure voting platform, be used in future processes, but this should be accompanied by early notification and reminders to ensure that potential voters are not inadvertently left out because of problems with spam filter.

Vote fraud/Vote trading

This is the first time we have had an issue with apparent attempts to trade votes among candidates. It is recommended that additional criteria be established providing some guidance on ethical standards for nominees during the voting process (and perhaps during their tenure as observers) so that such problems are avoided in the future, or at least that there is a clear rule that facilitators of the selection process can refer to in handling such matters. There were some allegations that "fake" organizations and/or organizations that were not true stakeholders in REDD were being registered in the case of the Pakistan vote list. While BIC took steps to try to verify the existence of several organizations, this is not practically feasible to do from Washington for local organizations which have no online presence. In this case no organizations were removed from the voting list. It is recommended for future process, as above, that registration (inclusion in the voting lists) be carried out well ahead of time, and that there be some mechanisms to try to ensure that all registered organizations exist and are active on REDD and are not either front e-mail addresses nor local groups uninvolved in national REDD processes. If there were enough time allowed, CSO liaison staff at UN-REDD and FCPF and/or current observers could play a role in (say, biannually) vetting the organizations in the regional data bases.

Lessons learned/Recommendations

In sum, a few recommendations can be made to improve future processes:

- Sufficient time needs to be scheduled into observer selection processes to allow for interested organizations to sign up, and be vetted/verified, before launching voting processes. This likely adds two or three months to the preparation time for running a selection process, but should increase participation and transparency.
- The regional databases assembled for this process should be made publically available, and should be constituted as regional/global list serves for communication and coordination among UN-REDD and FCPF observers and constituents.
- Additional elements should be added to the voting rules and observer qualifications to establish guidelines on issues like ethical behavior during elections (e.g., vote trading and full disclosure regarding an organization's true intent to run as a candidate).