

Africa's process for implementing PC&I

A three-phase ITTO project to promote principles, criteria and indicators in African forests has had a long-term impact on the forest sectors of many African countries

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Testing: Field verification of the PC&I in Gabon. Photo: O. Ahimin

ITTO project PD 124 Rev. 2 (M) “Promotion of sustainable management of African forests” commenced in August 2003 and is now in its final phase. The project was originally intended to be implemented together with the African Timber Organization (ATO), a regional body with which ITTO collaborated in 2000–2001 to develop a regional set of principles, criteria and indicators (PC&I) using the ITTO C&I as an overarching framework. With the demise of ATO and its operational activities, the project has been directly implemented by ITTO since 2012. The project’s development objective is to promote the sustainable management of African forests through the application and implementation of the *ATO/ITTO principles, criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African natural tropical forests* (ATO & ITTO 2003, hereafter referred to as the ATO/ITTO PC&I), with the support and participation of all stakeholder groups. This article reports on the major results achieved by the project.

Major project outcomes

Development of PC&I

All ten member countries participating since the project’s inception now have sets of PC&I derived from the ATO/ITTO PC&I. Seven have PC&I validated for natural forests, one has PC&I validated for forest plantations, and two have PC&I validated for both natural forests and forest plantations. The process of developing PC&I involved the following steps.

Preliminary survey of stakeholders. Prior to embarking on the national-level development of PC&I for use in evaluating sustainable forest management (SFM), countrywide surveys were conducted with a view to identifying SFM stakeholders. Groups considered to be

Key aspects of ITTO project PD 124 Rev. 2 (M)

Development objective:

Promote sustainable management of African forests through the application and implementation of the ATO/ITTO PC&I, with the support and participation of all stakeholder groups.

Specific objectives:

Establish key elements of an adequate capacity to implement the ATO/ITTO PC&I at the national level in the African member countries of ITTO.

Establish key elements of an adequate capacity for effective regional-level cooperation through the ATO to support individual member countries in implementing ATO/ITTO PC&I.

Complex nature of project:

10 countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo (new countries under ITTA 2006 since 2013: Benin, Mali, Mozambique)

10 expected outputs; 78 activities

Total budget: US\$4 184 678

The gradual mobilization of financing has meant that the project has been implemented in three phases:

Phase 1: August 2003–June 2007

Phase 2: January 2008–December 2010

Phase 3: April 2011–2016 (2015–16 work pending final tranche of funds).

stakeholders were legal or physical entities using forests or forest products and entities affected by such use. A clear description of actions and impacts was established for each of the identified stakeholders.

Establishment of multi-stakeholder forums. The multi-stakeholder forums comprise representatives of forest management stakeholders at the national level. They may include observers who can be physical or legal

entities. The multi-stakeholder forums concept is based on a decentralization model designed to foster multi-stakeholder dialogues at both the national and local levels. Multi-stakeholder forums are organized in chapters or chambers comprising forest stakeholders with similar types of activity or areas of interest. They may be non-official groups—i.e. established only to formulate standards—or official groups. Official groups may take the form of:

- an independent entity—i.e. be a non-governmental organization or association governed according to articles of association and rules of procedure duly approved by a relevant national-level authority; or
- an entity established by order or decree of the institution in charge of forest management or a higher body.

Drafting the first PC&I draft document. In each participating country in which a multi-stakeholder forum had been established, an expert (the “senior expert”) with broad experience in forest management-related fields was recruited at the national level to analyze the ATO/ITTO PC&I framework and evaluate its suitability for national conditions. The senior expert’s report constituted the first PC&I draft document for that country.

Review by experts and production of the second PC&I draft document. In each country, the first PC&I draft document produced by the senior expert was reviewed by other experts specializing in the following specific fields:

- agroforestry and forest management (Principle II);
- conservation, ecology and biodiversity (Principle III); and
- economic, social and cultural aspects in relation to local populations and forest workers (Principle IV).

Each specialist expert reviewed the criteria, indicators and sub-indicators of the relevant principle. Similarly to the senior expert, the main task of the specialist experts was to verify all these elements on the basis of clarity, relevance and adaptability to national conditions and to ascertain their appropriateness for evaluating accurately the management-related aspects of forest ecosystems and social systems.

The document resulting from the experts’ review was submitted to multi-stakeholder forum members for evaluation and the production of the second PC&I draft document.

Public consultation and production of the third PC&I draft document. The second PC&I draft document was forwarded to all stakeholders for comment. Not all stakeholders participated in the meetings of the multi-stakeholder forums, but all had a right to express their views on the PC&I. The document was sent in various formats (hard and electronic) and by various means (post, direct mail, email, etc.).

The duration of public consultation was 60 calendar days or more. If needed, experts and multi-stakeholder forum members were available to provide key stakeholders with additional information to enhance document evaluation and input.

Following public consultation, experts and multi-stakeholder forum members reviewed the various inputs of stakeholders and incorporated those they considered relevant. The document resulting from the public consultation constituted the third PC&I draft document.

Field-testing and fourth PC&I draft document. The diverse inputs that led to the production of the first to third PC&I draft documents were generally of a theoretical nature based on the actual or assumed experiences of experts and other stakeholders. To determine whether the draft PC&I could be applied in the field, field-testing was necessary; indicators and sub-indicators could be modified, reformulated, added or deleted as a result of the testing. Sites were selected for testing the PC&I that were representative of the diversity of the country’s forest ecosystems and management and use types and of the variety of social and cultural systems. An international consultant was recruited to review the PC&I draft document and ascertain its compliance with relevant international guidelines, and to undertake the field-testing with the support of national experts. The field-testing stage resulted in the production of the fourth PC&I draft document.

National validation workshop and production of final PC&I document. The fourth PC&I draft document was submitted to all stakeholders at national workshops attended by most of the stakeholders interested or involved in the process. National and international consultants explained the process that had led to document production, focusing on the main modifications and why they were made. Stakeholders appraised the documents at national workshops and validated them if no major objection or opposition was raised. The documents resulting from the workshops were then considered final; they were printed for dissemination among stakeholders.

Use of PC&I

Various activities initiated under the project, at both the national and regional levels, promoted the use of the national-level PC&I with the aim of increasing the implementation of SFM in the field.

National forestry auditors training. Under the project, training for national-level forest auditors was conducted regionally using the ATO/ITTO PC&I as the reference framework. Three training sessions of trainers were organized—two for French-speaking countries and one for English-speaking countries. A total of 65 trainers were trained in the ten member countries.

National training sessions were conducted to follow up the regional-level training. In total, 240 auditors were trained in these national training sessions, covering all aspects of assessing forest management. The project strategy for its training component was to ensure that each participating country had the necessary skills for training forest auditors; this type of training continues to be in high demand among stakeholders.

Production of national reports on progress towards SFM. Among other things, the PC&I are designed for use in the production of national reports on progress towards SFM on the basis of Principle 1 (“sustainable forest utilization and maintenance of the multiple functions of forests are a high political priority”). Such reports prepared by participating countries allowed an evaluation of the legal, regulatory, institutional and operational provisions for promoting SFM at the national level.

The evaluation focused on:

- national objectives, the legal and regulatory framework, and action plans for realizing national objectives;
- the existing institutional framework for realizing SFM-related objectives;
- the (human and equipment) means and resources available for SFM implementation;
- the economic and tax policies in place for ensuring the sustainability of forest enterprises; and
- the control, monitoring and evaluation measures in place for management operations after the formulation of sustainable management documents and their application in the field.

Based on the country evaluations, reforms were undertaken (or are planned) where they were found to be necessary to meet the requirements of Principle 1.

Auditing implementation of management plans. Field evaluations of selected forest concessions or other forest management regimes were conducted in three of the ten participating countries during the first stage of the project’s final phase. Teams of auditors were established for conducting evaluations in the field; a sample result for a concessionaire in Gabon is shown in Table 1.

For each principle, auditors evaluated the relevant indicators and sub-indicators in the field. Following a review of the documents provided by managers, interviews with the staff, and field inspections, auditors evaluated the management performance for each indicator and sub-indicator, with three possible grades: “complete compliance”, “non-compliance” or “partial compliance”. The first audits constitute a baseline study; subsequent audits, to be undertaken on a yearly basis and continuing under the currently ongoing stage of the project, evaluate the

Table 1: Example of audit results for a concessionaire in Gabon

Principle 2: The forest management unit, designated for whatever form of land use, is sustainably managed with a view to supplying goods and services			
Criterion 2.1: Forest management complies with the legislation in force, and also with all the international treaties ratified by Gabon	NC	PC	C
Indicator 2.1.1: Forest management respects all local and national laws, and meets all administrative requirements	Sub-indicator 2.1.1.1: Existence of written notification of management plan approval by the ministry in charge to the concession operator		X
	Sub-indicator 2.1.1.2: Existence of terms of reference for forest logging in CFADs (i.e. forest concessions)	X	
	Sub-indicator 2.1.1.3: Existence of record of contract terms between operator and local populations	X	
Indicator 2.1.2: All taxes, royalties and other fiscal payments established by law are paid	X		
Indicator 2.1.3: Management operations are compliant with existing national technical standards	Sub-indicator 2.1.3.1: Inventory procedure is compliant with established standards		X
	Sub-indicator 2.1.3.2: Mapping is compliant with technical standards		X
	Sub-indicator 2.1.3.3: Management plan formulation is compliant with existing regulations		X
	Sub-indicator 2.1.3.4: Planned techniques for reduced impact logging are compliant with the national technical manual		X

NC = non-compliance; PC = partial compliance; C = compliance

extent to which non-compliance has been remedied and the corrective actions prescribed by the auditors have been implemented.

Table 2 shows the levels of compliance in audited companies, by principle and country. Three companies in Gabon have been subject to a second audit. These audits using the PC&I are much appreciated in the countries where they have been carried out to date. The project will carry out follow-up audits in these countries in the current stage of the project and extend this work to more countries.

Project impacts on policies, laws and management, and trade processes

The project has had the following impacts on policies, laws and the trade:

- National-level PC&I are being used by forest administrations in participating countries through the development of SFM-related manuals and standards.
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification audit firms now consider the ATO/ITTO PC&I to be the regional reference framework for SFM and are using them in the development of the FSC reference framework for certification audit missions.

Table 2: Results of forest evaluations, by site and principle

		Level of compliance at each site (%)														
		Cameroon			Côte d'Ivoire				Gabon							
		1	2	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I	P2	42	63	35	57	68	65	66	60	53	30	45	18	32	34	55
	P3	41	75	40	84	70	67	78	49	58	27	53	21	50	65	79
	P4	48	93	23	73	43	32	55	33	78	22	48	49	40	22	42
	Average	44	77	33	71	60	55	66	47	63	26	49	29	41	40	59
II	P2									56	33	54				
	P3									77	37	59				
	P4									47	18	67				
	Average									60	29	60				

Note: P2 = Principle 2; P3 = Principle 3; P4 = Principle 4; I = first audit; II = second audit.

- The ATO/ITTO PC&I served as the basis for developing the subregional FSC standards in the Congo Basin, which were validated in 2012.
- Most of the legality grids¹ used in countries where voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) have been concluded with the European Union are based on Principle 1 of the ATO/ITTO PC&I.
- The development of national-level PC&I has also helped prepare countries for the forest law enforcement, governance and trade process in those countries in which VPAs have been agreed.
- The ATO/ITTO PC&I have been integrated into the monitoring/evaluation systems of initiatives taken towards the independent monitoring of forest logging legality certification (e.g. the Forest Concession Monitoring System for Central Africa and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)–TRAFFIC Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network).
- The partnership between the project and the WWF Central Africa Regional Programme Office has contributed significantly to project implementation in the five countries of Central Africa.
- Training courses in forest management auditing based on the ATO/ITTO PC&I have raised considerable enthusiasm and interest; the demand for such training courses is very high among forest stakeholders.
- Trained personnel are now part of an African pool of auditors who are being recruited by the FSC and auditing companies dealing with chain-of-custody certification and who are responsible for certifying legality compliance.
- Audits based on the ATO/ITTO PC&I constitute an alternative option for companies (small, medium-sized and large), certified or not, and for governments, in measuring progress towards SFM.
- Dialogue between forestry administrations and other stakeholders is now more productive in most of the participating countries as a result of the goodwill and working methods generated by the national multi-stakeholder forums established under the project.
- Requests for forestry auditing have increased among private operators and administrations.
- The concept of pan-African certification is being revived based on the PC&I now in place in participating countries.
- Countries that recently joined ITTO (Benin, Mali and Mozambique) have expressed strong interest in benefiting from project activities after observing its impacts on the management of the forest sector in neighbouring countries.

Outlook

The planned duration of the project was six years, but it has been extended due to difficulties related to the mobilization of finance and other reasons, including instability in several of the target countries over the project's life. It has now reached its penultimate stage of implementation. As of January 2014, over 87% of the total planned financing (US\$4 184 678) had been mobilized, and project objectives have been realized to the same extent. Another US\$500 000 is required to complete all project activities in participating countries and to establish an institutional framework at the regional level for ensuring coordination and monitoring of SFM-related actions across the participating countries.

Reference

ATO & ITTO 2003. *ATO/ITTO principles, criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African natural tropical forests*. Policy Development Series No. 14. ITTO, Yokohama, Japan.

¹ A legality grid is a matrix that shows the regulatory references, indicators and verifiers of timber legality within the context of a VPA.