

ITTO Fellowship Programme: contributing to capacity-building in sustainable tropical forest management

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THE ITTO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME recently conducted a survey of its fellows. This article presents the results and other information on the Programme.

History and current status

The ITTO Fellowship Programme began in 1989, and has gone through three phases to date: the first phase under ITTO PROJECT PD 60/89 (M,F,I) between 1989 and 1992, the second phase under ITTO PROJECT PD 1/93 REV.1 (M,F,I) between 1993 and 1999 and the current phase under the Freezailah Fellowship Fund since 2000. Over the last 17 years, ITTO has funded 911 fellows from 44 member countries. The total amount of awards has now reached more than US\$5.2 million.

The objective of the Programme is to develop human resources and enhance professional expertise in member

countries in tropical forestry, tropical timber industries and related disciplines, with a view to promoting sustainable management of tropical forests, efficient utilization and processing of tropical timber, and better economic information on the international trade in tropical timber. The Programme supports a wide range of activities, including short training courses, seminars, conferences, study tours, the publication of technical documents, and post-graduate degrees. The Programme aims to support young and middle-level professionals.

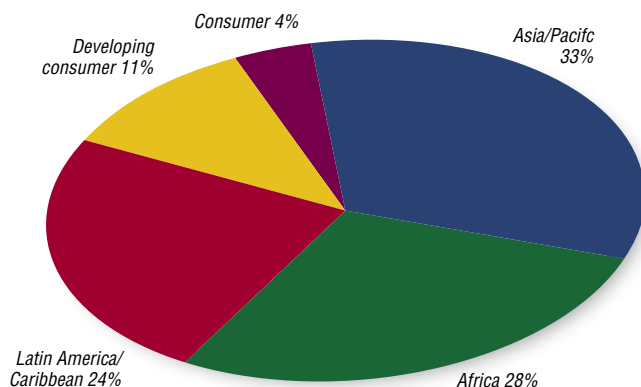
ITTO awards fellowships twice a year, normally in May and November in conjunction with meetings of the International Tropical Timber Council. Currently, the maximum value of an individual award is US\$10 000, and the average amount is around US\$5600. A total amount of US\$300 000 is awarded to 50 to 60 people per year taking into consideration geographic and gender balance and balance among the ITTO priority work areas.

The fellows

ITTO fellowships are awarded mainly to nationals of ITTO producer member countries and developing consumer member countries. In fact, 96% of all awards have been to these countries (Figure 1). Efforts have been made to distribute fellowships equitably to the Asia/Pacific, Africa and Latin America/Caribbean regions. Under the Freezailah Fellowship Fund, the distribution of the awards among the three geographic regions is now almost equal (Figure 2). Developed consumer country nationals are awarded fellowships only when activities are carried out in tropical countries and benefit producer countries. In terms of

Where 1

Figure 1: Geographic distribution, 1989–2006



NOTE – Rounded percentages in all figures may not sum to 100%

Sample of fellows reveals strong support

A recent sample-survey of ITTO fellows showed that the Programme is making a significant contribution to professional development and promotion of sustainable forest management in the tropics. The survey was undertaken in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of ITTO, and covered 33 fellows randomly selected from 313 former fellows who carried out their fellowship activities between 2000 and 2005. All respondents rated the Fellowship Programme very highly, as it strengthens capacity building in sustainable forest management in their countries, and considered the Programme to be efficient, transparent and flexible. The following testimonials show that fellows appreciate the wide range of activities that the ITTO Fellowship Programme supports.

"I rate the ITTO Fellowship Programme excellent. I really liked it as I find it efficient and it provides support for different types of activities, such as seminars, publications and post-graduate courses. The ITTO Fellowship Programme is the only international program of this nature that promotes studies related to tropical forests without making any distinction in terms of area, age, gender or nationality." *Ms Sandra Rodríguez-Piñeros, Colombian PhD student, Oklahoma State University*

"The ITTO Fellowship has opened up new horizons and breathed a new life in the areas of forest resource management as far as I am concerned. It has had a catalytic, spurring role for the promotion of sustainable forest management. In the sustainable development of my country, this Fellowship Programme has had a driving role because there could not be development without adequately trained human resources." *Mr Appolinaire Nankam, GIS Officer, Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, Cameroon*

"The ITTO Fellowship Programme is a tool that enables us—the forest professionals—to realize our dream of becoming ever more competent in our profession." *Mr Fernando Carrera, Peruvian researcher, CATIE, Costa Rica*

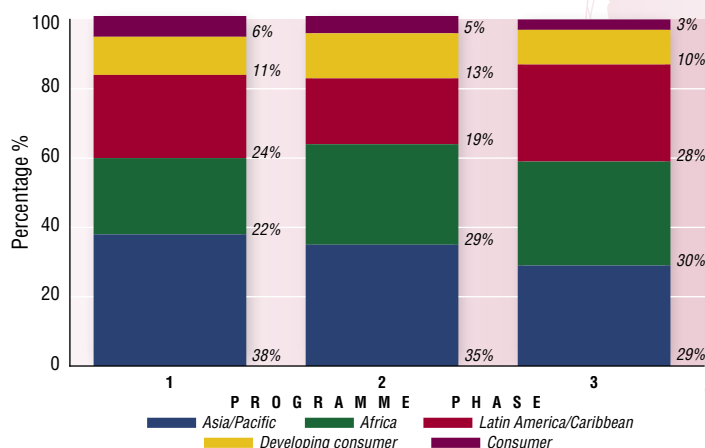
"I would rate this program as extremely useful because it is based on expedient and streamlined approval and implementation procedures. It provides many benefits to young professionals interested in continuing their training in forest management." *Ms Gabriela Gutiérrez, Forest Technician, Community Forest Management Plan, Chiquiaca, Bolivia*

"Through the ITTO Fellowship Programme I have earned a PhD in Forest Economics from the University of Toronto and have contributed to science and better understanding of Joint Forest Management in India. I have returned to my job and have reached the policy planning level. The knowledge gained will help me in formulating better policies for the development of forestry sector in India." *Dr Dinesh Misra, Chief General Manager, Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation, Ministry of Industry and Mines of Government of Gujarat, India*

"Through the fellowship activities, I learned advanced sawing and drying technologies for tropical plantation wood utilization and Eucalyptus wood processing technologies through visiting wood utilization companies in Australia. The Fellowship Programme is great, just like opening a window in a wall. I can communicate with the outside world through a new channel and get more related information. It can enhance the exchange of experiences in promoting sustainable forest management and sustainable development all over the world." *Mr Yongdong Zhou, Associate Professor, Chinese Academy of Forestry*

Where 2

Figure 2: Geographic distribution by Programme phase, 1989–2006



educational background, the majority of ITTO fellows have higher degrees, including bachelor's (24%), master's (34%), phd (15%) and forest engineering qualifications (17%). The Box details the strong support for the Programme among recipients.

Figure 3 shows the main nationalities of ITTO fellows, revealing that 70% of the Fellowships have been distributed to ten countries (Ghana 12%, Philippines 8%, Nepal 7%, Indonesia 7%, India 7%, Cameroon 6%, Brazil 6%, Colombia 6%, Malaysia 5%, and China 4%). To achieve a more balanced distribution of fellowships among ITTO member countries, a mechanism to encourage applications from other countries may be needed.

ITTO has also made efforts to promote gender equality, with 26% of the fellowships awarded to women during the last 17 years. Figure 4 shows that the percentage of women fellows has more than doubled over the life of the Programme, with 46% of ITTO fellowships awarded to women in 2006.

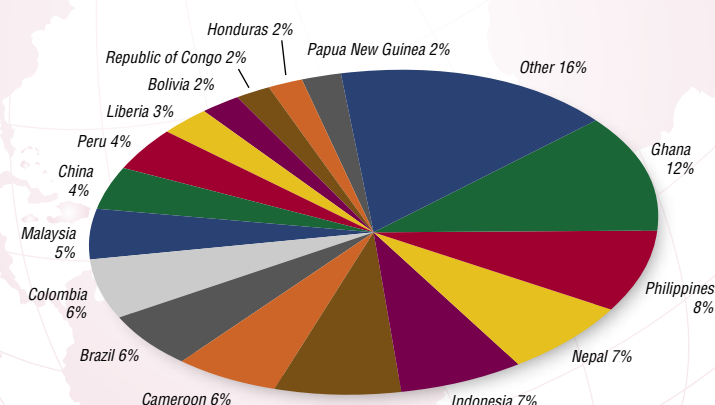
Activities and locations

The majority (64%) of fellowship activities are in the field of Reforestation and Forest Management (RFM). This trend is more evident in the current phase of the Programme as shown in Figure 5. The proportion of RFM awards has increased from 42% to 78% over the course of the Programme while that of Forest Industry has declined from 39% to 15% and that of Economic Information and Market Intelligence has decreased from 19% to 8%.

Under the current phase, the top ten host countries for fellowship activities are Costa Rica (14%), US (9%), Nepal (6%), Malaysia (5%), France (5%), Australia (5%), UK (5%), Canada (5%) and Indonesia (4%). While North-South cooperation was more evident previously, South-South cooperation has increased to 61% of fellowship activities between 2000 and 2005 (for example, African fellows have been trained in other African countries or in Asia, and many Latin American and Asian fellows have received training in neighboring countries). South-South cooperation is advantageous, as it is cost effective and fellows can gain

Where 3

Figure 3: Nationalities of fellows, 1989–2006



practical experience in a similar environment to their own countries.

Changes in length of activities and fellow backgrounds

The ITTO Fellowship Programme supports both short-term and long-term activities. There has been a change in the types of fellowship activities over the three phases of the ITTO Fellowship Programme. The first phase of the Programme mainly supported short-term activities of less than three months, such as short training courses, conferences, study tours and attachments to institutions, which accounted for about 80% of all activities. However, this trend has changed. The current phase supports more long-term activities, such as post-graduate degree studies and technical document

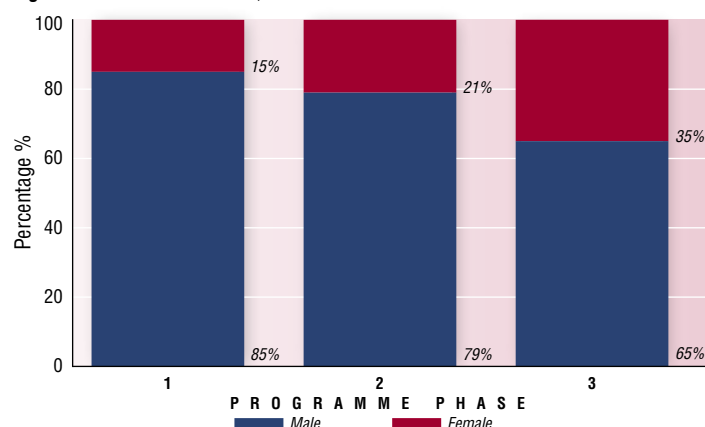
Fellowships awarded

Twenty-one fellowships worth US\$150 100 were awarded at the 41st session of the International Tropical Timber Council in November 2006. Awardees were:

Koffi Efanam Adadjii (Togo) and **Donatien N'Zala** (Congo), to attend a training course on new approaches to governance and management of tropical forests in Africa; **Jose Franco Alvis Gordo** (Colombia), to undertake a masters program in forestry and forest resource management; **Wilberforce Kwaku Asare** (Ghana), to attend a training course on physiological and genetic responses to ozone in trees; **Axelle Boulay** (France), to prepare a PhD thesis on economics of smallholder-industry cooperation for wood supply in developing countries; **Gusua Roseline Caspa** (Cameroon), to attend a training course on tree improvement; **Sunita Chaudhary** (Nepal) and **Balachandra L. Hegde** (India), to attend a training course on biodiversity assessment and monitoring; **Temilola Elisabeth Fatoyinbo** (Nigeria), to do PhD research on mangrove forest growth, biomass and structure estimations; **Juan Frontanilla Yañez** (Bolivia), to attend a special program in forest engineering; **Anna Nil Mohase** (Guyana), to undertake a study tour on improving the collection and interpretation of statistics in Guyana's forest and wood products industry; **Norwati Muhammad** (Malaysia), to participate in IUFRO Tree Biotechnology 2007; **Radhika Murti** (Fiji), to participate in the 7th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF); **Yvonne Nadège Nkolo Meze'e** (Cameroon), to complete a training internship at CIRAD; **Vivian Akweley Norley Nuhu** (Ghana), to attend a training course on revealing the future of conservation; **Joseph Angelus Fraga Palomar** (Philippines), to do masters research on the application of geographic information systems in the conservation of endemic tropical tree species; **Argelia Emelina Rascón Ramos** (Mexico), to undertake a masters program in integrated management of watersheds; **Milton Rivera Rojas** (Colombia), to undertake a masters program in management and conservation of tropical forests and biodiversity; **Elmer Velasco Sayre** (Philippines), to prepare, reproduce and disseminate a technical document on nursery management and tree planting; **Edison Hidalgo Solano Apuntes** (Ecuador), to undertake a masters program in conservation and sustainable use of forest systems; **Memel Serge Charles Yedmel** (Cote d'Ivoire), to complete a training internship at the University of Brussels.

Who

Figure 4: Gender distribution, 1989–2006



preparation, which often take longer than one year. These activities account for 54% of fellowship activities in the current phase (Figure 6).

Figure 7 shows the changes of the length of fellowship activities over the years. The percentage of short-term activities of less than three months has declined from 84% to 45%, while that of long-term activities (more than 12 months) has increased from 1% to 22%.

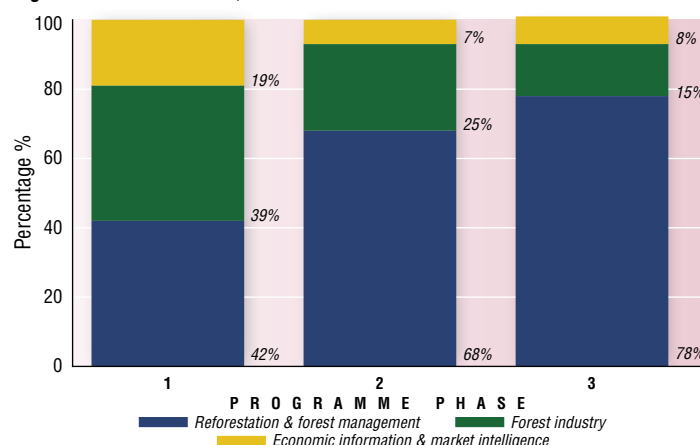
The employment background of the ITTO fellows has also changed over the years. In the first phase, about 80% of fellows came from public services and government research institutes, with none from NGOs. However, in the current phase, the first two categories declined to 57% while NGO fellows increased to 18% (Figure 8). In contrast, the number of fellows from research institutes has declined from 45% to 27%. This is partially because the current Programme no longer supports research activities unless they are related to a post-graduate degree program. However, researchers are still encouraged to publish technical documents or deliver papers with fellowship assistance.

Funding

The ITTO Fellowship Programme receives voluntary contributions of around US\$400 000 annually from donors.

What 1

Figure 5: Field of activities, 1989–2006



Contributions to date total more than US\$6.5 million. The major donor is Japan at around US\$4.8 million. Other significant donors are the US, the Netherlands and Australia (Figure 9). Increased contributions from a broader range of donors are needed due to growing demand for fellowships and recent increases in administration costs.

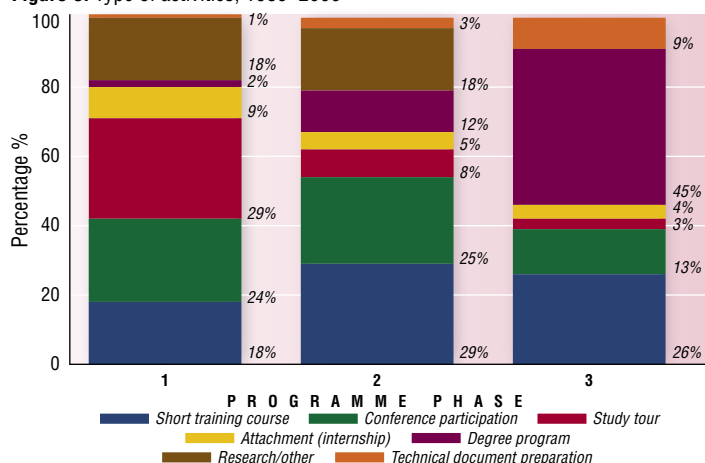
Challenges and future direction

Many fellows have requested ITTO to create a network among ITTO fellows for sharing experience and information. This could be achieved with a mailing list, an electronic newsletter or regional workshops. Perhaps the time has come to establish an alumni association to exchange knowledge and skills on sustainable forest management and related issues among ITTO fellows who are working in public services, NGOs, universities, research institutions, trade and industry and international organizations in various countries. This could be accomplished only with the assistance of former ITTO fellows in each country or geographic region and additional funding due to the limited resources of the Programme.

Another challenge could be to create new cost-sharing partnership programs with universities and training institutions. Almost half of current fellowship activities are

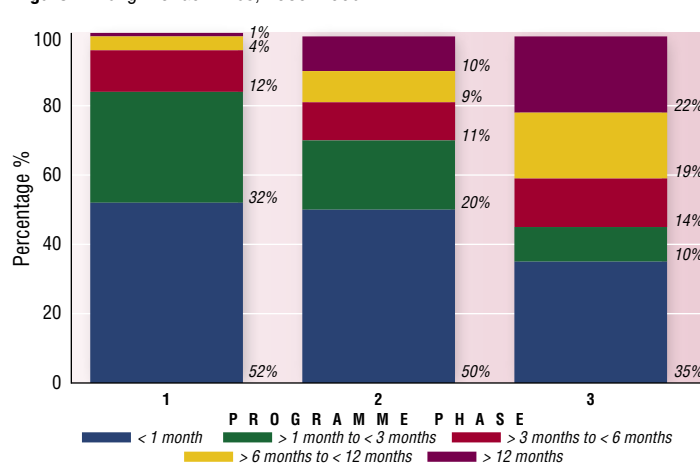
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Figure 6: Type of activities, 1989–2006



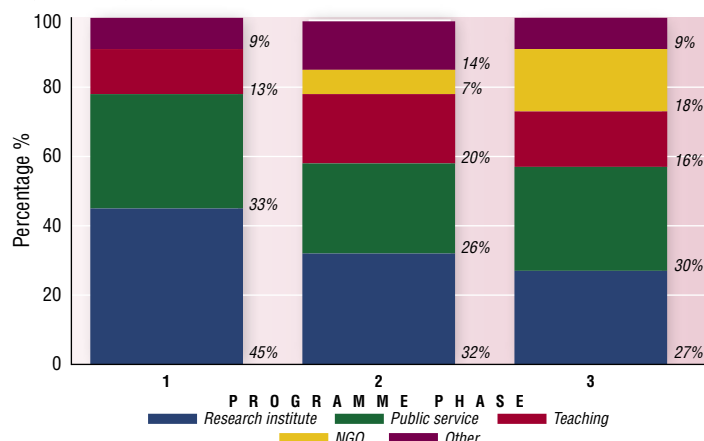
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Figure 7: Length of activities, 1989–2006



Work

Figure 8: Employment background, 1989–2006



to undertake master's and PhD studies. This has sometimes created challenges for ITTO, universities, and fellows as the maximum fellowship of US\$10 000 is not sufficient to support the whole period of post-graduate study. Fellows are required to search for additional funding to cover all their costs, but they sometimes face difficulties. ITTO could consider establishing a partnership program where, for example, a host institution could waive the tuition fees while ITTO pays travel and living expenses for fellows.

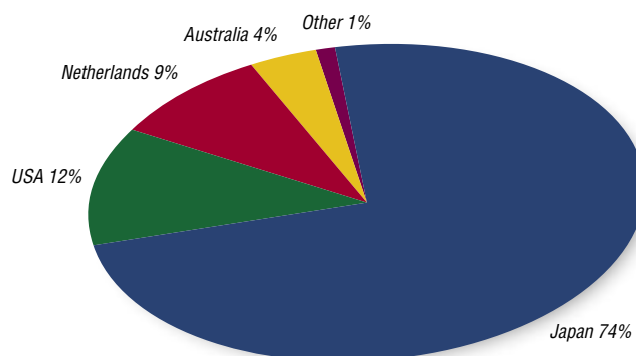
Another possible future extension of the ITTO Fellowship Programme is group training. The current Programme supports only individual training, which allows fellows to be trained in many topics at various institutions. However, ITTO often receives several applications for a particular training course. With almost two decades of cooperation

with many training institutions, it may be possible to identify the centers of excellence on various topics related to sustainable forest management and establish annual group training programs in each tropical region. This would be cost effective, and fellows could maintain an international network after the group training, which has a tremendous value for their future professional careers.

By addressing these challenges and opportunities as it approaches its third decade, the ITTO Fellowship Programme will further enhance its contribution to building capacity for sustainable forest management in tropical countries.

Funds

Figure 9: Contributions from donors, 1989–2006



ITTO fellowships offered

ITTO offers fellowships through the Freezailah Fellowship Fund to promote human resource development and to strengthen professional expertise in member countries in tropical forestry and related disciplines. The goal is to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests, the efficient use and processing of tropical timber, and better economic information about the international trade in tropical timber.

Eligible activities include:

- participation in short-term training courses, training internships, study tours, lecture/demonstration tours and international/regional conferences;
- technical document preparation, publication and dissemination, such as manuals and monographs; and
- post-graduate studies.

Priority areas: eligible activities aim to develop human resources and professional expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- improving transparency of the international tropical timber market;

- promoting tropical timber from sustainably managed sources;
- supporting activities to secure tropical timber resources;
- promoting sustainable management of tropical forest resources;
- promoting increased and further processing of tropical timber from sustainable sources; and
- improving industry's efficiency in the processing and utilisation of tropical timber from sustainable sources.

In any of the above, the following are relevant:

- enhancing public relations, awareness and education;
- sharing information, knowledge and technology; and
- research and development.

Selection criteria: Fellowship applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria (in no priority order):

- consistency of the proposed activity with the Program's objective and priority areas;

- qualifications of the applicant to undertake the proposed fellowship activity;
- the potential of the skills and knowledge acquired or advanced under the fellowship activity to lead to wider applications and benefits nationally and internationally; and
- reasonableness of costs in relation to the proposed fellowship activity.

The maximum amount for a fellowship grant is US\$10 000. Only nationals of ITTO member countries are eligible to apply. The next deadline for applications is **8 March 2007** for activities that will begin no sooner than 1 August 2007. Applications will be appraised in May 2007.

Further details and application forms (in English, French or Spanish) are available from Dr Chisato Aoki, Fellowship Program, ITTO; Fax 81-45-223 1111; fellowship@itto.or.jp (see page 2 for ITTO's postal address) or go to www.itto.or.jp