

ITTO begins a process for developing capacity in tropical countries for the auditing the ITTO criteria & indicators

by Hanna Nikinmaa and Jussi Lounasvuori

*Indufor Oy, Töölönkatu 11 A
FIN-00100 Helsinki, Finland
Fax 358-9-135 2552
indufor@indufor.fi
www.indufor.fi*

THE development of auditing systems for the *ITTO Criteria and indicators for sustainable management of natural tropical forests* (C&I) and the training of auditors can provide several benefits to tropical forestry. They help bring the C&I to the level of practical forest management planning, implementation and monitoring and encourage the development of feasible national/regional level adaptations of the requirements of sustainable forest management (SFM). In addition, auditing provides credible information on ecological, social and economic aspects of forest management, giving feedback for forest management unit (FMU)-level planning and implementation as well as to national-level reporting.

The development of auditing capacity at national and regional levels is therefore essential. With this in mind, ITTO commissioned Indufor Oy to assist in developing a training package and in conducting three training courses (one each in English, French and Spanish) on auditing systems for the ITTO C&I. ITTO also contracted consultants at the regional level to assist in conducting the courses, including from Sustainable Ecosystems International Corporation in the Philippines, STCP Engenharia de Projetos Ltda in Brazil, and CRESA Forêt-Bois in Cameroon.

The implementation of the activity took place in seven phases: 1) development of training material; 2) testing of the material and training arrangements in a pilot course in Asia (in English); 3) revision of training material; 4) translation of training material into Spanish and French; 5) training course in Brazil (in Spanish); 6) training course in Cameroon (in French); and 7) finalisation of training package (September 2003).

Training package

The training package comprises a comprehensive set of transparencies (in PowerPoint format), and instructions and materials for workshop instructors and participants. Documents supplied included the ITTO C&I, the *Reporting format for the ITTO C&I at the forest management unit level*, and the *Framework for an auditing system for ITTO's C&I*. The first set of materials was tested in a training course held in Surigao City, the Philippines on 24–28 February 2003 and a modified version was used in the second (28 April–2 May 2003 in São José do Rio Claro, Mato Grosso, Brazil) and third (Kribi, Cameroon, 8–12 September 2003) courses. The final English and Spanish packages are practically identical, whereas in the French version the *ATO/ITTO Principles, criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of natural African forests* (PCI) were used instead of the ITTO C&I as audit requirements.

Courses

A total of 53 mostly forestry professionals from 24 countries participated in the three courses; most had been involved in development initiatives related to SFM and had some familiarity with C&I and certification. Eighty-eight percent of trainees were from government agencies,

8% from the private sector and 4% from research and education institutions. This heavily weighted breakdown is explained by the fact that participants were nominated by governments; greater participation of the private and research/educational sectors should be encouraged in the future.

The training courses were designed to mimic the real-life auditing process in an FMU. The FMUs hosting the courses were: the Surigao Development Corporation concession area in Surigao del Sur, the Philippines; Guavirá Industrial e Agroflorestal Ltda (a company-owned forest) in Mato Grosso, Brazil; and the MMG Sarl concession in Lokoundjé-Nyong near Kribi, Cameroon. The training involved the following steps:

- introduction to the audit process within the ITTO C&I context;
- presentation of the pilot FMU hosting the audit exercise;
- planning of the audit and lists of verification indicators to be audited;
- collection of the audit evidence in the selected FMU through interviews, document review and field observations;
- evaluation of the audit evidence; and
- presentation of the audit results.

Participants worked in two groups during the first two courses and three smaller groups (4–5 members in each) during the third.

In general, course participants were highly motivated to study the auditing systems and techniques within the framework of the ITTO C&I. The approach of voluntary auditing was new to many and they felt it could be adapted to the monitoring practices of their own organisations. Implementing an auditing system was also seen as a useful tool for encouraging the implementation of C&I for SFM by different organisations, as it obliges them to find practical ways of applying each criterion and indicator in order to provide a basis for performance-monitoring. The participants expressed a hope that the capacity-building approach would continue within the ITTO framework and that there would be improved contact between participating organisations at the regional level.

Participants were generally satisfied with the course material and presentations. The group work was particularly appreciated, although the schedule was considered too tight. Participants also pointed out that the length of the course did not allow a thorough audit of an FMU.

Conclusions

C&I: producer countries and professionals are highly appreciative of the initiatives that ITTO has undertaken in the development of C&I and the organisation of regional seminars, workshops and training courses. However, the

procedures for the implementation of the c&i in practical forest management are not yet adequately defined. Each country has to develop appropriate procedures for implementing the c&i and ITTO is supporting these processes through regional cooperation and training. Many participants wished for better coordination between ITTO's initiatives towards SFM and the rules and regulations of national forest administrations. This could be accomplished by closer contacts with the ministries and government officials responsible for the implementation of national forest policies. The appointment of the ITTO regional officers (one for Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Brazil, and another for Africa, based in Gabon) was highly appreciated by participants and seen as a step towards the more efficient implementation of the c&i.

Auditing systems: the approach of the training courses was to concentrate on auditing systems and techniques rather than certification. This was well justified because it allowed the participants to understand the potential of an auditing system to help the internal development of management in an FMU and the promotion of SFM at local or national levels, in addition to its role in second- or third-party auditing.

The development of certification arrangements should be taken as a separate initiative when adequate procedures for the implementation and monitoring of SFM have already been put in place. However, the situation varies between countries and regions and participants from Asia and Latin America expressed the need for feasible certification arrangements in the near future. The ITTO c&i are well adapted to the collection of information and the identification of trends on the performance of forest management at the FMU level, but they are general and should not be seen as certification requirements. Most ITTO producing member countries are still in a very initial stage regarding certification arrangements and the first task should be the development of standards at a national or regional level.

Both the ITTO c&i and ATO/ITTO PCI (in the ten African member countries) provide an appropriate framework for the development of certification standards. The participants were generally not fully familiar with the ITTO c&i or ATO/ITTO PCI before the training course; such training courses therefore play an important role in developing an understanding among professionals of auditing practice and the potential benefits of implementing the c&i. Implementation guidelines approved by member countries for the ITTO c&i and the ATO/ITTO PCI could also improve this understanding.

Capacity-building in auditing: participants in each course were highly motivated and most said they could apply the learned techniques directly in their current work. However, many considered it difficult to disseminate the know-how or introduce changes in their monitoring systems efficiently without the political support of the ministries in charge of

forest administration. Closer cooperation between ITTO and national ministries was called for, either directly or through the recently appointed ITTO regional officers. The training courses were considered an excellent step for capacity-building in the implementation and auditing of SFM, but further training on the implementation of c&i and auditing would be required (with the continued assistance of ITTO).

It is clear that the assessment of SFM requires excellent knowledge of local forestry, ecology, socioeconomic structures and cultures and that the auditing of it cannot be fully credible without an adequate network of local auditors. Measures should be taken to strengthen the establishment of local/regional auditing services in the near future.

Recommendations for ITTO

Based on the outcomes of the training activities, the project made the following recommendations to ITTO:

- develop practical implementation guidelines to help incorporate the c&i into forest management planning and monitoring in public and private-sector organisations;
- develop further training in cooperation with regional/national institutions on the implementation of the ITTO c&i and the training of forest auditors;
- conduct three more regional courses on the auditing of the ITTO c&i to establish a critical mass of trained trainers in each country and to integrate the auditing of SFM in existing national forestry curricula and training programs;
- assist in building capacity on a continuous or programmatic basis rather than through short projects. ITTO should aim to develop a network of experts with a thorough understanding of regional/local conditions in forest management as well as competence in the implementation of c&i and the auditing of these;
- ensure that ministries in charge of forest administration be informed of and understand the potential benefits related to the implementation of the c&i and auditing systems; and
- maintain and expand its direct links with private-sector organisations by providing further training to forest managers on ITTO c&i implementation and auditing.

The auditing training packages will be available on the ITTO website (www.itto.or.jp) early in 2004.