

# ITTO Tropical Forest UPDATE

A newsletter from the International Tropical Timber Organization to promote the conservation and sustainable development of tropical forests



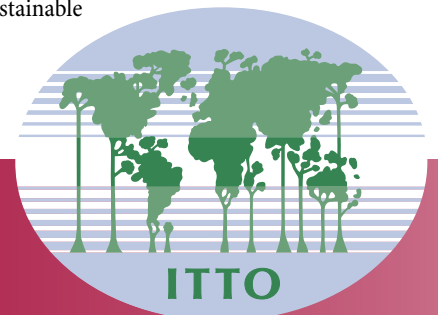
## Responding to disaster

**T**HE STAFF at ITTO would like to convey its sympathies to all readers affected by the tsunami that hit Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India, the Maldives and other countries in December 2004. Like most people who watched in horror as the full extent of the destruction became apparent, we want to help in the recovery process in the coming months and years.

What, actually, can we do? Apart from making individual financial contributions, we can redouble our efforts to ensure that ITTO delivers its own brand of development support as efficiently and effectively as possible. This may not sound much, but we believe that every little bit will help.

An outcome of the 37th session of the International Tropical Timber Council (convened prior to the tsunami disaster) should help increase the effectiveness and efficiency of ITTO's field projects. The Council's decision on measures to improve project formulation and appraisal will provide relevant national-level institutions and organisations with training in and new tools for the preparation of well-conceived, targeted ITTO projects that will achieve tangible and sustainable results in the field.

Mangrove ecosystems can help protect against storm



**Inside** ▶ logging in the Congo ▶ the incredible Condor ▶ mangrove projects evaluated ▶ more ...

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**Cover image** A village near the coast of Sumatra lies in ruin after the tsunami of December 2004. *US Navy photo by Philip A. McDaniel*

surges and tsunamis, and ITTO is already working with countries to improve mangrove protection and management. An article on page 14 reports the ex-post evaluation of some early ITTO mangrove projects; such evaluations are also helping to improve the quality of new projects. ITTO has several mangrove-related projects under implementation across the tropics in accordance with its Mangrove Action Plan; in the wake of the tsunami we can expect more such projects in South and Southeast Asia to come on stream and make a tangible contribution to the rebuilding process.

It's not only mangrove forests that need attention. Recent landslides in the Philippines, which left over a hundred people dead, have been attributed in large part to forest degradation in the uplands. Elsewhere in the tropics, rural poverty and deforestation continue, apparently unabated, with the possibility that more environmental disasters will occur in the future. It is clear that more assistance is needed in many tropical countries to improve forest management and to make forestry a financially viable and environmentally sustainable land-use option.

For its part, the Council allocated an additional US\$10 million\* at its 37th session for projects that will, among other things, help develop national-level principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in the Republic of Congo, undertake fire management and post-fire forest restoration in Ghana, and continue the development of a transboundary conservation area in the Emerald Triangle of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. This shows that ITTO is able to respond with relative promptness, and in a substantive way, to new and emerging issues in national and international forestry. The Council meets twice a year, and it has the capacity to finance new initiatives at each session.

Another activity funded at the last session was the review and revision of the *ITTO Guidelines for the conservation of biological diversity in tropical production forests*. Since these guidelines were published in 1992, new approaches to biodiversity conservation have been designed and tested. The revision, which will be done in collaboration with

IUCN, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and other relevant organisations, will take these into account with the aim of producing state-of-the-art guidelines for use at the national and forest-management-unit levels.

New grants worth US\$10 million no doubt will be welcomed by struggling forestry agencies across the tropics. But this amount, though large by the standards of many international forestry-related institutions, is barely a drop in the ocean of what is needed. The international community must admit that its efforts so far to turn its concern for tropical forests (including mangrove ecosystems) into real and substantive action have been insufficient.

It is becoming increasingly clear that tropical forests are important for the long-term health and well-being of millions of people living in the tropics and, arguably, also for those living elsewhere. The commitment of a great deal more funds, and their wise distribution, is urgently needed.

**Alastair Sarre**

*\*The major donors at the session were the governments of Japan, Switzerland, the United States and the Netherlands, while the governments of Finland, Norway, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand also pledged funds. In addition, funds were mobilised from the Unearmarked Fund of the Organization's Special Account, its Bali Partnership Fund Sub-account B and the Working Capital Account.*