

ITTO Tropical Forest

UPDATE

A newsletter from the International Tropical Timber Organization to promote the conservation and sustainable development of tropical forests



Fellows for SFM

The lack of human capacity has been identified as a key constraining factor to sustainable forest management (SFM) in most of the diagnoses and analyses to assess progress towards SFM carried out in ITTO member countries over the past quarter century. One of ITTO's most effective contributions to addressing this constraint has been its Fellowship Program, among the Organization's earliest and most successful initiatives and probably the world's only such support program focused specifically on tropical forests and their management.

The promise of the Fellowship Program was not immediately grasped by the Committee on Forest Industry where it was first introduced as a Secretariat-drafted project 22 years ago. Some members and observers (including other international organizations) questioned the need for such a program, pointing to various academic scholarships and bursaries available to qualified students, although none of these focused specifically on tropical forests. Only with the persistence of ITTO's second



Special issue on the ITTO Fellowship Program

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Note to readers: This issue of the TFU is shorter than usual due to funding constraints and is not being circulated to our 15,000 subscribers (it will only be available online, with a limited number of copies printed for the 47th ITTC session). Funding constraints have also affected the publication schedule/frequency of the TFU in 2011. It is hoped that the regular length and publication schedule of the TFU can be resumed in 2012 through the provision of sufficient voluntary contributions or through the inclusion of this work in ITTO's core activities budget under the terms of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006 when it enters into force.



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Cover image: Brazilian Fellow Danielle Celentano carries out research towards her Master of Science degree.

Photo: D. Celentano

... Editorial continued

Executive Director Manoel Sobral Filho (then ITTO's Assistant Director of Forest Industry) and the support of the chair of the Committee on Forest Industry at that time (Markku Simula, who later became chair of ITTO's governing Council) were these objections overcome and the project approved. The rest, as they say, is history.

Over the past two decades, the ITTO Fellowship Program has helped more than 1100 young and middle level professionals from more than 40 ITTO member countries to enhance their professional capacities in forestry and related disciplines and thereby contributed substantially to promoting sustainable management of tropical forests. The Program has also developed a cadre of forestry officials throughout the world who know ITTO's programs and policies and help to promote the Organization's work while simultaneously furthering its objectives.

In 2010, in order to assess the impacts of the Fellowship Program on capacity development in ITTO member countries at the individual, institutional, national and international levels, ITTO undertook an Impact Assessment survey of awardees. This survey was conducted to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Freezailah Fellowship Fund, a mechanism established by the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) to ensure financial continuity of the Fellowship Program named in honor of the Organization's first Executive Director.

The lead story in this special issue of the TFU reports the results of the survey, based on responses from more than 200 former fellows from 34 countries (page 3). The survey clearly shows the significant impact of the Program on capacity development in tropical forestry, timber industries and related disciplines in ITTO member countries. The survey also illustrates the Program's breadth, both in terms of the range of people who have benefited from it and the scope of activities for which assistance has been provided.

A sample of the type of work carried out under (and the impacts of) ITTO fellowships is summarized in articles prepared by five ITTO fellows from Peru, Cambodia, Cameroon, Gabon and Nepal in this issue. From the work carried out by

Constantino Auccha Chutas (page 8) to train local communities in the utilization, conservation and management of cloud forests in Peru to Rabindra Roy's research to examine the contribution of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in daily livelihoods in Nepal (page 20), the dedication of the ITTO Fellows and the achievements of the Fellowship Program shine clearly from the pages of this issue. In fact, one of the hardest tasks in compiling this issue of the TFU was in choosing between the many excellent articles submitted by Fellows in response to our request to showcase their work. We thank all of those who submitted articles and hope to be able to publish more of the articles submitted in future TFUs in the regular *Fellowship report* section.

Despite its clear contribution to ITTO's objective of building human capacity to implement sustainable forest management and high returns on the relatively modest investments made to date, the future of the Fellowship Program is by no means assured. As former ITTC chair Stephanie Caswell (who also chaired both the Fellowship Selection Panel and the expert panel charged with reviewing the Program a decade ago) points out in *Out on a limb* (page 24), the Program needs to widen its funding base which currently relies disproportionately on just two donors. Ways also need to be found to reduce the amount of voluntary contributions absorbed by administrative costs (which currently account for more than a quarter of funds pledged to the Program). Ms. Caswell's recommendations for further improvements should be carefully considered by the ITTC in its deliberations on the future of the Program.

As ITTO celebrates its 25th anniversary during the International Year of Forests in 2011, the Fellowship Program is among its proudest achievements. The Secretariat, the Council and all ITTO Fellows must work together to ensure that the Program continues its important contributions to building capacity for SFM over the next 25 years.

**Chisato Aoki
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