

## *A study tour to the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu afforded some insights into the minds of local foresters*

by Ruth C. H. Turia

### PhD Candidate

Australian National University  
Research School of Pacific and  
Asian Studies  
Human Geography Department  
Canberra, ACT, 0200  
Australia  
ruth.turia@anu.edu.au

**W**ITH funding from ITTO, I visited the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji to observe first-hand the forms of forest management that these countries are applying. In this article I summarise the findings of this study tour, highlighting some of the areas of common concern in these countries and comparing them to Papua New Guinea (PNG), my home country.

### Objective

The objective of the study tour was to observe how each country was managing its forests. This was done by first talking to available foresters and some landowners from selected project areas in each country, using both structured and unstructured interview methods, and then making site visits to observe the types of forest management that are taking place. My main purpose for taking this approach was to evaluate the understanding by foresters of 'forest' and 'forest management'—and their roles in the latter.

### Some observations

All countries have codes of logging practice that are in use, some more effectively than others. Fiji in particular has gone a fair way in applying the principle of sustainable forest management.

The ways in which forestry legislation has been framed with regards to forest resource appropriation are slightly different in different countries. The Solomon Islands and Fiji have delegated the task of securing forest resources for development to government agencies other than the forestry departments—provincial governments in the case of the Solomons and the Native Land Trust Board in Fiji. The government forestry agency only becomes involved at the time of granting the final approval for timber extraction. In PNG and Vanuatu the government forestry agency is



**On the way up:** the author stands in a newly established tree species' trial plot (provenance) at Markham in PNG.

responsible for securing access to the forest resources and then for granting approval for extraction. The situation in PNG is slightly different to that in Vanuatu in that, for large-scale operations, the government negotiates a contract (in the form of a project agreement) with the contractor on

## Fellowships awarded

*Twenty-nine fellowships worth a total of US\$151 490 were awarded at the 36th session of the International Tropical Timber Council in July 2004. Awardees were:*

**Einar Rafael Joffre Rojas** (Bolivia), to prepare a masters' thesis on the valuation of tropical forest ecosystems; **Ubirajara Contro Malavasi** (Brazil), to complete a training internship on methodologies to evaluate nutrient and water use by tree species; **Jean Avit Kongape** (Cameroon), for the preparation of a guidebook on procedures related to the management of production forests in Cameroon; **Diangha Mercy Nambu** (Cameroon), to attend an international conference on multipurpose trees in the tropics; **Yongdong Zhou** (China), to undertake a study tour of the processing and utilisation technologies of *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* plantation woods in Australia; **Verónica Duque González** (Colombia), to attend a short course on the diversified management of natural tropical forests; **Yohanna Cabrera Orozco** (Colombia), to undertake a study tour to learn how to improve the durability of some Colombian plantation species with low-toxicity preservatives; **Théophile Bouki** (Congo), to undertake doctoral research on the local management of forest resources and its impact on the conservation of forests; **Martin Mba Obame** (Gabon), to conduct doctoral research on conflicts and development in southeastern Gabon; **Abraham Addo-Ansah Allotey** (Ghana), to take a training course in social forestry for sustainable rural development; **Andrew Akwasi Oteng-Amoako** (Ghana), to publish a manual on rural wood preservation in the tropics; **Dzigbodi Adzo Doko** (Ghana), to take a masters' program in environmental science; **Yolanda Renita Hawker** (Guyana), to undertake a masters' degree in forest product technology; **Bempah Nsiah** (Ghana), to complete a masters' thesis on the use of mycorrhizae

for the improvement of some indigenous timber tree species for the restoration of mined areas; **Ariel Estuardo Nieves Antillón** (Guatemala), to take a course in the diversified management of natural tropical forests; **Ahmed Parul Rishi** (India), to take the Smithsonian environmental leadership course; **Shanmughavel Piramanayagam** (India), to prepare a digitised inventory of tropical timber resources in India; **Paimin Sukartana** (Indonesia), to attend an international conference on environmentally compatible forest products; **Tati Rostiwati** (Indonesia), to conduct PhD research on mechanisms of shade adaptation of locally important tree species in Sulawesi; **Bhoj Raj Khanal** (Nepal), to conduct masters' research on the institutional capacity of community forest groups for the marketing of forest products; **Nirjala Raut** and **Yogendra Yadav**, both from Nepal, to undertake masters' programs in forestry; **Shadrach Olufemi Akindele** (Nigeria), to prepare a document on volume functions for common timber species of Nigeria's tropical rainforests; **Manuel Antonio Soudre** (Peru), to undertake a masters' program on tropical forest management; **Patricia Ojeda Rondón** (Peru), to take a course in the diversified management of natural tropical forests; **Dennis Morgia Gilbero** (Philippines), to attend a training course on biodiversity monitoring and assessment techniques; **Mirko Meoli** (Switzerland), to undertake a training internship on the inventory and restoration of degraded forest in Congo; **José Rafael Lozada** (Venezuela), to prepare a PhD thesis on vegetal succession in harvested forests in the Imataca Forest Reserve; and **Omar Ernesto Carrero Gámez** (Venezuela), to attend a course on the principles of economics for the analysis of investment and design of natural-forest policies.

## Fellowship reports available

The following ITTO fellowship reports are available on request from the authors:

**Community forestry and poverty reduction in Nepal: perspectives on forest dependency, benefit sharing, resource governance and overall livelihood benefits to the poor.** *Contact: Mr Balram Dhakal, PO Box No 19464, Kathmandu, Nepal; dhakalbalram@hotmail.com*

**People's perception and participation towards integrated natural resource conservation: a case study from Nepal.** *Contact: Mr Shiva Kumar Wagle, Assistant Forest Officer, District Forest Office, Kapilbastu, Nepal; wagleshiva@yahoo.com*

behalf of the landowners. The landowners are able to negotiate directly with a contractor when the volume to be harvested is less than 5000 m<sup>3</sup> in any one year and is to be used mainly for domestic processing. In Vanuatu, the landowners negotiate their own contract with a contractor and the head of forestry either grants approval for or rejects the contract.

All four countries (including PNG) face financial and transport difficulties in implementing the code of logging practice effectively and in undertaking other forestry activities.

Another major issue, particularly for the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG, is how to deal with land tenure. A noted concern that came out of my discussions with foresters was that they often did not know how to deal with the customary owners. This is due partly to the type of forestry curriculum that was being taught to forestry students until recently, in which it was generally assumed that the forests were owned by the state. In their attempts to apply in the field the kind of forest management principles they gained from attending forestry schools, these foresters quickly found out that there was no forest for them to work in. A lot of work still needs to be done to equip foresters with the necessary skills for working effectively in what is often a difficult social, political and economic environment and for managing relationships with the customary owners.

There is also a lot of confusion among foresters in the four countries about some relatively new forestry concepts and terminology. The international

community seems to be generating new terms at a rapid rate, but their quick adoption in the field is unlikely when many foresters are still grappling with the difference, for example, between 'sustainable forest management' and good old 'forest management'. In this light, how useful are the international processes that generate these terms? There may also be a lack of understanding in the international community about the local and national contexts in which forest management is being undertaken. I feel that the international community (including ITTO) needs to do some more work towards understanding how developing countries in particular understand 'forest management' and 'sustainable forest management', so that the programs and plans they develop can be applied more effectively.

## Bibliography

Dauvergne, P. 1997. *Corporate power in the forests of the Solomon Islands*. Working paper No 1997/6. Department of International Relations, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

Department of Forests 1997. *National forest policy—Vanuatu*. Forest Department, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Ministry of Fisheries and Forests 2003. *Strategic plan 2003–2005*. Suva, Fiji.

Pearce, D., Putz, F. & Vanclay, J. 2003. Sustainable forestry in the tropics: panacea or folly? *Forest Ecology and Management* 172(2–3).

Poore, D. & Thang, H.C. 2000. *Review of progress towards the Year 2000 Objective*. ITTO, Yokohama, Japan.

World Bank 2000. *Project appraisal document: forestry and conservation project*. Report No 20641-PG. World Bank, Washington, DC, USA.

## ITTO fellowships offered

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

### Eligible activities include:

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

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

- improving transparency of the international tropical timber market;

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

*In any of the above, the following are relevant:*

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

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

- consistency of the proposed activity with the Program's objective and priority areas;
- qualifications of the applicant to undertake the proposed fellowship activity;
- the potential of the skills and knowledge acquired or advanced under the fellowship activity to lead to wider applications and benefits nationally and internationally; and
- reasonableness of costs in relation to the proposed fellowship activity.

The maximum amount for a fellowship grant is US\$10 000. Only nationals of ITTO member countries are eligible to apply. The next deadline for applications is 21 April 2005 for activities that will begin no sooner than 1 August 2005. Applications will be appraised in June 2005.

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