

## **Forestry schools in Central Africa reviewed**

### **Workshop on Teacher Training in Forest Concession Management**

17–21 February 2003  
Kribi, Cameroon

For more than a decade the countries of the Congo Basin have been striving for the sustainable management of forest concessions. Several reforms have been initiated at both the institutional and legislative levels, and the first management plans for forest concessions have been drafted according to newly developed technical standards of sustainable management. In addition, some managers of forest concessions have undertaken their own initiatives with a view to achieving forest certification.

But the full realisation of such ambitions depends largely on the availability of foresters to undertake the tasks demanded of sustainable forest management. A priority, then, is to improve the training of future forest concession managers. To that effect, the Réseau des Institutions de Formation Forestière et Environnementale d'Afrique centrale (Network of Central African Institutions of Forest and Environmental Training, RIFFEAC) and ITTO have initiated a process for updating training in forest management in Central African schools of forestry.

The process started with a workshop on teacher training in forest concession management last February in Kribi. This gave the teachers in charge of forest management training an opportunity to analyse the current level of the lessons given, identify weaknesses, explore options for improving education and commit themselves to update the courses. Some 20 forestry teachers attended the workshop from six countries in the region.

#### **Progress report**

Progress was made during the Kribi workshop, particularly in relation to the following.

**The need to improve training in forest management:** participants discussed

ideas and practices in forest management, including the challenges of integrating the social and environmental components of forest concession management. The following topics were debated: the status of forest management in the countries of Central Africa; the impacts of logging; tools for the sustainable management of forest concessions; and the monitoring and assessment of the environmental and social sustainability of forest concession management. Through this exercise participants were made aware of the ways in which knowledge and practices in forest management had evolved over the last ten years.

**Analysis of the current situation:** participants assessed the extent to which new knowledge and practices in forest management are already integrated in training programs. Through this exercise the participants were made aware of the gaps existing between the current contents of training programs and the developments in knowledge and practices in forest management. It was pointed out, for example, that current training did not sufficiently take into account the environmental and social components of forest concession management. Indeed, aspects relating to the methods for assessing environmental impacts, geographic information systems, forest and environmental audits, standards of management, communication, participative management, data processing, etc. were not included in the training programs of most forestry schools. Moreover, teaching staff were themselves rarely afforded the opportunity to update their knowledge and teaching skills through further training.

**The search for solutions:** this analysis of the current situation aroused the interest of participants and reinforced their determination to act in order to improve training in forest management. Various options were explored, either at the level of each school, or via RIFFEAC. The possibility was also raised of establishing a platform of cooperation between the private sector, the public sector and forestry educational institutions to update training in forest concession management. Participants agreed on the following strategic main lines: development of a model training program

in forest management and the management of forest concessions; updating the courses relating to forest management; and reinforcing the capacities of teachers in charge of training activities.

The process will continue. The three strategic main lines identified were used in the development of a project proposal to support the process initiated during the workshop. This project proposal was submitted to ITTO by the Government of Gabon and received funding from the International Tropical Timber Council last May (ITTO PROJECT PD 189/03 REV.1 (1); see *TFU* 13/3, page 19).

#### **The first lessons**

The Kribi workshop was not an end in itself, but a way of kick-starting a process; it benefited from some excellent dynamics between participants, which are perhaps rarely achieved in workshop settings. The workshop's success is linked to the fact that ITTO's offer to provide funding and other support enabled the initiation of a process that had already been planned within the RIFFEAC framework. Indeed, almost two years ago RIFFEAC undertook to update the courses and to reinforce the capacities of the teachers. Therefore, ITTO's offer was perceived as an opportunity to implement the network's operational plan in general and, in particular, to tackle the priority needs of training identified during evaluations carried out in 2002.

Success is also attributable to the specific approach followed in carrying out the workshop. According to the 'active' methodology adopted, the workshop instructors were asked to create conditions that would encourage the teachers to become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses regarding the issues discussed, to help them build on their strengths, and to acquire new skills in order to improve the quality of the lessons on forest management taught in their respective institutions. The workshop agenda was drawn up specifically to address these concerns.

Another factor worth mentioning is the group spirit that developed during the workshop. The distinctions between disciplines prevailing in the setting up of the RIFFEAC's subjects' working groups (GTT) were overlooked in favour of

establishing common ground for specialists in forest sciences and technology and teachers of social sciences (economics, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, etc). The management of forest concessions is no longer a field reserved for 'foresters', but is now open to other disciplines. With the ITTO project now starting, forest management training in Central Africa is poised to advance more rapidly towards sustainability.

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## **Mega-forestry congress stresses sustainable forest management**

### **XII World Forestry Congress**

**21–28 September 2003**  
Quebec City, Canada

The World Forestry Congress, which is held every six years, is an excellent opportunity for foresters to find out about forestry issues in other countries and to network with colleagues from around the world. More than 4000 people from over 140 countries attended this session, which had a general theme of 'forests, source of life'. It comprised plenary, theme, ecoregional, special and general sessions, as well as open fora, side-events and a very large and impressive exhibition. ITTO hosted a side-event attended by about 160 people to debate sustainable forest management in the tropics; Canadian forester David Boucher (also a former chair of the International Tropical Timber Council) moderated the side-event and Duncan Poore was its keynote speaker. As is the usual practice, at its conclusion the Congress issued a motherhood statement which lays out a vision for forests and urges the 'world community' to undertake measures to achieve it.

*A detailed account of the event can be found at [www.iisd.ca/sd/wfc12/](http://www.iisd.ca/sd/wfc12/). The final statement can be downloaded from [www.cfm2003.org/en/index.php](http://www.cfm2003.org/en/index.php).*

## **Protected area action plan agreed**

### **V World Parks Congress**

**8–17 September 2003**  
Durban, South Africa

Another large congress that took place in the second half of 2003, the World Parks Congress, attracted more than 2700 delegates. Convened by IUCN in cooperation with the Government of South Africa, the Congress delivered three main outputs: the Durban Accord and Action Plan, which are a (non-legally binding) high-level vision statement for protected areas and an outline of implementation mechanisms; 32 recommendations, approved by workshops during the Congress; and a message to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The theme of the Congress was 'benefits beyond boundaries', which was interpreted by delegates in a variety of ways. Perhaps most importantly, many stressed that local and indigenous communities both inside and outside protected areas should be enabled to participate in and benefit from biodiversity conservation rather than be treated as threats, as has often been the case. Thus, the Durban Action Plan includes the following goal: "the rights of Indigenous peoples, mobile peoples and local communities recognized and guaranteed in relation to natural resources and biodiversity conservation". Moreover, conservation professionals are realising that while totally protected areas may serve as the core of a conservation strategy, what happens in the wider landscape can have a profound influence on the survival of species and ecosystems. Another of the goals of the Durban Action Plan, therefore, was: "a global system of protected areas linked to surrounding landscapes and seascapes achieved".

Transboundary conservation, an area of special interest and involvement for ITTO, received plenty of attention and support from delegates. One of the challenges listed in the Durban Action Plan is that protected areas are too often not linked to development planning, land-use and other resource management decision-making systems beyond their boundaries, and

particularly in transboundary situations requiring the harmonisation of approaches across political boundaries. Several actions were proposed to address this, including to:

- create new and promote existing transboundary protected areas for communities separated by national borders, including corridors of connectivity for mobile Indigenous peoples who have traditionally migrated across borders; and
- promote regional agreements and governance structures to support transboundary protected areas and management of transboundary resources, such as river basins, that support protected areas.

One of the Congress's recommendations was to create a global network to support the development of transboundary conservation initiatives. A related website, the Global Transboundary Protected Areas Network, was launched during the Congress; it can be viewed at [www.tbpa.net](http://www.tbpa.net). ITTO also joined with IUCN and others to launch a portfolio of information and case-studies on transboundary conservation initiatives.

Other products of the Congress included: the production of a draft *State of the world's protected areas*; the launch of a protected areas learning network, a web-based knowledge management tool for protected area managers and stakeholders; outputs on Africa's protected areas, including a recommendation on Africa's protected areas and the *Durban consensus on African protected areas for the new millennium*; and a handbook on managing protected areas in the 21st century, which will collate case-studies, models and lessons learned during the Congress.

*More information is available at [www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/](http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/)*