**INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL
TIMBER COUNCIL**

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
14-19 November 2011
La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala

META-EVALUATION OF PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED ITTO PROJECTS

Lessons learned & good practices towards sustainable management of tropical forests

Summary Report

11. <u>Non-timber forest products</u>

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THEMATIC SUMMARY REPORT No. 11

Non-Timber Forest Products

1. INTRODUCTION

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are, for several countries, important products to generate social and economic benefits and thereby help the implementation of sustainable management of tropical forests. NTFPs play an important role to improve livelihoods of local communities which are involved in their harvesting, processing and trade. Some NTFPs (bamboo, rattan, medicinal plants, and others.) have large formal markets and are traded internationally thereby generating income and employment in forest areas.

The ITTA objective (q) makes a specific reference to importance of NTFPs: "*Promoting better understanding of the contribution of non-timber forest products and environmental services to the sustainable management of tropical forests with the aim of enhancing the capacity of members to develop strategies to strengthen such contributions in the context of sustainable forest management, and cooperating with relevant institutions and processes to this end*".

Consequently, ITTO has financed a large number of projects to promote the production and trade of NTFPs with significant positive impacts. For ITTO's projects, it is important to demonstrate the linkage between NTFPs and sustainable forest management (SFM). NTFPs can be the principal source of forest-based revenue for local people but their harvesting, processing and trade is often inefficient and weakly organized and therefore the potential to contribute to SFM is far from being tapped.

2. KEY ISSUES

- Information on collection/gathering, utilization and trade of NTFPs is important to develop sustainable income and improve livelihoods of forest communities. However,available data is often deficient or may be lacking to design programmes and projects.

- Government policy and regulation may occasionally be in conflict with NTFP development.

- The relationship between conservation and community forest enterprises (CFE) is not positive if over-harvesting occurs in the forest. Projects involving NTFP production and utilization should take into consideration biodiversity, and seek to balance environmental conservation aspects and socio-economic benefits.

- Limited basic skills of local communities in business development and their members are a key constraint to sustainable NTFP use and its successful commercialization.

- Promotion of sustainable use and management of NTFPs has to generally focus on the development of small-scale production and marketing systems involving local stakeholders. However, reaching them can be a major challenge to effectively share knowledge and experience.

- Stakeholder participation, particularly in the case of forest communities, is vital for NTFP projects but local people are not always effective participants.

- Transfer of improved processing technologies for value added products can take place through South-South cooperation but necessary commitments and incentives by both parties are not always easy to establish.

3. LESSONS LEARNED

Project design

- Land and forest use rights of local communities and indigenous peoples need to be compatible with the development of NTFP-based activities to avoid or reduce conflicts, and to ensure permanent access to land.

- NTFP project strategies can target at increasing socio-economic benefits and revenue of local government through improved methods of harvesting, reproducing, processing and marketing for which many opportunities exist in tropical forest areas. NTFP development could reduce the pressure on forests once the forest communities' income levels are improved.

- Forest communities tend to have a perception that NTFP project operations are against government rules. A detailed review of policies is therefore important, followed by effective communication to stakeholders.

- Many project designs have targeted at improving data and technical information but fail to make necessary provisions for dissemination of results and support to their adoption.

- Pilot projects including both harvesting and processing can be successful in demonstrating benefits from NTFP development but their site selection should consider access to facilitate demonstration on the ground.

- NTFP development often needs targeted projects rather than support being part of other government programmes.

Communities and other stakeholder participation

- Implementation and sustainability of NTFP projects need active participation of local stakeholders. Farmers and other beneficiaries of the communities need to be fully involved throughout the project cycle.

- The collaborative approach with active involvement of communities, the private sector and other stakeholders has proved to be effective and facilitates the implementation of NTFP project activities.

- Economic feasibility of the promoted improvements in harvesting and processing is critical to get farmers and other community members interested in NTFP development. If long payback periods are expected, the communities' interest is easily lost.

- Technically oriented NTFP projects (especially food projects) need to fully recognize socio-economic conditions to ensure the acceptability of new technologies and facilitate their adoption by communities.

- Conducting successive short training courses targeted at government extension staff, communities, and the private sector to cover all the necessary aspects of the NTFP development can be a feasible capacity building strategy if supported by adequate technical assistance.

NTFP production and trade

- Raw material surveys and improved forest management are often required to justify major investment or development programmes NTFP production.

- Traditional NTFP collection/gathering practices can be either sustainable or unsustainable depending on factors such as harvest methods, intensity and frequency. Thorough assessment of traditional methods is necessary before starting to develop new technologies. Gradual improvements in the existing practices may often be the best approach for ensuring adoption by producers.

- Waste reduction in the harvesting, processing and distribution process should be promoted as the waste rates are often high.

- Market studies need to be carried out in the beginning of the project to serve as a basis for technical work and marketing efforts.

- Technical and market knowledge is necessary but not a sufficient condition for success. Other critical elements include entrepreneurship development, micro-credit, and market linkages. These elements have sometimes proved to be difficult to integrate into a single project.

- Introducing new NTFP in the traditional domestic diets can be a difficult task, and therefore alternative markets in urban areas should be sought. Even if local market may not exist for fresh NTFPs, processed products may be destined for export markets, which are not limited by traditional use.

- Quality control and complete product information are necessary for entering the formal markets, especially in the case of preserved food products. For natural products there are fewer problems.

- In export development, market studies are necessary in establishing potential sales volumes, quality requirements, packaging and other safety standards, and specific marketing strategies. The entire supply chain should be considered in developing export markets.

- Access to financing is important to promote as projects tend to get bogged down with initial difficulties in business development. The investment built up in social capital may therefore be lost.

- Study tours to other countries in the region are extremely useful for community members to understand practical aspects of NTFP development.

- R&D activities have been successful when they have been clearly targeted at practical application in resource management, harvesting, processing and end-use utilization.

Sustainability

- Economically feasible improvements which are broadly disseminated and can be demonstrated on the ground can ensure the sustainability of NTFP projects.

- Establishing commercial partnerships between producers and the private sector contributes to project impacts and sustainability. Subsequent policy interventions may be necessary to ensure sustainable impacts of NTFP projects. Governments should continue data collection to monitor changes in the forest, to validate and fine tune management planning and sustainable harvesting levels for NTFPs after the project completion.

- Continuing financial and other support from local government has been critical to sustained success as NTFP development is often focused on some regions in the country only.

- Successful local initiatives are not always replicated, limiting community forest enterprise (CFE) development based on NTFPs as a strategy for sustainable livelihoods even though the project may have demonstrated their viability. Effective dissemination is therefore necessary for ensuring replication but further promotional efforts may be needed after the project's completion.

- Adoption of the project training products by relevant educational institutes contributes to project sustainability. Also, networking between communities and the private sector within the country and regionally can improve sustainability.

- Local beneficiaries may be unsatisfied for the lack of sustainability of project support if the development process is not sufficiently advanced. A successive stage of support programme may prove necessary to ensure sustainability.

4   GOOD PRACTICES

Project design

- Existing policies and regulations should be reviewed to identify potential barriers for NTFP development.

- The project strategy needs to provide for an active involvement of rural communities in SFM and utilization of NTFPs to enhance their socio-economic benefits and alleviate poverty.

- Consultation processes and other participative arrangements should be put in place to ensure commitment to project objectives and the communities and their members´ acceptance of the proposed technologies.

- The pilot community approach is often feasible in introducing and testing improved technologies for collection, processing and storage of NTFPs. Provisions in the project design should be made for validation and dissemination of the experience.

- Training and extension strategies can be phased to ensure that beneficiaries are gradually exposed to new information corresponding to their absorption capacity and development needs.

- The duration of project interventions should be long enough to have an impact, but the strategy can also be phased starting with technical and socio-economic studies.

Implementation

- Resource surveys, analyses of the existing harvesting and processing practices, market studies, and socio-economic surveys should be carried out for detailed planning of the project implementation.

- New technologies should result in livelihood and income improvements and they should be acceptable by communities.

- Establishment of permanent sample plots for monitoring of plant occurrence and behaviour after harvesting and management interventions is deemed necessary.

- An appropriate balance between technical assistance and training to community members is needed.

- Integration and transparency of supply chains of NTFPs contributes to generation of value added in forest areas and appropriate benefit sharing between actors.

- Market strategies should consider the potential of local, formal national and international markets, and their product quality and other commercial requirements. In marketing, communities need to wisely identify their target customers, how to reach them, how buyers make decisions, and what price can be obtained.

- The project office should be located near the pilot project sites and other focal areas to facilitate the work and to enable ease supervision.

Sustainability

- Risk factors associated to NTFP development can be mitigated by action to encourage the government to provide enabling environment and support (finance, extension, legal access to the resource base, incentives for sound harvesting practices).

- Appropriate information on techniques and technologies on NTFP product development and utilization efficiency should be published and effectively disseminated.

- Engagement of industry associations in dissemination and extension activities should be attempted when they have adequate promotional capacity.

- Establishment of partnerships between communities and the private sector should be promoted for sustainability of project impacts.

- Regional thematic networks should be supported to promote utilization of individual NTFPs.

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SOURCES

This thematic summary is based on the ex-post evaluation reports of the following projects:

PD 15/96 Rev.2 (M,I)	UTILIZATION, COLLECTION AND TRADE OF TROPICAL NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS IN THE PHILIPPINES
PD 56/99 Rev.1 (I)	PROMOTION OF THE UTILIZATION OF BAMBOO FROM SUSTAINABLE SOURCES IN THAILAND
PD 24/00 Rev.1 (I)	PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF RATTAN FROM PLANTATION IN THAILAND
PD 108/01 Rev.3 (I)	DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE RATTAN PRODUCTION AND UTILIZATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION OF RATTAN SMALL HOLDERS AND INDUSTRY IN INDONESIA
PD 146/02 Rev.1 (I)	PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF BAMBOO THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT
PD 277/04 Rev.3 (I)	PROMOTING SELECTED NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS BASED ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION APPROACH TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN EAST KALIMANTAN
PD026/92 Rev.2 (F,I)	DEVELOPMENT OF METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINED MANAGEMENT OF MOIST TROPICAL FORESTS IN CAMEROON
PD037/95 Rev.2 (F)	MANAGEMENT OF CATIVO FORESTS AND NON-TIMBER PRODUCTS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF RURAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, DARIEN, PANAMA
PD 3/96 Rev.2 (I)	DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION OF RUBBERWOOD PROCESSING AND UTILIZATION TECHNOLOGY