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META-EVALUATION OF PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED ITTO PROJECTS

Executive Summary

Draft Report

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION (ITTO)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) has financed about 1,000 projects since its establishment. About 14 percent of them have been subject to ex-post evaluation as a tool for continual improvement and assessment of the Organization's impacts, efficiency and accountability. The accumulated cost of ex-post evaluations amounts to USD 3.67 million since 1997 but a comprehensive assessment of this investment as a whole has never been made. The meta-evaluation was carried out to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the ITTO monitoring and evaluation function to enhance countries' efforts in the design and implementation of projects. The key tasks were: (a) to identify and propose findings, conclusions and recommendations to improve evaluation practice, and (b) to compile and synthesize lessons learned, good practices and recommendations of completed ex-post evaluations of ITTO's projects. This main report contains the results of the task (a) while the results of the task (b) will be provided separately later.

Methodology and approach

Meta-evaluation is here understood as a systematic review of evaluations to determine the quality of their processes and findings. The approach is based on triangulation, mainly drawing on information on projects, ex-post evaluations, and stakeholder views. For the evaluation of the quality of ex-post evaluation and the quality of projects, an evaluation matrix with 100 quality indicators was developed. To collect evidence the meta-evaluation team analyzed and rated 92 of the total 140 ex-post evaluated projects. An analysis of thematic lessons learned was carried out for 13 themes. In addition, surveys among six stakeholder groups were consulted using structured questionnaires. The work was carried out in March-September 2011 and will be completed by the end of the year.

Portfolio analysis of ex-post evaluated projects

The ex-post evaluated projects represent about 22% of the total funding by ITTO, of which two thirds are in Reforestation and Forest Management (RFM), one quarter in Forest Industry (FI), and the rest in Economic Information and Market Intelligence (EIMI). More than three quarters of the ex-post evaluated projects were executed by a government agency. NGOs and private sector organizations executed six per cent. The balance (16%) was mixed projects with a government body and either an NGO or a private sector organization, or both, as Executing Agencies.

About 20% of the ITTO projects in Asia have been evaluated, while the share is only 15% in Latin America and 11% in Africa. The evaluated projects have been carried out in 23 countries and there are another 13 producing member countries with ITTO projects, but none of their projects has been subject to ex-post evaluation. Only few projects submitted by consuming member countries and none of the about 100 projects implemented by ITTO have been subject to ex-post evaluation. Due to these caveats and the fact that ex-post evaluations have been carried out only for larger projects, the sample of the meta-evaluation does not reflect the total portfolio of the Organization's projects.

Quality of ex-post evaluation

The quality of ex-post evaluations has been by and large satisfactory but there is variation between evaluators and, to a lesser extent, between ITTO Divisions. As a whole, unsatisfactory evaluations are few. While the outputs of ITTO projects can be generally identified without difficulty, the evaluation of impacts and sustainability is typically constrained by lack of baseline information and quantifiable indicators of measurement. Due to these factors, compounded by limited time and resources available and sometimes over-ambitious Terms-of-Reference (TOR), the quality of the ex-post evaluation process of the ITTO projects is often inherently imperfect.

The quality of project design has an impact on the performance of evaluation. Logical framework matrix (LFM) should be an important basis for evaluation but it has often weaknesses. Absence of baseline information is a particular problem in field projects involving communities and smallholders, or which are targeted at restoration and rehabilitation of degraded forests. For this reason, pre-project (baseline) and post-project situations are often described only qualitatively. Another related issue is that contributions to ITTO objectives are usually covered by only identifying the existence of the (intended) linkage but qualitative or quantitative analysis of the significance of such contributions is lacking.

Other areas with weaknesses in the ex-post evaluation reports include assessment of (i) replicability of the project, (ii) exit strategy, (iii) impact of external risks on performance, and (iv) monitoring and follow-up activities after the project completion.

Evaluation of efficiency has focused on looking into expenditure against the budget, which is not sufficient. Only few evaluators have dealt with the question whether the project was the least-cost approach in delivering its outputs and outcomes.

With regard to accountability, evaluations commonly focus on verification of the activities carried out and the outputs generated as well as review of the financial audit reports. Other aspects of accountability, including the role of actors, adoption of recommendations, sharing of lessons, etc., have not always received due attention.

Above all, the evaluation quality depends on evaluators. Of the 25 evaluators assessed, the majority produced satisfactory quality and a few proved to be excellent. Few evaluators were rated as moderately unsatisfactory and only one case was considered a failure. There is apparently a shortage of available high-quality consultants for this kind of demanding work. The result also emphasizes the importance of a good selection process of evaluators.

A significant improvement has taken place in the last 10 years in reporting, judgment and assessment of the key success determinants but there is still scope for improvement and the analysis revealed a number of ways for how to do it.

Project quality

It is well known that forestry projects need to address a uniquely complex set of issues and field projects are often implemented in challenging environments that are largely outside the control of those who fund, implement and benefit from the intervention. Environmental degradation of the forest resources, extreme poverty, deficient infrastructure, limitations in market access, weak governance, and social conflicts are prevalent in many situations. Field projects can also be affected by external factors such as weather risks. ITTO's projects are fully country-driven and they focus on putting the policies into action, which adds to their value. However, implementation is subject to changes in the political and institutional environment, which has sometimes been challenging.

In general, the average quality of the ex-post evaluated projects has been satisfactory. Effectiveness, efficiency and relevance have received higher quality ratings than impacts and sustainability. The differences between Divisions are not significant. Regionally, the projects in Africa have had the highest overall quality ratings in the sample, followed by Asia and Latin America. The international-level projects have suffered from a somewhat lower quality in relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, in spite of their relatively good impacts and efficiency.

Relevance
As regards relevance in the national or local context, strengths in the project design included alignment with beneficiary/target group needs, implementation arrangements, policy compatibility, economic impact, participation and provision of local opportunities, and partner interest alignment. Somewhat weaker areas have been realism and internal logic in project design but there is significant scope for improvement also with regard to participation and innovation.

Effectiveness
A large majority of the sampled ex-post evaluated projects were rated as satisfactory in terms of effectiveness and a few even as excellent, which indicates that the specific objectives were generally well achieved.

Impacts
Impacts have been sought through projects that have been (a) closely targeted at specific substantive, often technically oriented themes to deliver verifiable impacts; and (b) focused on problems in which simultaneous interventions in more than one impact area were necessary; such problems are typical in the producing member countries.

In general, the projects have had satisfactory impacts in strengthening of capacity and institutions as well as information and knowledge but lower ratings were found in gender, building up of social capital and empowerment, and economic impact. Most of the projects have had impacts up to a national level even in cases in which the actual interventions took place on a local level. Local level projects have been particularly common in Africa and the RFM division.

The main intended target groups of ITTO projects have been forest administrations, the private sector and forest communities. Training and research institutes as well as NGOs have been targeted to a considerably lesser extent. Successful identification of beneficiary needs has contributed to impacts, particularly in strengthening of social capital and in generation of economic benefits. Weaknesses in gender aspects are partly due to lack of proper identification of beneficiary needs but – perhaps mainly - because gender is not relevant in many technically oriented ITTO projects.

Thematically, the main impact areas have been SFM (particularly restoration, rehabilitation, reforestation and plantations, demonstration of new practices, forest inventory, and management planning) which is the "core business" of ITTO. Another key impact area has been development of community forest management and enterprise. There has been less evaluation on further processing and industry development, reduced impact logging (RIL), information systems, governance, marketing and trade promotion, non-timber forest products, Criteria & Indicators for SFM, and certification and timber tracking and market information. This may not be considered compatible with ITTO's strategic objectives.

Among the cross-cutting themes, human resource development has been the focal impact area addressed by most projects. R&D has also been well covered, but there have been fewer projects with impacts in innovation, technology transfer, and hardly anything specifically targeted at investment promotion.

Direct project impacts could be considerably enhanced through effective sharing of knowledge. Most project products, lessons learned and recommendations identified are applicable nationally and in more than 20% of the evaluated cases also regionally/internationally. In addition, many projects could be replicated in similar conditions beyond project sites and host countries. This emphasizes the role of ITTO projects as valuable global public goods.

Sustainability
In most ITTO projects sustainability has been either satisfactory or moderately satisfactory but a third has had problems in this respect. While technical viability and environmental sustainability were generally rated satisfactory, institutional, economic and particularly social sustainability have been more problematic. The latter has not been even assessed at all in a quarter of ex-post evaluations, but this can be partly explained by the technical orientation of many projects having no direct social link.

ITTO projects are different and cannot contribute to all the sustainability pillars in the same way. Economic and social sustainability appear to have a strong positive linkage demonstrating the potential for win-win interventions. Positive linkages between economic and environmental sustainability and between social and environmental sustainability were also identified although they appear to be weaker and there are cases with negative trade-offs as well.

Projects have usually a high degree of national policy compatibility and their sustainability has been aided by the fact that a third of the projects have led to policy adjustment. However, feasible exit strategies beyond identifying a need for follow-up external financial support appear to be few. More than a half of all the sampled projects led to design/implementation of a follow-up project or other post-project activities, suggesting that the interventions opened up a new opportunity for future support, or (perhaps more likely) there was a need to continue to support the started activities to ensure sustainability.

With regard to sustainability, ITTO's projects may be classified into three main categories: (i) One-off projects have clearly defined end products after which no further action is needed; impacts and sustainability will depend on how stakeholders pursue post-project utilization of these products. (ii) Phased projects (should) have a clearly defined milestone against which outputs and immediate impacts can be evaluated to enable an informed decision on possible support to the next phase. Evaluation of sustainability is relevant only after all the phases have been completed. (iii) Projects with no clear end point or exit strategy do not allow proper evaluation of sustainability due to lack of suitable indicators. In this group, the started activities often tend to collapse after project completion.

Several sampled ex-post evaluated projects belong to the first group (e.g., forest inventory and management planning, training on RIL and industrial processing, market studies, etc.). A large number of sizeable (and thereby often ex-post evaluated) projects belong to the second group but phasing has often been designed according to the availability of limited funds rather than based on a clearly defined logical milestone.

Projects with no clearly defined end point possibly represent a significant share of ITTO projects. It is the lack of post-project financial support which often endangers the valuable results in forest protection, community forestry, strengthening of governance, demonstration areas, and many other interventions. This emphasizes the importance of developing adequate exit strategies starting from the project design phase.

Efficiency
The efficiency of ITTO projects has on average been satisfactory as a result of appropriate resource allocation, cost-efficiency, effective monitoring, and keeping the expenditure within the budget limits. However, no sampled evaluation report had explicit information on the financial or economic rates of return of the productive activities promoted. This is a major lacuna to be addressed both in project design and evaluation, and it is directly linked with the regular lack of baseline information and inadequate data on benefits and costs.

About 10% of the projects have been implemented within the planned schedule and three quarters within less than 12 months. However, there have also been longer delays, sometimes up to several years. It can be questioned whether it is a good practice to allow long implementation delays and whether (dis)incentives should be introduced to improve the situation.

Actor performance is part of efficiency and, on average, it was found as satisfactory, with the highest rating obtained by the ITTO Secretariat followed by Executing Agencies, Project Steering Committees and implementation partners.

Many project types funded by ITTO tend to suffer from inherent risks which should be duly considered in project design and implementation. External factors have had a significant negative influence on the implementation of 15% of the evaluated projects. Bureaucratic delays in fund transfer, changes in government policy and institutional responsibilities, and exceptional weather conditions have been quoted as typical examples. However, these have also sometimes been used as an excuse for the delays caused by Executing Agencies not being able to comply with the obligations of project agreements and implementation rules, or with the agreed work plans.

Contribution to ITTO Objectives
Multiple targets are common as most ITTO projects have contributed to the achievement of more than one ITTO objective. Sustainable development (including poverty reduction), improvement of national policies, SFM, and capacity building are typical examples of such multiple objectives. More than 60% of the projects have contributed to consultation for policy development, information sharing, R&D, and access to, and transfer of, technology. Projects which deal with forest land-use and tenure, reforestation, rehabilitation and plantations, industry, markets, and marketing tend to be more focused than in other areas.

Targeting contributions to several ITTO objectives in a single project should not be an important decision-making criterion for funding. While multiple objectives are a positive feature in their own right, they easily increase complexity of the project and can divert attention from the project's strategic focus. In spite of apparent win-win opportunities between ITTO's objectives, these trade-offs need careful consideration in project design on a case-by-case basis.

Change in project quality and impact of preparatory action
Project quality has been improving in all respects, particularly during the last ten years. In spite of several training courses, there is still obviously a lot of scope for improvement, especially in enhancing impacts and sustainability. More capacity building in the strategic aspects of project design is needed than in meeting the formal requirements of proposals.

Investment in preparatory support has usually resulted in improvement of the project quality. Pre-projects

have particularly contributed to actor performance but the impact appears marginal in the other aspect of project quality. On the other hand, a previous project (often a previous phase of the same project) has usually significantly improved overall project performance.

Thematic summative evaluation

Thematic summative evaluation was carried out for 13 thematic areas:

1.	Demonstration areas, permanent sample plots and model forests for sustainable forest management
2.	Forest inventory, monitoring, mapping and zoning
3.	Protected areas/biodiversity
4.	Forest restoration, rehabilitation, reforestation and plantations
5.	Community forest management and enterprise
6.	Illegal logging, governance and forest certification
7.	Criteria & Indicators for sustainable forest management
8.	Forest information systems
9.	Reduced impact logging
10.	Further processing and industry efficiency
11.	Non-Timber Forest Products
12.	Markets, marketing and trade promotion
13.	Project design and implementation

The themes were identified based on (a) a review of ex-post evaluated projects portfolio, (b) linkage with ITTO Division mandates, and (c) relevance to the ITTO's five Thematic Programmes (TP). The approach was deemed to make the results directly relevant to the Organization's future work areas. The summative evaluations were based on the review of the ex-post evaluation reports and project completion reports. Under each theme, the following elements were analyzed and synthesized: (i) key issues, (ii) lessons learned, (iii) good practices, and (iv) recommendations for target groups. The thematic summative reports will be provided in a separate annex to the report in due course.

Monitoring and evaluation function

Monitoring and evaluation are well-established practices in ITTO with clearly defined procedures and responsibilities. Most stakeholders perceived that these activities are appropriately conducted and they produce valuable information on accountability and lessons for learning. However, information is not always easily accessible and the feedback loop to project design and implementation is not adequate. The meta-evaluation found that ex-post evaluation in the past may have often been more a formal requirement than a strategic diagnostic tool for learning.

Choice of projects for evaluation
The current criteria of project selection on benefits to be derived for lessons learned and their wider application of lessons learned are appropriate. The criterion on the minimum size of the project (e.g. USD 400,000) needs revision as sometimes small projects have generated important impacts and useful lessons, but these cannot be detected and systematized because such projects have not been eligible for ex-post evaluation.

Thematic evaluation reports on a group of projects have been a valuable tool for synthesizing information and therefore appreciated for dissemination. Evaluation of a group of projects in a country could also be potentially useful, if at the same time the impacts of ITTO's project and non-project work could be considered, with a broader strategic view on making progress towards SFM. In such evaluations ITTO's competitive advantage should be looked into within the framework of other external support.

There is a need for a more strategic approach to identify lessons learned, successful practices and pitfalls to be avoided in project design and implementation. Ex-post evaluations can be fewer but well chosen among apparent successes and failures covering all the main thematic areas and different country situations. In general, preference should be given to group projects to be evaluated by substantive themes.

Mid-term evaluation
Mid-term evaluation is a good value for money tool in many situations. However, it has rarely been practised in ITTO projects and, even then, usually as a "punitive measure" for Executing Agencies which have not been successful in implementing their project. This undermines mid-term evaluation as a proactive management instrument to improve project performance. In phased projects, a mid-term evaluation should invariably be carried out, before the completion of each on-going phase for ensuring smooth continuation of the activities, as unnecessary disruption tends to negatively affect project impacts, sustainability and cost-efficiency.

Guidance for ex-post evaluations
With the three existing manuals on (i) project formulation, (ii) project monitoring, reporting, review and evaluation, and (iii) standard operating procedures, an adequate general framework for the ex-post evaluation activity exists in ITTO. Guidance on evaluation is generic but rather detailed, which has sometimes diverted evaluators' attention from examination of key issues. In addition, there have been weak systemic links between evaluation and strategy design, project formulation and sharing of lessons learned. Careful drafting of the TOR is critical to guide evaluators for appropriate focusing of their work. There are a number of minor inconsistencies in the ITTO manuals concerning evaluation which should be addressed when these are revised next time.

Evaluation teams and evaluators
Most of the evaluations have been carried out by two consultants (one from consuming and the other from producing country), due to formal requirements for the team size and origin of members. However, the size of the team should be established based on the nature, complexity and size of the project(s) to be evaluated as well as the competence of evaluators. The professional qualifications of consultants are more important than their countries of origin but it is also crucial for the team to have good knowledge on local/country conditions. In addition, evaluation teams should have adequate expertise on social aspects and the private sector when the project scope calls for such expertise.

Timing of ex-post evaluations
One third of evaluations have been carried out two years after the project completion but lapses of several years have also been common. The longer the time lapse, the more difficult to assess efficiency and effectiveness, but the more information can be obtained on long-term impacts and sustainability. A fixed (minimum or maximum) period for the lapse between the completion and ex-post evaluation is not useful as timing should depend on the nature and size of the project, and the specific focus of evaluation. Too long lags (beyond four years) should, however, be avoided.

Evaluation missions
Ex-post evaluation assignments are usually one-month contracts, of which one week is spent for the fieldwork in the country. In view of the tasks identified in the TOR as well as the need for site visits and stakeholder consultations, this is not always sufficient. The scope of work and the nature of the project(s) should be duly considered in resource allocation. Combining project evaluations thematically is a good practice allowing relevant analysis of differences for learning.

Management response
It is vital to have a timely formal management response (positive or negative) by the Executing Agency to evaluation results, particularly in projects implemented by a partnership of different organizations. The present debriefing meetings at the end of missions are important but cannot be considered an adequate practice. In addition, ITTO has presently no mechanism to pursue implementation of the recommendations of ex-post evaluations, which undermines their usefulness.

Dissemination
Effectiveness of the learning function of ex-post evaluation depends on dissemination and other knowledge management. It is necessary to capitalize the significant investment made by ITTO in ex-post evaluations so that there is an operational feedback loop through various institutionalized ways for learning. The current dissemination mechanisms are all useful and highly appreciated but need strengthening in some areas. Dissemination strategy should be based on diverse needs of various target groups.

Committee presentations on ex-post evaluation results have been appreciated by participating members but if the time constraints continue to limit their future usefulness and cost-efficiency. While thematic summaries of ex-post evaluation results are highly valued by all target groups, there is a need for synthesizing the results so that they become easily accessible for practitioners, policy makers and donors. There is a need to integrate the lessons learned in relevant technical meetings and other events. Special thematic workshops on carefully selected strategically important topics would be useful.

Few producing member countries have established mechanisms for sharing knowledge of ex-post evaluation reports. This is obviously a cause of concern, as most of the contents of ex-post evaluation reports are country specific, with potentially valuable lessons learned and recommendations for other

national stakeholders.

Feedback to project design and appraisal
One of the purposes of ex-post evaluation is to improve the quality of project proposals submitted to the ITTO but the feedback loop has not been strong enough; increased ex-post evaluation activity has had no apparent correlation with the quality of project formulation. There is no requirement for project formulators to look into the lessons learned from the previous projects. The Expert Panel on Project Appraisal has considered the results of ex-post evaluation reports on an ad hoc basis. The ITTO Manual on project formulation does not contain specific guidance for benefiting from earlier lessons learned. The programmes of training courses on project formulation organized during the last 10 years have not included consideration of lessons learned from evaluations. There is a need to establish stronger systemic links between evaluation and the other elements of the project cycle.

Monitoring and continual improvement
Effective proactive monitoring reduces the need for ex-post evaluations, particularly for accountability. The present system is considered mostly robust and the quality of monitoring has generally been satisfactory. The new On-line Monitoring System will improve communication between the Secretariat and Executing Agencies. However, there is scope for simplification of reporting formats to avoid unnecessary repetition.

The format of summary reports on completed projects prepared by the Secretariat to the Committees varies. The reports do not include any assessment on the project's overall performance. The meta-evaluation deems it useful to standardize the format of these reports and to include Secretariat's own assessment on project performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, impacts, expected sustainability, performance of actors, as well as contribution to the ITTO objectives. Such an addition to the existing system would enable the Organization to periodically monitor the continual improvement of its project work as the information could be annually/biennially analyzed for reporting to the Council and the Committees. The results would also guide the Committees in the selection of projects to be ex-post evaluated towards a more strategic and cost-effective approach.

Organization of the monitoring and evaluation function
The recent establishment of a new post of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (PMEO), directly under the Executive Director, with a responsibility for development of the monitoring and evaluation system, is a positive development, which is in line with the principles of good governance in international organizations. Project Managers should not be responsible for organization of ex-post evaluations, as this may create a conflict of interest. The tasks listed in the PMEO job description are straddling and there is a need for clarification in some areas. It is apparent that the identified tasks cannot presently be properly implemented by one person alone.

Future of ex-post evaluation in ITTO
The meta-evaluation has revealed that ex-post evaluation is an important tool for ITTO's accountability and learning. It has generally been practised in a satisfactory manner but its potential is not fully utilized. Ex-post evaluation has often been perceived more as a formal requirement than a management tool for continual improvement. There are major possibilities to enhance the contribution of evaluations to accountability and learning by targeting project selection more strategically, strengthening the systemic links of ex-post evaluation in the project cycle, enhancing dissemination, broadening the pool of expertise, and exploiting various possibilities to improve impacts, sustainability and cost-efficiency.

Recommendations

Based on its findings and conclusions, the meta-evaluation recommends ITTO to continue with ex-post evaluation of projects and makes the following recommendations to strengthen the current monitoring and evaluation practice as a strategic tool for learning and accountability:

ITTC

The Council should consider a new Decision to update Decision 3(XXVIII) in order to improve guidance on monitoring and evaluation in the Organization. The following elements are proposed to be part of the operative section of the Decision:

Evaluation

1.   The <u>selection criteria</u> of projects for ex-post evaluations should be

   (a)   To assess if a project requires ex-post evaluation, the Committee(s) should take into account the nature of the project, its strategic importance to the achievement of the objectives of the Organization, its potential for learning, replication, innovation and impacts, as well as wider application of its outputs and lessons learned;
   (b)   Other factors as considered appropriate by the Committees.

2.   <u>Grouping of projects</u> for ex-post evaluation as a cost-effective measure to enhance the value of learning can include the following approaches:

   (a) Group evaluation by substantive themes to identify common problems and opportunities associated with implementation of projects related to a defined theme, and to produce lessons learned to assist in the formulation and implementation of future projects in the same field.
   (b) Other group evaluation. (i) Grouping of multiple projects by country to identify common lessons learned applicable to projects and their broader impacts on policy development and capacity building as well as the impacts and sustainability of ITTO activities to improve the methods employed in formulation and implementation of future projects in that country. (ii) Other group evaluation can be carried out based on specific relevant criteria.

3.   <u>Timing of ex-post evaluation</u> should be decided by taking into account the nature of the project and the specific objectives of evaluation, and it should normally be at least one year after the completion of project activities.

4.   <u>Mid-term evaluation</u> as a tool to assess the achievements of the project towards attaining its objectives should be applied (i) in phased projects before the end of the on-going phase to facilitate formulation of, and decision-making on, the subsequent phase, and (ii) in large projects. Respective costs should be included in project budgets. In addition, (iii) mid-term evaluation can be selectively used in specific situations in which it can proactively improve project performance or a need for revision of the project design or improvement of performance has been identified.

5.   The <u>selection of consultants</u> should be based on their specific competence relevant to the project(s) and the region/country to be evaluated according to the Guidelines for selection and employment of consultants, procurements and payments of goods and services. The number of evaluation team members should be decided based on the extent and nature of the project(s) to be evaluated, and the competence of evaluators. In team composition, a balance between producing and consuming countries can be considered, as appropriate.

6.   The ITTO Secretariat should provide a <u>management response</u> to ex-post evaluation reports, including on their recommendations for ITTO.

7.   Project <u>evaluation reports</u> should be prepared in the official communication language of the country in question and executive summaries in all the three languages of the Organization.

8.   In <u>project agreements</u> with Executing Agencies, a specific clause should be included to establish an obligation for

   (a)   Reporting on the follow-up activities taken after the project completion upon request by the Secretariat within a defined time limit
   (b)   Submitting a written management response to evaluation reports

Knowledge management
9.   <u>Secretariat reports on completed projects</u> should be presented in a standardized format including a summary of lessons learned and Secretariat assessment on relevance, effectiveness, impacts, sustainability, efficiency and contribution to the achievement of SFM and the ITTO's objectives (to be presented in a condensed manner by means of rating of project quality and implementation performance).

10. In order to strengthen the utilization of lessons learned from evaluation and monitoring, project proponents should be required to consider <u>lessons learned</u> as an input into formulation of new projects, and to demonstrate this in their project proposals.

11. Provide adequate resources for the implementation of improved <u>dissemination</u> of lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation for the preparation of communication products and organization of training events.

ITTO Secretariat

The Secretariat should

1. Ensure that <u>TOR of ex-post evaluations</u> explicitly address the specific characteristics of the project and key strategic issues on which lessons are needed, including those which have been weakly addressed in the past (such as gender, social capital and empowerment). The TOR should also include a provision to submit, together with the ex-post evaluation report, a short PowerPoint Presentation on the key findings, lessons learned and recommendations.

2. Elaborate <u>additional guidance</u> to evaluate impacts and sustainability of ITTO projects and for cost-efficient collection of data through stakeholder surveys, when appropriate

3. Expand the <u>roster of consultants</u> including specialists with multidisciplinary skills and in-depth knowledge on local conditions in ITTO member countries

4. Periodically <u>monitor and report on the performance</u> of the Organization's project work through analytical summaries based on, inter alia, Secretariat quality assessments of completed projects

5. Expand and strengthen <u>dissemination</u> mechanisms including

    (a) Posting on the website of all the ex-post evaluation reports and selected technical reports produced by the projects and providing of an appropriate search engine to facilitate access to them
    (b) Posting of PowerPoint presentations on the results of ex-post evaluations on the ITTO website
    (c) Producing brief summaries on lessons learned by thematic subject areas in three languages, targeted at practitioners and stakeholders for wide distribution electronically and in hard copies
    (d) Including in the website a special section on highly successful projects that can serve as examples for other countries
    (e) Integrating lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation in the programmes of the relevant ITTO technical meetings and workshops, including training courses on project formulation
    (f) Organize regional workshops for dissemination of lessons learned from ex-post evaluations
    (g) Rationalize presentations in the Committees on evaluation reports prioritizing group evaluations, lessons learned and good practices, and project evaluations which have strategic value for the Organization
    (h) Develop new communication products to inform potential donors and the international community at large on the outcomes of the Organization's project and other work to fill the existing gaps in the available information

6. Routinely <u>provide information</u> on lessons learned and recommendations <u>to EP/TPAC</u> members that is relevant for the projects to be appraised

7. Routinely <u>request from Executing Agencies to report on post-project follow-up action</u> (6-12 months after the project completion) and post-evaluation action after the submission of the final ex-post evaluation report

8. Establish a <u>Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit</u> with specific responsibilities related to monitoring and evaluation for

    (a) Continuous development of the monitoring and evaluation system of the Organization, including strengthening of staff capacity in proactive monitoring
    (b) Organization and supervision of mid-term and ex-post evaluations
    (c) Updating the guidance for monitoring and evaluation in the Organization
    (d) Analysis and systematization of monitoring and evaluation results for lessons learned in cooperation with the Divisions
    (e) Ensuring that the Expert Panels and TPACs are informed on the relevant lessons learned related to the project proposals subject to their appraisal

    (f) Compiling periodic analytical reports on the performance of completed and on-going projects in cooperation with the Divisions

    (g) Ensuring effective dissemination of lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation in cooperation with the Communication Unit

Expert Panel on Project Appraisal and Thematic Programme Advisory Groups

The Expert Panel and the TPACs should

1. Strengthen the <u>appraisal of the substantive aspects</u> of project design to minimize the risk for unsatisfactory project performance

2. Verify that the <u>lessons from past ex-post evaluations</u> have been considered in the formulation of project proposals in the same thematic area

3. In appraisal, pay special attention to (a) <u>exit strategies</u> to ensure sustainability, (b) <u>baseline information</u> to allow evaluation of impacts, and (c) the assessed track record of the <u>performance of Executing Agencies</u> in project implementation

Producing member countries

1. Executing Agencies should <u>disseminate</u> ex-post evaluation reports of ITTO-funded projects, including e.g. by posting them on their own websites or establishing a link with the respective webpage of the ITTO website.

2. Executing Agencies should <u>strengthen</u> their <u>capacity</u> in (i) project formulation and implementation by observing the lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation, and (ii) setting up an internal monitoring system to ensure efficient and successful implementation of ITTO-funded projects.

3. Executing Agencies should engage relevant <u>stakeholders in the Project Steering Committees</u> to strengthen ownership of project outputs and to improve impacts and sustainability of project activities. The Committees should assume a proactive role to strengthen performance of project implementation.

4. <u>Focal Points</u> in producing member countries should <u>evaluate the performance</u> of Executing Agencies in previous project implementation and consider their track record in the appraisal of their new project proposals.

5. <u>Focal Points</u> in producing member countries should (a) <u>inform stakeholders</u> through their own in-country distribution lists on the availability of new evaluation and other reports in the ITTO website, and (b) encourage stakeholders to <u>consider lessons</u> learned in formulation of new projects.

Consuming member countries

1. <u>Donor agencies</u> and other potential sources of financing should take full advantage of ITTO as an efficient, low transaction cost multilateral agency implementing country-driven projects, offering a unique service in promoting sustainable management of tropical forests and trade from sustainably managed sources, in channeling aid and other support in meeting their international commitments related to forests.

2. <u>Focal Points</u> in consuming countries should inform stakeholders through their own in-country distribution lists on the availability of new evaluation and other relevant ITTO reports which can add value to various efforts towards promotion of sustainable management of tropical forests and timber trade from sustainably managed sources.