Report of Ex-post Evaluation

PD 37/00 Rev.1 (F)

**Operational Strategy for Sustainable Forestry Development
with Community Participation in India**

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EX-POST EVALUATION OF PROJECT PD 37/00 Rev.1 (F):
OPERATIONAL STRATEGY
FOR SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT
WITH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
IN INDIA

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

B-I	Bhopal-India Process
C&I	Criteria and Indicators
EA	Executing Agency
FORMACS	Forest Management Control System
FMU	Forest Management Unit
FRA	Forest Resource Accounting
GIS	Geographical Information System
GoI	Government of India
IFS	Indian Forest Service
IGNFA	India Gandhi National Forest Academy
IIFM	Indian Institute of Forest Management
ITTA	International Tropical Timber Agreement
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committees
LUCID	Local Unit Criteria and Indicator Development
MoEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests
NFTP	Non-Timber Forest Products
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NWPC	National Working Plan Code
SFD	Sustainable Forestry Development
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This ex-post evaluation report relates to project PD 037/00 Rev.1 (F) *Operational Strategy for Sustainable Forestry Development with community Participation in India*. The evaluation was based on terms of reference, which included an assessment of the role and contribution of the forest to SFM in India taking into account specific studies and research undertaken as part of the project as well as its impact and effectiveness including relative success or failure. The evaluation was also expected to include an assessment of the contribution of the project towards ITTO's Objective 2000 and the ITTO Action Plan, and to draw lessons that can be used to improve similar projects in the future.

Following a desk study of material related to the project the consultant visited Bhopal and spent a week with the project executing agency, the Indian Institute of Forest Management, further studying project related documents and meeting with stakeholders. The visit also included a field trip to one of the forest management units (Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary) in which the C&I developed by the project was field tested and documented. There the consultant also met with the local community.

The development objective of the project was to create conditions for achieving sustainable forestry development in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, which in turn would serve as a model to be replicated in the rest of the country. It was later expanded to cover four additional states. Specifically, the project was: 1) to develop and operate a functional system of C&I for sustainable forestry development with community participation and 2) to establish institutional capability for implementing C&I.

The total budget for the project amounted to US$ 1,226,978, of which the ITTO share was US$ 594,678 with the Government of India contributing the balance US$ 632,300.

The two specific objectives have been fulfilled thus contributing to the achievement of the development objective of creating conditions for achieving sustainable forest development in the country.

PD 37/00 Rev.1 (F) is one of the most efficiently run projects. It was originally intended to operate in eight Forestry Divisions (FMUs) within Madhya Pradesh but eventually extended to cover 16 FMUs in six different States. The expansion also required the extension of project from five to almost ten years. Also as part of the project new studies and manuals have been developed in a number of areas, which have added to the current knowledge on implementing C&I. All these had been accomplished without any increase in the original budget.

The project has played a critical role in developing criteria and indicators applicable to all major forest types in India, thus promoting eventual institutionalising of C&I. It has also enhanced awareness among officials, local communities and other stakeholders to the need for sustainable forest management and the role C&I can play in implementing and monitoring SFM.

In addition to the C&I developed and tested for natural forest management the project also has developed separate C&I to meet specific needs of forest plantations, non-timber forest products as well as wildlife management. Studies have also included a
Forest Resource Accounting System to capture forest products and services that are inadequately reflected in conventional national accounts, as well as a study of the relevance of C&I to certification.

However, countrywide application of C&I is yet to be incorporated in a government instruction into the National Working Plan Code (NWPC) which is basis for planning and execution of forest development in the country. Although some States have moved to apply the C&I following a preliminary instruction included in the NWPC of June 2004, its wider application has been delayed until a final directive is issued. A national committee has been setup to revise the National Working Plan Code 2004.

The success of the results achieved will depend on the application of C&I on the ground. For that to happen the ITTO focal point and the project executing agency (EA) need to work together to ensure the adoption of C&I into the NPWC and its implementation. To ensure momentum in implementation, the EA also may find useful to support the States that are currently willing to adopt C&I for management of forests in their own territories.

The most effective way to ensure implementation of results of a project is the direct involvement of the responsible agency from design stage to implementation. That should be undertaken during the evaluation of the project proposal.

Project PD 37/00 Rev.1 (F) could serve as a benchmark for efficiency in assessing future project proposals.

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of administering the provisions the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), particularly in the sustainable management of tropical forests, the ITTO's Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management, at its Forty-fifth Session, decided to conduct the ex-post evaluation of project *PD 037/00 Rev.1 (F) Operational Strategy for Sustainable Forestry Development with community Participation in India.*

The main purpose of the evaluation was to provide a concise diagnosis of the project related to criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management so as to point out the successful and unsuccessful outcomes, the reasons thereof, and the contribution of the project towards ITTO's Objective 2000 and the ITTO Action Plan, and to draw lessons that can be used to improve similar projects in the future.

2. EVALUATION SCOPE, FOCUS AND APPROACH

The scope and focus of the evaluation were to analyze and assess:

1. The overall role and contribution of the project in light of sectoral policies, development programmes, priorities and requirements to improve the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (SFM) in the countries concerned.
2. The current status of criteria and indicators (C&I) of SFM in the concerned countries, the effectiveness of the project's implementation and its effectiveness in promoting SFM.
3. The contributions of the specific studies in various C&I-related tools/manuals/guidelines prepared by the project as regards the monitoring of sustainable forest management in the concerned countries.
4. The results and potential impact of applied research conducted by the project (if any) and its contribution to the overall knowledge on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management in the country.
5. The impact of project activities on the improvements of forest management monitoring.
6. The effectiveness of dissemination of project results.
7. The overall post-project situation in the concerned country.
8. The unexpected effects and impacts, either harmful or beneficial, and the reasons for their occurrences.
9. The cost efficiency in the implementation of the project, including the technical, financial and managerial aspects.
10. Follow-up actions in order to enhance uptake of project results.
11. The project's relative success or failure, including a summary of the key lessons learnt; and the identification of any issues or problems that should be taken into account in designing and implementing similar projects in the future.

The mission was undertaken by consultant Don Wijewardana of New Zealand. The evaluation commenced with a desk review of documents provided by the ITTO secretariat. As part of the assessment the consultant visited India during the period 11 June to 15 June 2012. The visit allowed for more detailed review of project documents with the Executing Agency, the Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. The Executing Agency had also arranged a programme of meetings with relevant stakeholders including forest officials, academics, representatives of nongovernment organisations and the community. A field visit to one of the forest management units, Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary, in which the project was implemented, was also undertaken. Details of the programme and parties met are shown in Annex I.

3. PROJECT FACTS

Deforestation and forest degradation have been major problems faced by the forestry sector in India for several decades although in later years the rate of deforestation had tended to decline. Given the government objective of increasing forest and tree cover from 24 percent to 33 percent urgent action was needed to address the problem. This project, *Operational Strategy for Sustainable Forestry Development with Community Participation in India, PD 37/00 Rev.I (F),* stemmed from a pre-project supported by ITTO, which clearly indicated the urgent need for action to halt deforestation and forest degradation by implementing measures towards sustainable forest management.

The project fully complied with the objectives of ITTA 1994. Of the 14 objectives enshrined in ITTA 1994, six (c, d, f, i, j and l) directly deal with sustainability considerations. By institutionalizing C & I the project also complied with the goals of the ITTO's Libreville Action Plan, particularly goal 2, to improve the tropical timber resource base.

3.1 Objectives and outputs

The development objective of the project was to create conditions for, and thus help achieve, *Sustainable Forestry Development* in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, and by stages over the entire country. The two specific objectives of the project were

    i)   to develop and operationalise a functioning system of C&I for sustainable forestry development, with community participation through refinement of the Bhopal-India Process following the guidelines contained in the ITTO Criteria and Indicators; and

    ii)   to establish institutional capability for implementing C&I for sustainable forestry development taking into consideration the principles· contained in the ITTO manuals and other relevant documents.

The main outputs related to specific objective i) included the following:

    1.1.   A well defined C & I system for SFM/SFD in the State of M. P, and selected FMUs within the State.
    1.2.   A 10 year C & I Plan for the State of M. P.
    1.3.   Manuals/ Guidelines for operationalising C & I for SFM/ SFD at the State level and at the level of FMUs
    1.4.   Eight pilot areas established and C & I implemented therein.
    1.5.   A functional Expert Forest Management Information System.
    1.6.   Increased commitment at the national level for SFD.

Outputs related to specific objective ii) included:
    2.1.   Competent human resource.
    2.2.   Strengthened institutional structures.
    2.3.   Organised and functioning participatory arrangements for SFM/SFD.
    2.4.   An adequate system for forest valuation.
    2.5.   An operational plan for C & I related research and technology development
    2.6.   A system for monitoring & evaluation of implementation of C&I.

The rationale behind the project was that in achieving the development objective of sustainable forestry development in the country, it will be more effective to address the underlying causes of unsustainability by implementing clear and consistent C&I through community participation and capacity building, and by ensuring that such C&I are fully implemented.

The Council approved the project at its Twenty-ninth Session in November 2000 and full financing was pledged at the same Session. The total budget for the project amounted to US$ 1,226,978, of which the ITTO share was US$ 594,678 (Government of Japan (MoFA) US$ 584,678 and Government of Republic of Korea US$ 10,000) with the Government of India contributing the balance US$ 632,300.

Implementation commenced in June 2001 intended for completion in four years. But following a midterm review and deliberations in the committee further extensions were granted and all the earmarked project activities were concluded in 2010.

A mid-term evaluation was conducted in 2005, which recommended for further outreach of the activity in more areas to cover a wider range of representative forest types and communities. Based on the detailed work plan for year 2006-2007 and associated budget presented by the Executing Agency to the 37th Session of the Committee, a two-year extension, until December 2007, was granted. At the 39th Session of the Committee, a further 18-month extension, until June 2009, was approved in order to utilize unspent funds and to continue implementing most of the original activities in four additional States without changing the original objectives or outputs of the project. A final extension to the project, until August 2010, was granted to fully realise the extended project coverage at two new pilot sites in the States of Kerala and Sikkim without additional funds.

4. FINDINGS, LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 Findings

Developing C&I relevant to all main forest types in a large and geo-climatically diverse country such as India is a difficult task. To meet this challenge, the project has been able to test C&I in FMU's comprising 16 major

forest types right across the country during the extended period of operation. In the process it has also addressed a number of issues that have a major bearing on implementing C&I for sustainable management of natural forests in India. They included developing country-specific criteria and indicators for sustainable management of plantation forests, non-forest timber products and management of wildlife. Also included were the development of a new or improved and modified Forest Resource Accounting system and a study of developing site-specific standards (C&I) as a basis for certification of forests and NTFPs. Many of these issues have not been addressed comprehensively within any other C&I process.

PD 37/00 Rev.1 (F) is an example of one of the most efficiently run projects. It was originally intended to operate in eight Forestry Divisions within Madhya Pradesh but eventually extended to cover 16 FMUs in six different States. Also as part of the project additional studies and manuals have been developed in a number of areas such as C&I to cover non-timber forest products, a Forest Resource Accounting System to capture forest products and services that are inadequately reflected in national accounts, and a study of the relevance of C&I to certification have been undertaken. These studies have added to the current knowledge on implementing C&I. All these had been accomplished without any increase in the original budget.

The development objective of the project was to create conditions for, and thus help achieve, Sustainable Forestry Development in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India, and by stages over the entire country. The rationale behind the project was that in achieving the development objective it will be more effective to address the underlying causes for unsustainability by implementing clear and consistent C&I through community participation and capacity building, and by ensuring that such C&I for SFM/SFD are fully complied.

Decades of experience has shown that non-participatory approaches were ineffective and involved heavy financial and social cost as well as high risk of failure. The project, therefore, adopted a three-pronged strategy to achieve the objectives and outputs of the project in an efficient and effective manner by cooperation and empowering stakeholders:

i)   Develop, operationalise and implement appropriate C&I for SFM/SFD in   the different categories of FMUs (based on vegetational, functional, and legal/ownership classification), within an overall umbrella of national level C&I.

ii)   Strengthen institutions (including changes in attitudinal orientation) and institutional capability for implementing C&I for SFM/SFD.

iii)   Encourage and enable organised and informed people participation in implementing C&I for SFM/SFD.

In formulating the project it was expected that the project intervention would indirectly support better land use practices and improve environmental stability. It was anticipated that eventually it would also improve ecosystem integrity and resilience, biodiversity, vegetative health, wildlife conservation, agro-ecology, watershed hydrology, carbon sequestration and other habitat aspects.

While this potential remained, it has not been realized to a great extent, as wider implementation of the project is yet to take place.

4.2   Project Sustainability

There are number factors that tend to confirm that the ground has been laid to ensure sustainability of the project. They include:

a)   Availability of the documentation on C&I and training manuals, which have been tested and proved, as well as relevant experience gained in implementing criteria and indicators in 16 diverse FMUs.
b)   Potential obstacles to adopting C&I being already addressed. These include C&I for the sustainable management of plantation forests and wildlife protected areas, development of Forest Resource Accounting System to bring out the so far unrecognized or undervalued contributions of forests,
c)   A high level of awareness relating to SFM and the role of C&I created through the ten years of operation of the project.
d)   Availability of a centre of expertise at the IIFM for continued updating and promoting the C&I and provide necessary research and training.
e)   Forestry education in universities, Indian Forest Academy, Dehradun and a number of forestry

training schools adopting C&I into their curricula.

    f)   Recognition of the importance of SFM and C&I by the establishing SFM units within the Ministry of Environment and Forests and some of the State Forestry Departments, and the adoption of C&I by at least one State, Sikkim, as the basis for managing its forests.

However, the real validation of this tool comes only when the government agency responsible endorses it as a mandatory tool of forest management by including it in the National Working Plan Code. Also, implementing most of the initiatives will require resources and commitment from the Central government. Sustainability of the project remains in doubt until that happens.

4.3   The process of Project formulation and implementation

This project was based on a pre-project, also supported by ITTO, by which the Bhopal-India process was developed. Implementation of the current project in six States during its extended period of 2001-1010 involved State and national level stakeholders including NGOs. Local communities were involved through Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) at the FMU level and were involved in identifying the sites and for implementing the project. They were also involved in data collection on the Criteria and Indicators of the area after taking training and capacity building exercises. The project design was developed following consultations at FMU and community level. These consultations often resulted in adjusting the final C&I to reflect local conditions more appropriately. The result was the Local Unit Criteria and Indicators Development (LUCID). With a new awareness and ownership of the process communities often turned out to be enthusiastic supporters of SFM. However, the ownership of the project does not appear to have been shared to the same extent by some other stakeholders, such as the project State Forest Department.

The project was intended to address a fundamental problem facing India's forestry sector: inability to expand forest cover and combat forest degradation. While the development objective reflected the problem the specific objectives included a three-pronged strategy to help achieve it:

    i.   develop, operationalise and implement appropriate C&I for SFM;
    ii.   strengthen institutions, and
    iii.   encourage and enable people's participation in implementing it.

Several countries have moved away from coercive approaches, to rely on cooperation of stakeholders, in the management of forests. For India too, faced with inadequate growth in forest cover and persistent forest degradation, C&I offered a new and more effective means. At the same time, it required adaption to widely varying conditions of this vast country. Project design and expanded implementation seem to have addressed all such issues effectively.

There were number of risks associated with the proposal as identified in the project document. They included:

    i.   Support of Government agencies
    ii.   Availability of implementation capability
    iii.   Willing participation of community and
    iv.   iv.   Coordination between the stakeholders.

The project has tested and delivered C&I considered suitable for implementation in most States across the country. However, in the event, many of these risks have come to pass militating against the general adoption of C&I.

Implementation of C&I for sustainable management of India's forests needs political commitment and significant human and financial resource allocation. The absence of that support, evident in the delay in endorsing C&I into the National Working Plan Code, has been a fundamental obstacle to achieving countrywide implementation and gaining the downstream benefits. It is also reflected in the lack of coordination between some of the stakeholders.

It can be argued that these risks were clearly identified in the project proposal, and the proposal-appraisal-process should have recognized them to devise measures to avert such risks jeopardising the outcomes. It is worth noting, however, the project was approved 12 years ago when such considerations may not have gained the current level of concern.

4.4 The overall role and contribution of the project in light of sectoral policies, development programmes, priorities and requirements to improve the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (SFM) in India.

The project has played a critical role in developing criteria and indicators applicable to all 16 major forest type groups that exist in India, thus promoting eventual institutionalising of C&I in the country.

It has also enhanced awareness among central government and regional officials, local communities and other stakeholders to the need for sustainable forest management and the role C&I can play in implementing and monitoring SFM.

Project output is being used for the preparation of FMU level working plans, which are due for revision after the completion of one FMU management cycle i.e. ten years.

As a result of the project, GoI has commenced training sector players on SFM. However, the number of programmes is still limited and need to expand significantly to make an impact on the 28 State Forest Departments and eight Union Territories.

In addition to the C&I developed and tested for natural forest management the project also has developed:

- Separate C&I to meet specific needs of sustainable management of forest plantations, non-timber forest products as well as wildlife protected area management.

- A Forest Resource Accounting System has been developed based on the gap analysis of the conventional accounting system to capture forest products and services that are inadequately reflected in conventional national accounts. Such under-valuations have tended to contribute to disinvestment in forestry all over the world.

- A study of the relevance of C&I for forest certification undertaken by the project is being used by a national level forest certification committee to establish an accreditation system for forest certification in India.

Some States have moved to apply the C&I following a preliminary instruction issued in the NWPC in June 2004. A national committee has been constituted to revise the Code for the inclusion of the C&I framework. All these initiatives have helped improve C&I in India.

4.5 The current status of criteria and indicators (C&I) of SFM in India, the effectiveness of the project's implementation and its effectiveness in promoting SFM.

The project has generated a high level of awareness of C&I at all levels as a tool for bringing about SFM in the country. The government recognition of the significance of C&I is evident in that the GoI has requested the Executing Agency to expand the testing of C&I to additional states – Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, beside the six where the project was being implemented already.

The project has generated a keen interest from some of the states to implement C&I. For instance Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh have sought Executing Agency's support to expand capacity for implementation. Sikkim is also expanding the application of C&I to all four FMUs in the State.

C&I developed for natural forests do not fully capture the sustainability of a wide range of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) ranging from edible plant products to medicinal plants and other produce like honey. Vast majority of the population living close to the forest depends on them for livelihood. A focused set of C&I could form the basis of certification for NTFPs, which could enhance trade opportunities for them. A separate set of C&I for NTFPs developed by the project is being used by a government committee for further action.

Introduction of C&I to the curriculum of the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) and forest training institutions and universities and in some of the working plan revisions, establishment of SFM units in GoI and some of the States, sizable participation of the stakeholder groups in the workshops and training programs and the attitudinal changes generated among policy makers and stakeholders are some of the important indicators of the impact of the project in promoting SFM.

However more needs to be done in terms of creating awareness on the application of C&I framework, developing site-specific norms/benchmarks for each identified indicator at FMU level, and using it as monitoring tool. The task is made complex by the diverse geo-climatic conditions of this vast country.

What the project has achieved is remarkable in developing C&I framework and measuring sustainability of natural forests at FMU level with the assessing the trend with sustainability index method, testing them in different locations and producing the necessary documentation for training and implementation. Next crucial stage is to apply this tool in forest management by Central and State governments.

4.6   The contributions of the specific studies in various C&I-related tools/manuals/guidelines prepared by the project as regards the monitoring of sustainable forest management in India.

A major contribution of the project to enhance the effectiveness of C&I in sustainable forest management is undertaking studies to address a number of key concerns that have arisen in using them around the world. For instance it has been widely known that C&I produced for management of forests do not fully capture the sustainability of a wide range of non-timber forest products (NFTPs), ranging from edible plant products to medicinal plants and other produce such as honey. A set of C&I specifically addressing such products could form the basis of certification for NFTPs, which could enhance trade opportunities for them. A report produced on this by the project is being used by a national committee constituted by GoI to further this objective. Similar sets of C&I have also been developed to address the specific requirements of plantation forests, non-timber forest products and wildlife Protected Area management.

Conventional Forest Resource Accounting system (FRA) has tended to consistently underestimate the tangible and intangible benefits generated by forests. To address this, the project developed a new and modified FRA to help capture such gains more comprehensively. The Indian Statistics Office has accepted the study as a basis for reviewing the current national accounting system relating to forests. This is a major contribution in addressing a problem faced by most countries that has contributed to disinvestment in the sector.

Among the other documents published by the project for monitoring SFM in India, is a very useful practical guide graphically presented to promote SFM among the less literate communities. Such innovative tools have helped successfully promote C&I especially at the grassroots level.

4.7   The results and potential impact of applied research conducted by the project (if any) and its contribution to the overall knowledge on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management in the country.

Applied research undertaken as part of the project has contributed to enhanced knowledge and application of C&I. These were in addition to other research undertaken as part of the activities of the project. They included, among others:

- Use of modern tools and techniques to gathering comprehensive data related to indicators, e.g. remote sensing, GIS, etc. Establishment of GIS lab and hiring the GIS experts to assist in developing spatial database of the FMUs proved to be an efficient way of gathering the necessary information.

- Development of a procedure for assessing sustainability using temporal data through a software package FORMACS– a simple procedure to establish the direction of change in sustainable forest development.

- A literature review on C&I that produced a comprehensive annotated bibliography especially for researchers.

- Identification of R&D gaps to achieving SFM, e.g. those related to biological diversity, species and genetic diversity etc for further enhancing research approaches.

The studies conducted in States as part of the project for assessing the gaps in conventional system of forest resource accounting (FRA) provided a basis for the development of modified and better system of forest resource accounting taking into consideration the un-recorded tangible benefits of forestry. They highlighted the little effort needed in collection of the data and analysis to reflect the true contribution of the sector to the country's economy.

Research was also undertaken on the role of C&I in certification in particular on NTFPs. It has helped initiate action to progress the issue that could eventually improve the standard of living of forestry communities and help conserve the country's forest resource.

These research initiatives have not only helped the country to use advanced modern technology for implementing SFM but also made it efficient and effective in both using C&I and monitoring progress at micro and macro levels.

4.8   The impact of project activities on the improvements of forest management monitoring.

The impact of the project on improving forest management monitoring is seen in the tools it has produced in the form of an impressive range of manuals, guidelines and studies that have helped lay a solid foundation for implementation to take place. The project has also generated widespread awareness within the national and regional forestry administrations as well as other major stakeholders of the need for SFM and the usefulness of C&I in implementing and monitoring progress. The spread of training in SFM and the use of C&I into the programmes in all forestry schools and training institutions as well as universities and the establishment of SFM units within government forestry agencies have all been largely the result of the project. But all these are largely creating awareness relating to monitoring and providing the tools. That preparation will be of practical use when a government decision is made to adopt C&I in forest management of the country.

4.9   The effectiveness of dissemination of project results.

During the extended period of operation, the project has established very effective channels of communication. Foremost among these was the quarterly newsletter *'C&I India Update'* about 500 copies of which were distributed each time it was published.

In addition the project published a number of studies dealing with research into aspects of it which were also distributed widely and promoted through its regularly updated webpage (www.iifm.ac.in/sfmindia).

All forestry universities, including the IGNFA and forestry training institutions/ schools have included C&I and sustainable forest management as a subject at graduate/ postgraduate levels and skill enhancement and management development programs.

Training courses have also been held for forest guards, Range officers and for senior forest service officers serving project states.

The effectiveness in the dissemination of project results is also evident in some States adopting C&I in forest management (e.g. Sikkim), MoEF and some State Forest Departments establishing SFM units, and a number of forestry training organisations absorbing C&I into their programmes.

4.10   The overall post-project situation in India.

It was originally envisaged that the post project situation will include a number of achievements which were expected to result in increased commitment for SFM at National as well as State levels:

i)   A well defined system of C&I for SFM/SFD for the State of Madhya Pradesh and five other States, along with implementation plans and related guidelines for operationalising the system,

ii)   Identify the sixteen pilot areas (Forest Divisions) representing different management categories and implement C&I for SFM/SFD therein,

iii)   A web-based expert forest management information system with particular reference to the use of criteria and indicators, Forest Resource Accounting.

iv)   Systems/methods for forest valuation, research and technology development, monitoring and evaluation and arrangements for people's participation.

v)   Clearly laid out direction for continuing and completing the task of universal application of C&I and related strategies for SFM/SFD over the entire State of Madhya Pradesh, as well as over the rest of the country in successive phases, within a period of another 6 years.

vi)   Development of human resource (through fellowships, training, basic education and extension) that would be sufficient to expand the system of C&I for SFM/SFD to the entire State of Madhya Pradesh.

vii)   Institutional structures would have been strengthened to carry forward, facilitate, and manage the system in Madhya Pradesh, as well as in the Centre and other States.

viii)   The main constraints for the smooth functioning of the system would also have been removed

or reduced.

ix) It was expected that universal adoption of C&I for SFM/SFD will serve to promote investment and action for tropical forest resource development and its sustainable utilization.

It is evident that on its completion the project has realised the majority of these expectations. Items i) to iv) have clearly been achieved while v) seems to have been partially attained with the development of C&I applicable to the entire country. It was partly realized since it was unable to proceed to the stage of applying C&I within the entire Madhya Pradesh or the rest of the country. As the project Executing Agency notes in the completion report the project has achieved its academic output, but the institutionalization of SFM is the responsibility of State Forest Departments, which in turn relies on instructions from the respective State and Central government.

The achievement of the rest of the objectives, vi) to ix), have been held up largely due to the same reason. Although the development and testing of C&I had been successfully undertaken in 16 FMUs in six different States the rest of the same States as well as 22 other States are yet to be introduced to this sustainable management concept. Such a task also has significant resource implications, which can only be addressed by the central and State governments.

4.11 The unexpected effects and impacts, either harmful or beneficial, and the reasons for their occurrences.

The extent of involvement of stakeholders, in particular the central government and State Forestry agencies, in implementing the project has been below expectations. This, and the delay in revising the National Working Plan Code by the MoFE, have caused an unexpected setback in wider implementation of the project. The reason for this may be lack of understanding and close involvement of the Ministry from initial stages of project design to implementation.

The project has been beneficial for the communities involved in raising awareness and promoting empowerment. Contrary to the often held belief that the communities were only interested in meeting their wood needs rather than sustainably managing the resource, the project showed that indeed they were keen on sustainably managing the forest on which they depended on. The main reason for this was their increased awareness through project-related training and empowerment through the Joint Forest Management Committees.

There was no noticeable impact of the project on the forest and forest management as envisaged in the project proposal, since that required greater involvement of the government forestry administration that has the key responsibility for forest management. However, the State of Sikkim has adopted the C&I and is reported to be planning implementation in all its FMUs.

4.12 The cost efficiency in the implementation of the project, including the technical, financial and managerial aspects.

The project has been executed by IIFM that has sound technical and managerial capabilities as well as the infrastructure. That has allowed the project to be managed efficiently in its financial, technical and managerial aspects. Administration and accounting have been done as per norms and procedures required by the donor agency.

The consultant perused the audited accounts and minutes of steering committee meetings. There has been no suggestion that the project has been executed in other than efficient and appropriate manner.

This has proved to be one of the most efficiently run projects within the ITTO portfolio. The initial funding allocations were for States of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Later, on the basis of the recommendations of the Project Steering Committee, the project period was extended and project activities were spread to 4 more states within the same input allocations. Thus the project initially meant for 5 years was extended to 10 with expanded coverage. The expanded aims were met without any increase in he original budget.

Consequently, the allocations made under component sub-contracts were underutilized since the logistics support for which the provisions were made in the budget were provided free of the cost by the state forest departments. These savings were utilised with appropriate authority to expand project activities into other States. Also, given the extended period of implementation project inputs have been revised and re-appropriated from time to time on the basis of annual reviews without seeking additional resources.

One area that could have benefited from additional allocation of funding was in capacity building of JFMCs to assist in FMU level implementation of C&I.

4.13 Follow-up actions in order to enhance uptake of project results.

Inadequate growth in forest cover and forest degradation are major intractable problems confronting India's forestry sector. Measures to address these using command and control have proved to be ineffective. What has become clear in many parts of the world in recent years is that criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management is one important tool that can be used to address the problem effectively with the participation and empowerment of stakeholders.

The project has demonstrated through successful testing in a representative number of FMUs that C&I can be fruitfully utilized to progress SFM in India taking into account the diverse conditions. But the uptake of C&I by the country's forestry administration has been slow. It has been suggested that a reason for the delay is a perceived concern among foresters that they could be held personally responsible if indicators do not reflect progress in SFM in forests within their responsibility. But this is an unfounded concern since non-progress could be attributed to so many factors beyond the control of those responsible for forest management. Such fears, perceived or real, need to be unequivocally dispelled so that such a valuable tool in SFM is not discarded along with such concerns. The most important step to enhance the uptake of project results is to ensure mandatory use of C&I is incorporate in the National Working Plan Code with adequate resourcing to facilitate training and implementation.

The establishment of a SFM unit at the MoEF as well as a number of State Forestry Departments is a major step that reflects government commitment to sustainability.

The project has produced a number of very useful guides and manuals to help train stakeholders in implementing C&I. Among them is a very practical guide illustrated with attractive graphics to promote SFM among the less-educated. The role the community plays is critical to the success of moves towards SFM. As such every effort to muster their cooperation is laudable. To help further, this publication may need to be complemented with translations into languages most commonly used in different parts of the country.

As the application of C&I gains ground it would be worthwhile to consider publishing a country report on SFM on an annual basis which will allow for assessment of national progress in SFM. A similar document is being published by the FAO documenting global progress in sustainable forest management.

To keep C&I relevant and current it is important emerging forestry issues are also captured as and when they arise. Currently the list includes climate change related issues such as REDD+ readiness, as well as bio-diversity mapping/ documentation and in situ and ex situ conservation of ecologically/ locally important plant species.

4.14 The project's relative success or failure, including a summary of the key lessons learnt; and the identification of any issues or problems that should be taken into account in designing and implementing similar projects in the future.

This project is a shining example of success by a dedicated project team to achieve results beyond those originally envisaged, including addressing new issues that emerged during the implementation process. The long period of operation of nearly ten years has allowed the project team to understand the effect of issues that have major impacts on the project objectives and address them. Such issues are often disregarded due to various reasons including limited time frames or lack of resources. Also, during the period of operation, project coverage expanded beyond the two original States to include four additional ones. All these, it has achieved at no extra cost beyond the original budget.

The project also has produced valuable tools the international community could use in implementing SFM. They include FRA, C&I for NTFP and wildlife, FORMACS, promotion by illustrations/pictures, national language (Hindi) etc.

These studies, field tests, training and promotion have no doubt created the appropriate environment as well as the infrastructure to facilitate implementation nation-wide. However, the wider application of C&I is yet to be realized as the National Working Plan Code has not endorsed the final product yet for general application by State forestry departments. This is a vital step and there is concern that a reason for this could be fears among foresters that they could be held personally responsible for non- achievement. Such perceived fears need to be dispelled unequivocally to ensure progress.

A critical issue common to the two projects evaluated is that there is no commitment by authorities to implement the findings, however useful they are for achieving sustainable management of the country's forests. In the event they are not taken up it is a waste of valuable resources that could have been more fruitfully utilized elsewhere. In the future designing of similar projects, it may be worthwhile obtaining a commitment from authorities about the implementation of findings of such projects.

One problem most executing agencies face is the difficulty of bringing authorities responsible for implementing project findings to follow up on them. The process of 'selling' outcomes to authorities should commence well before project completion: it should begin at the project design stage through the involvement of responsible government agencies and then carrying them through the entire process of implementation. That way their ownership of the project is established. It would be a good idea for the Project Evaluation Expert Panel to ensure such involvement in all relevant project proposals.

5.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Conclusions

Inadequate growth in forest cover and forest degradation are two major problems that India had been grappling with for decades. The current forest policy adopted in 1988 has not been able to address the issues satisfactorily. In addition, since then global concern on dwindling forest cover has grown, leading to a series of joint actions generated through the Earth Summit of 1992. Also, new elements, such as REDD+ and other climate change related issues have emerged which have major implications for forest management. Within India too, some of the legislation enacted since the last policy statement, e.g. Biodiversity Act of 2002 and Forest Rights Act of 2006 seem to conflict, with significant impact on SFM due to the potential contradictions between the concepts of conservation and development that need to be carefully managed.

With a new interest in C&I worldwide, the project was timely as it offered a fresh prospect for solving these problems, not through government directives but with cooperation and empowerment of stakeholders, in particular the local communities. It also provided the opportunity for the government to regain leadership in the management of country's forests.

The project is a shining example of an executing agency prudently managing a project using limited resources to gain benefit beyond those originally planned. It involved both expanding geographically from two States to six with 16 different major forest type groups, producing studies and manuals to capture areas such as development of software on determining trends of indicators (FORMACS), developing a new or modified Forest Resource Accounting system to capture forest values that are currently not adequately reflected in national accounts, developing C&I for sustainable management of plantation forests, non-timber forest products as well as wildlife protected areas management, producing national language (Hindi), graphically illustrated manuals to promote C&I among the less literate, and an analysis of the role of C&I in forest certification. Many of these are useful not only for India but the entire global community using C&I for sustainable forest management.

These studies, field tests, training and promotions have no doubt created the infrastructure, as well as the appropriate environment, to facilitate implementation of C&I nation-wide. C&I is now part of the curriculum of universities, the National Forest Academy (IGNFA) and forest training institutions, Colleges, and used in the revision of some of the FMU level working plans. SFM units have been established in MoEF and some of the State forestry departments. At least one State, Sikkim, is in the process of implementing C&I through Working Plan. These are all significant developments that augur well for applying criteria and indicators countrywide. However, its wider application is yet to be realized, as the National Working Plan Code, currently under revision, has not endorsed the final product i.e. national set of C&I for sustainable management of forests and forest products so far, for application by State forestry departments. Until that happens no quantifiable impact of the project can be expected on the ground.

Our limited interaction with the grassroots level JFMC members suggests the local community is not the villain of the piece in forest loss and degradation as generally perceived. They have enormous enthusiasm and support for sustainable forest management and should be involved in implementing and monitoring progress in SFM. But their interest needs to be nurtured through education and training to achieve the desired result.

5.2   Recommendations

5.2.1 Recommendations to ITTO/Expert Panel

- At a time when the ITTO is faced with a critical shortage of resources to support SFM initiatives of member countries, the management of Project PD 37/00 Rev.1(F) shows how an executing agency could prudently run a vastly expanded project at no extra cost to the donor. It could serve as a benchmark in assessing future project proposals.

- A very valuable contribution of the project is the publication of a number of studies and manuals that help implement C&I, as well as address aspects that have not been adequately covered within any other C&I process. Among them are Forest Resource Accounting System that helps to capture values of forests that are currently excluded in national accounting systems, C&I specifically addressing plantation forests, non-timber forest products and management of wildlife, a study on the role of C&I in certification, a computer-based procedure, Forest Management Control System (FORMACS), to determine the direction of change in indicators, way to compare progress in different indicators, and an illustrated manual aimed at introducing C&I to less literate. They have relevance for all members and it is worth considering drawing on these documents when updating and promoting C&I.

- Resources committed to the project have resulted in the production of manuals, studies and other promotional material of a high standard, which would comprehensively meet the needs of operationalising C&I in the two countries. However, in both cases there is some doubt as to when or whether the government responsible for implementing the findings will follow suit. If that does not happen the entire effort would end up as a mere academic exercise. To avoid such situations measures may need to be put in place when assessing project proposals. An effective way to address it may be to make certain of the direct involvement of responsible government agencies in project design and execution to ensure their ownership of the outcomes. (It is to be noted, however, that the project PD 37/00 Rev.1(F) had a senior member of the MoEF in the Steering Committee). It may also involve seeking a commitment to implement findings. But this may not always be possible.

5.2.2 Recommendations to Executing Agency/country focal point

- Much progress has been made in introducing C&I into the Indian forestry scene with the establishment of SFM units at MoEF and some of the State Forestry Departments and number of universities, and the National Forest Academy and several training schools introducing C&I into their awareness skill development programmes. The next step with regard to operationalising the C&I is to ensure it is embodied in the National Working Plan Code and a national committee has been established for this purpose. The delay may be due to apparent concerns or could be a simple administrative glitch. In any event, India's ITTO focal point, with the support of IIFM, needs to take on the responsibility to pursue this without delay.

- Implementing C&I offers a great opportunity for the forestry sector suffering from inadequate increase in forest cover and forest degradation. Inaction, or delay in action, will only exacerbate the problems in the background of mounting population pressure. The MoEF and IIFM have complementary roles to play in implementing C&I. While IIFM can provide the expertise and the technical support the Ministry has the responsibility to administer wider implementation. The two organizations need to work together to find ways for speedy implementation of C&I countrywide.

- It is evident that some State governments are interested in pursuing C&I as the basis of their forest management, even though a formal final instruction has not been issued by the central government (e.g. Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh?). The IIFM as the Executing Agency should assist these States to demonstrate practical application of the instrument as well as to keep the interest alive until a government directive is issued.

- Training local communities in the use of criteria and indicators is generally more difficult given their level of education and the multiplicity of regional languages. The project has cleverly designed manuals illustrated with graphics, which is a major advance in this respect. Translations to local languages as necessary needs to be undertaken as an integral part of promoting C&I in different States.

- It would also be useful to plan for a national publication that collates data on the application of C&I

by different States. This will help build a national picture of progress in implementing SFM.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ANNEX 1:

EX-POST EVALUATION OF PROJECT PD 37/00 Rev.1 (F)
MEETINGS AND VISITS BY CONSULTANT
DON WIJEWARDANA

DATE	TIME	DETAILS OF ENGAGEMENT	VENUE
10 June 2012	22:30	Arrives in Bhopal. Met by Dr Dharmendra Dugaya	
11 June 2012	10:00	Meeting with Prof. P.C.Kotwal, Asst. Prof. Dr M.D.Omprakash (Project Coordinator), Dr Dharmenda Dugaya.	Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM).
	17:00	Meeting with Dr Ravindra Saxena, Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests M.P., and Dr M.D.Omprakash.	M.P. Forest Department
12 June 2012	09:30	Meeting with Prof. P.C.Kotwal, Asst. Prof. Dr M.D.Omprakash	IIFM
	14:30	Meeting with Associate Prof. Prashant Jadhar, IFS IIFM Telephone discussion with Dr Ram Prasad, Chairperson, National Task Team.	IIFM
	16:00		
13 June 2012	09:00	Leave for Sanchi and Ratapani FMU with Prof. P.C.Kotwal and Dr M.D.Omprakash.	Sanchi and Ratapani FMU.
	1500	Discussions with JFMC members Kamlesh Parwar, Devi Singh, Mukesh Uika and others.	
	18:00	Drafting preliminary conclusions for meeting with stakeholders	Hotel Nisarga
14 June 2012	10:00	Meeting on preliminary conclusions. Chaired by Dr M.D.Omprakash. Present: Prof. P.C.Kotwal, Prof. A.K.Dharni, Associate Prof. Prashant Jadhar, Abhaya Kumar Patil, Manmohan Yadev, Prof. Capt. Anil Khare. Meeting with Dr M.D.Omprakash, Project Coordinator filling gaps in data	IIFM Conference Room
	14:30		IIFM
15 June 2012	10:00	Meeting with Dr M.D.Omprakash, following up on information gaps.	IIFM
	14:00	Meeting with Dr Manoj K Singh, International Centre for Community Forestry and IIFM.	IIFM
16 June 2012	08:00	Consultant leaves Bhopal.	

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