

# Promoting SFM in Africa

**An ITTO project develops C&I and manuals for the management of African tropical forests**

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**By the book:** Auditing conformity with ATO/ITTO PCI in Ghana. *Photo: M. Mbolo (University of Yaoundé)*

CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICAN countries are globally important suppliers of tropical timber and timber products to Asian and European markets. Natural tropical forests are the major sources of timber designated for export markets or domestic use. In 2004 the ten major timber producing countries in the region<sup>1</sup> produced 436 million cubic meters of timber, veneer, panels and wood fuel. Cameroon, Gabon and Ghana are the most important exporters of timber and timber products. The total value of tropical timber exports from the ITTO producer countries of Africa was estimated to be close to 1.9 billion US dollars in 2005.

Forest degradation and the related adverse impacts on living conditions for forest dependent people and for species

<sup>1</sup>Cameroon, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo.

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schemes as currently envisioned. ITTO will be working with member countries and partners to ensure that sustainable forest management (including sustainable timber production) is an eligible activity for any assistance to be offered under an eventual climate agreement. Such topics will no doubt also be raised at a meeting to be hosted in June by the government of Japan on technologies required to implement any eventual REDD scheme.

In May, ITTO's host city, Yokohama, will welcome the fourth meeting of the Tokyo International Conference on African

Development (TICAD IV). Many heads of state are expected to attend this high-profile meeting, where environmental issues (including forests and climate change) will feature prominently. Because of its wealth of natural resources, including timber, Africa is experiencing an unprecedented wave of investor interest from a range of developed and developing countries. While TICAD IV will focus on general issues of development, ITTO will be highlighting its role in sustainable forest development on the continent during the meeting.

It would not be realistic to predict a rapid transition to forest sustainability in all

diversity in general can result from commercial harvesting operations or from forest clearance for agriculture. ITTO recognized early the importance of linking environmental protection and social justice to the commercial use of tropical timber and took the first initiatives to draft Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for sustainable management of tropical forests already in the early 1990's.

During the 1990s the African Timber Organization (ATO) commenced, with the support of Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the European Union, a regional process to draft a set of Principles, Criteria and Indicators (PCI) for the sustainable management of tropical African forests with a focus on Western and Central Africa.

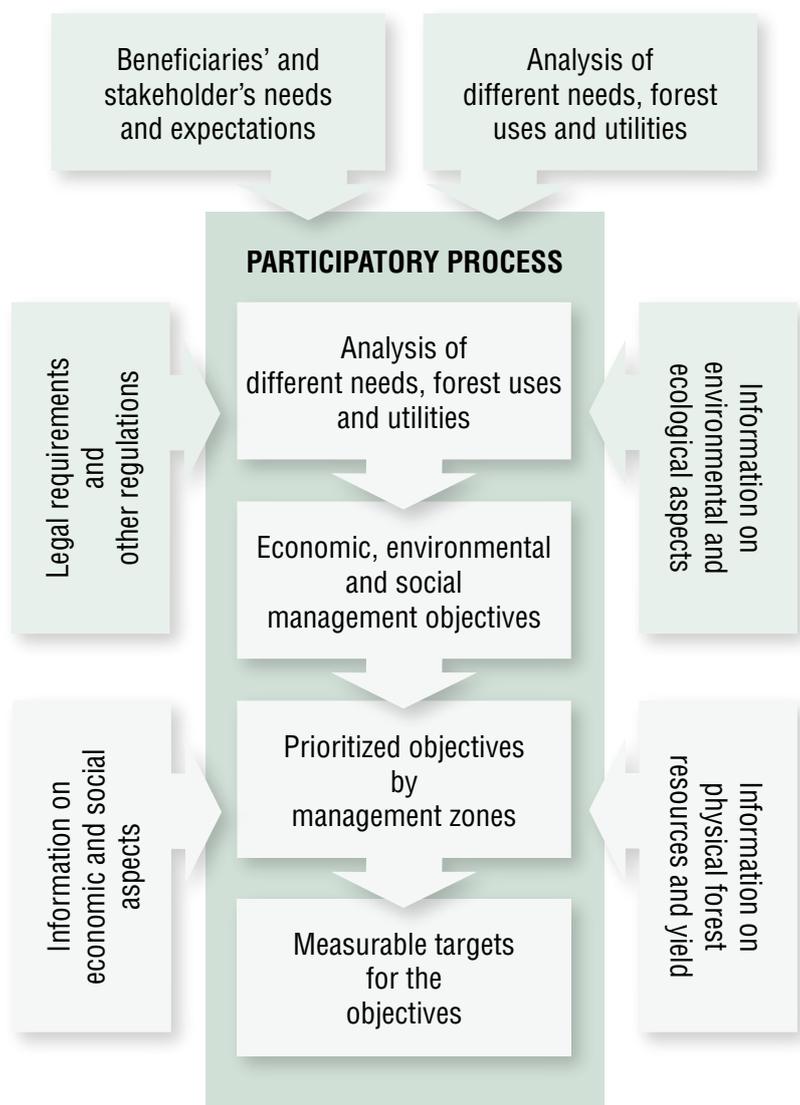
ATO and ITTO recognized the need to strengthen and harmonize the two sets of C&I and provide their member countries with a unique set applicable to African tropical

African countries given the level from which most are starting and the problems that still afflict many. However, increased political will in almost all countries coupled with investor enthusiasm and prospects for forest management funding under a new climate change regime provide grounds for optimism. ITTO will be working with its member countries and partners in the region over the coming years to help realize Africa's promise.

**Steve Johnson**

## Participatory

Figure 1: Defining forest management objectives



forests. The *ATO/ITTO Principles, criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African natural tropical forests* was published as ITTO Policy Development Series No 14 in 2003. The regional principles, criteria and indicators (PCI) can:

- serve as a baseline to implement and monitor sustainable forest management
- serve as support for the control of the effectiveness of national forestry programs
- provide a preliminary reference base (standard) for forest certification
- assist in strategic and participatory planning
- provide a reporting framework when communicating development trends to national and international stakeholders.

### Implementing the PCI

Concurrent with the development and adoption of the harmonized PCI, ATO and ITTO made a significant

contribution to the practical promotion of ecologically, socially and economically viable forest management in their member countries by developing a joint regional project on the *Promotion of sustainable management of African forests* (PD 124/01 REV.2 (M)). The main project objective was to disseminate and encourage implementation of the PCI through practical guidelines and related regional training courses. The project has also assisted in establishing national PCI working groups in almost all member countries of the partner organizations and has contributed to certification efforts in some.

To ensure effective implementation of ATO/ITTO PCI in practical forest management and monitoring, the project produced in 2005 an *Auditing manual for the implementation of ATO-ITTO principles, criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African natural tropical forests* and organized two training courses on auditing techniques including a case study audit in an operational concession area. The course in French was organized in December 2006 in Sangmelima, Cameroon and the corresponding course in English in January 2007 in Takoradi, Ghana. Participants represented practically all ATO and ITTO member countries in the region.

The auditing manual provides instruction for the evaluation of forest management quality but does not provide guidance for practical planning, implementation and monitoring. ATO and ITTO recognized the need to develop or update practical forest management guidelines for tropical Africa and commissioned Indufor under the joint project to draft a *Manual for the management of African natural forests*. The objective of the task was to:

- prepare comprehensive forest management guidelines that cover the whole management cycle from planning to operational level management and address all the provisions of the ATO/ITTO PCI;
- provide forest managers tools to reach conformity with the ATO/ITTO PCI through systematic implementation of the manual and pave the way for optional forest certification; and
- inform on the existing guidelines and instructions for the management of tropical forests in Africa through comprehensive references to published documents.

### Forest management manual

The manual interprets the ATO/ITTO PCI in practice, drawing on relevant experiences in forest management in Africa. It outlines the appropriate planning and implementation procedures to practical forestry operations and illustrates how environmental and social constraints can be taken into consideration. The manual considers the characteristics of large and small concessions as well as community/village forestry and helps concession holders and forest managers to strengthen management procedures and give appropriate oversight to forestry operations.

As per the ATO/ITTO PCI, the manual integrates environmental and social values and constraints (including the empowerment of local people) into all forest management and planning. It provides guidance for identifying the environmental and social impacts of forestry operations and for finding appropriate mitigation measures at the planning phase. Participatory elements are important in the strategic, tactical and operational level planning. The manual highlights the differences in various participatory approaches and suggests guidelines for working with stakeholders.

Forest management objectives are defined in consultation with stakeholders, usually resulting in recognition of the multiple uses of forests and the need to adapt the objectives for different management zones (Figure 1).

Monitoring of forestry operations and their impacts is essential for the continuous improvement of forest management and its adaptation to the changing social and ecological environment. The manual provides guidance on the indicators that forest managers should regularly use in monitoring and sets the minimum requirements for consideration and documentation of the collected information.

Due to its very extensive scope in concept and field of application the manual does not give precise field level instructions. It rather provides the forest manager a framework under which he can update and amend existing field level guidelines and procedures to meet the basic requirements of the ATO/ITTO PCI set for sustainable forest management. The manual provides an applicable framework for the following essential elements of forest management:

- recognition of land tenure and property rights;
- assessment of social and environmental impacts of forest management and mitigation of adverse impacts;
- participatory processes in forest management planning;
- forest inventory and strategic planning;
- operational planning of forestry operations;
- provisions for practical harvesting, transportation and post harvest treatment guidelines;
- preconditions for infrastructure development;
- development of health and safety services for forest workers and forest dependent communities; and
- training of staff to become aware of the provisions of sustainable forest management and appropriate working methods.

The manual also gives information on current options for forest certification in Western and Central Africa. The ATO/ITTO PCI will be used as a reference basis for forest certification within the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC—www.pefc.org) scheme framework in ATO/ITTO member countries.

The draft manual was validated in a regional seminar held in Libreville, Gabon in late 2006. The seminar participants evaluated each section of the manual and gave recommendations for its improvement. Based on the recommendations the manual structure was reorganized and clarified to become more accessible and useful for forestry professionals, and was finalized in 2007.

## Conclusions

Authorities and forestry professionals representing both the public and private sectors have highly praised the ATO/ITTO initiative to adapt the international ITTO C&I to the regional level and apply them to the practical operations of a forest management unit. The approach to train professionals in regional seminars who can then disseminate the information at the national or company level has proven successful, although a lack of resources and professional support can prevent the efficient transfer of information into practical skills that would change established practices.

The interest in applying sustainable forest management to all African forests is strong but it requires additional resources to meet the large scale information and training needs to empower people to learn and adapt the new approaches and techniques in practice. Local authorities and company staff are key players in improving forest management to achieve SFM under the ATO/ITTO PCI.

In African countries the availability of information can also be an obstacle to development. It is important that the guidelines and manuals developed under ITTO financed projects are readily available on-line and accessible to all interested parties. Some promotion may be needed (e.g. in forestry companies and forestry schools) to familiarize forestry people with the new requirements and guidelines.

A second phase of the joint ATO/ITTO project to promote the PCI (currently on-going) will address many of these issues. ATO and ITTO will also organize detailed training sessions at the national level of each member country in Africa under this follow-up phase of the project. These training sessions will be facilitated by the trainers who were involved in the regional sessions organized in Cameroon and Ghana. Each ATO/ITTO member country will then possess a pool of forest management specialists capable of disseminating sustainable forest management practices at the sub-national and forest management unit level.

*All project outputs referred to are available from the ITTO Secretariat (eimi@itto.or.jp).*