

Long-term logging

Guyana's ITTO-supported forestry training centre is a key element in the shift towards SFM

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Large-scale logging by multinational firms started in Guyana in the 1980s. Such operations were typified by negative environmental impacts, low compliance with occupational health and safety standards and national forest management guidelines, poor harvesting practices, outdated management techniques, resource wastage, machinery damage, high maintenance costs and high labor turnover.

All of these problems could be traced to a lack of skilled workers and supervisors with adequate knowledge of appropriate techniques and the unfamiliarity of managers with field operations and good work practices. Increasing the capacity of the forest sector to provide vocational training, it was believed, would mitigate these problems and help ensure that forest enterprises complied with national guidelines on logging practices.

Reduced impact logging (RIL) technologies became widely accepted in the 1990s as part of a process to improve tropical forest management. RIL alone would not guarantee the sustainable management of tropical forests but it was generally agreed to be an important component of it. A 1996 review of progress towards ITTO's Year 2000 Objective, for example, concluded that training the workforce to accelerate the use of reduced impact logging was of the utmost priority and urgency.

For RIL to be implemented successfully in Guyana, an enabling environment had to be created. It was crucial, therefore, to train managerial and supervisory staff so they could understand the changes in management that were required if RIL was to succeed and the benefits that RIL could bring. At a workshop held in Georgetown in 2000, stakeholders agreed that the best strategy for upgrading the skills of field operatives in the forest sector was to establish a field-based vocational training centre. The centre would run a model logging operation to provide participants with hands-on, real-world training in RIL, and it would also train higher-level managers in managing the switch to a RIL regime.

In 2002 the International Tropical Timber Council approved project PD 68/01 Rev. 2 (1): *Training in reduced impact logging in Guyana* with the aim of improving the quality and efficiency of forest operations by implementing sound forest management and RIL. The project, which operated between



Spot the stump: RIL techniques such as directional felling practiced during FTCI training leave a healthy residual forest. *Photo: E. López Rojas*

2002 and 2005, was implemented by the Guyana Forestry Commission with support from the Forest Products Association of Guyana and the Tropical Forest Foundation. The target beneficiaries were forest workers, forest rangers, Amerindian communities, small operators, universities, timber companies and forestry trainers. Its immediate aims were to establish a vocational training centre—the Forestry Training Center Incorporated (FTCI)—and to train 120 field operatives by the end of the project. This article summarizes the findings of an ex-post evaluation of the project conducted in 2009.

Project achievements

Overall the project made a positive contribution towards the introduction of RIL techniques locally and regionally through on-site and off-site demonstration operations. Through the FTCI, Guyana has developed capacity—as embodied in manuals, a cadre of trained trainers and a basic, functional facility—for delivering practical hands-on training in RIL and forest management to personnel at all levels of the forest sector. By the completion of the project,



Low impact: Wide-tired tractor used in FTCI's RIL training. *Photo: E. López Rojas*

20 courses in eight different categories had been delivered to 199 participants. Eleven of the courses were convened on-site using the FTCI's facilities and nine were delivered off-site—the off-site courses were conducted on the basis of full cost recovery. At the time of the ex-post evaluation, the Centre, which also benefited from a second ITTO project (PD 33/05 Rev.2 (I), financed in November 2005), had delivered a total of 49 on-site courses to 465 participants and 28 off-site courses to 344 participants.

Change in the field?

The acceptance and implementation of RIL, and demand for training in RIL, are growing. Without monitoring or a formal analysis, however, it is difficult to assess the extent of improvement in the quality and efficiency of forest operations as a result of this increase in training. An important independent indicator of the impact of the project will be the contribution of the training courses toward timber industry adherence to the recently adopted Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting, which is now mandatory for all forest operations in Guyana.

Sustainability

The FTCI is a major asset for Guyana: the need for training persists due to competition for workers from other industries such as gold and diamond mining. The degree of interest and motivation shown by participants has been very high. Moreover, in interviews with the author the Guyana Forestry Commission and academic institutions were firm in their conviction that the training courses offered by the Forestry Training Centre were necessary for the realization of their own respective goals.

The main challenge faced by the FTCI is the relatively high cost of field training because of the requirement for heavy machinery and the relatively large number of staff needed to carry out preparatory work. The high cost contrasts with the low willingness of the forest industry to pay for training. Therefore, special attention needs to be given to ensuring the FTCI's long-term sustainability, including through the development of a strategic plan and an expansion of the training plan beyond its focus on RIL.

Undoubtedly the development of the Forestry Training Centre was timely: hands-on training is the fastest and most effective way to promote the widespread adoption of RIL. It has also become clear that the implementation of RIL depends largely on the timber industry's willingness to train sufficient people to transform their enterprises and to make other required changes to their operations.

The complete report of the ex-post evaluation is available at www.itto.int or on request from the ITTO Secretariat (fi@itto.int).