

ITTO Tropical Forest

UPDATE

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



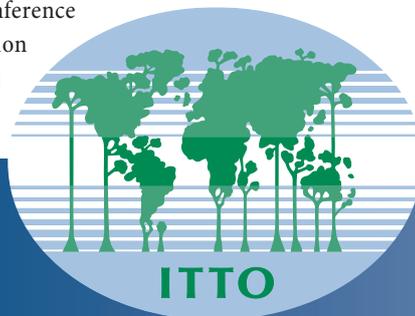
The transboundary transition

Conservation across borderlines is an idea whose time has come. Nowhere is this more clear than in the Condor Mountains, where a transboundary conservation area (TBCA) between Ecuador and Peru has not only improved relations between governments, it has empowered the region's Indigenous peoples—Wampis and Shuar (pictured), among others—to strengthen their cultural identities, renew cross-border family ties and seek new livelihood opportunities.

In 2003 ITTO and IUCN hosted, at Ubon Ratchatani in Thailand, what was believed to be the first international forum to review experiences in the

transboundary conservation of tropical forests. Mostly the experiences were recent: it was still unclear if the concept would work.

There is more clarity now. In July this year ITTO teamed with Ecuador's Ministry of Environment, the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity, IUCN, Fundación Natura and Conservación Internacional-Ecuador to convene a second international conference on biodiversity conservation in transboundary tropical forests. The conference



Special edition ▶ Transboundary conservation



Photo: G.S. Bhardwaj

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Cover image A Shuar family enjoys an early-morning dance in the Condor mountains. *Photo: N. Kingman*

heard that several of the TBCAs that were early experiments at the time of the Ubon Ratchatani conference are now successful institutions; many other initiatives have been launched and are showing positive signs.

Much has been learned since 2003 about both the pitfalls of TBCAs and their many advantages. We know much more about the keys to success. This special edition of the *TFU* takes a look at a range of initiatives and draws lessons from them all.

Sandwith (page 5) reports that, globally, there are now more than 220 TBCAs, covering an area of at least 460 million hectares. The value of TBCAs has been questioned in the past but is becoming increasingly clear. "Climate change," says Sandwith, "is an issue that eclipses all others; it is the single most transboundary thing that we, the global community, have ever experienced and it requires a profoundly transboundary response."

Gasana (page 7) identifies several factors that are critical for the effective governance of TBCAs: political will; a political vision; joint structures and synergies; and a mixture of financing mechanisms. He concludes that, in the future, TBCA governance should be re-imagined to give sufficient role to non-state actors and to devolve an adequate share of power to local levels.

The range of TBCA initiatives in all three of the tropical regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean) is already impressive. For example, China, India and Nepal are considering a proposal for the coordinated management of the Kailash Sacred Landscape (page 18). In Africa, the huge TRIDOM TBCA (page 11), which was created in 2005, is helping to improve governance in the region, as could the Mayombe TBCA (page 15), a new initiative between the two Congos and Angola. For its part, ITTO has played a significant role in expanding and demonstrating the potential of the TBCA concept, funding projects to help bring more than 10 million hectares of TBCAs under management, including between Malaysia and Indonesia (page 16), Thailand, Cambodia and Laos (the 'Emerald Triangle'; page 20), and Ecuador and Peru (page 24).

ITTO has joined forces with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD; page 9) in an initiative to support the implementation of the CBD's programme

of work on forest biodiversity in ITTO producer countries. At the recent Conference of the Parties to the CBD, Japan announced additional funding of US\$2 million to support the Emerald Triangle TBCA (which has already received ITTO support through the governments of Switzerland and Japan in recent years) through the initiative.

In a statement issued at the conclusion of the conference (page 30), participants expressed the view that transboundary conservation can catalyse new approaches to governance in border areas, addressing power imbalances between governments and local stakeholders. It can also increase peaceful cooperation in combating global and regional problems.

TBCAs in tropical forests can also help to:

- ensure the supply of drinking water where catchments straddle political borders
- control the illegal trade of forest products, including the smuggling of wildlife and timber
- resolve borderland political and cultural disputes
- create synergies between management agencies across borders
- sustain species gene pools by improving the size and connectedness of conservation areas.

At the conclusion of the conference, delegates from African countries invited ITTO and co-organizers to convene a follow-up meeting in the Congo Basin in 2012 in order to further share experiences and to ensure that TBCAs are further promoted. Transboundary conservation has crossed the line: once an oddity, it now has an essential role to play in ensuring the health of ecosystems, communities, nations and the planet.

Alastair Sarre, Steve Johnson, Eduardo Mansur and Hwan Ok Ma (co-editors)

The International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests took place in Quito on 21–24 July 2010. It was attended by about 100 experts from Latin America, Africa and Asia and representatives of the public sector, civil society and academic and research institutions. All papers and presentations are available at http://www.fnatura.org/documentos/conferencia_2/c_i_bosques.php.