

Evaluation of four ITTO projects in Bolivia, Indonesia and Cameroon shows many trained but only moderate effectiveness

by
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Learning SFM: On-site training in Bolivia. Photo: V.H. Achá (ESFOR)

IN NOVEMBER 2005 the Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management decided to carry out ex-post evaluations of four completed ITTO projects related to training in sustainable forest management. The evaluation was to provide a concise diagnosis of successful and unsuccessful outcomes, the reasons for successes and failures, the contributions of the projects towards ITTO's Objective 2000 and the ITTO Yokohama Action Plan and to draw lessons that can be used to improve similar projects in the future.

The projects were:

- 1) **PD 89/90 (F) I, II & III:** Sustainable Forest Management and Human Resources Development in Indonesia – Phase I, II & III;
- 2) **PD 26/92 REV.2 (F,I):** Development of Methods and Strategies for Sustained Management of Moist Tropical Forests in Cameroon;
- 3) **PD 63/97 REV.3 (F):** Specialization Program for Forest Technicians on Sustainable Tropical Forest Management in Bolivia; and

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- 4) **PD 42/00 REV.1 (F):** 'Training of Trainers for the Application of the ITTO, and the National Criteria and Indicators (C&I) of Sustainable Forest Management at the Forest Management Unit Level' (Indonesia).

These projects were completed between December 2001 and February 2005 and were evaluated in the second half of 2006.

The author was the team leader of the ex-post evaluation mission for the four selected projects, with specific tasks assigned on a regional basis (see acknowledgements). The author visited each of the project sites, accompanied by a regional consultant.

Differences between projects

There are important distinctions to be made with regard to the type of training provided by each project:

- **PD 89/90 (Indonesia)** assisted national forestry professionals to participate in SFM related post-graduate programs overseas and locally; however PD 89/90 had three distinct objectives, only one of which dealt with human resource development related to forest management;
- **PD 26/92 (Cameroon)** was predominantly a research project that included some training; the project strategy was based on the combination of research and training-related activities;
- **PD 63/97 (Bolivia)**—the executing agency (Escuela Superior Forestal—ESFOR) developed curricula and training modules and provided post-graduate specialization courses in SFM to national and regional forestry professionals, as well as to undergraduates; and
- **PD 42/00 (Indonesia)** conducted practical training of trainers for the application of the ITTO and the Indonesian C&I for SFM at the management unit level (forest concession holders).

Evaluation

The four selected projects contributed to the attainment of several of ITTO's objectives, policies, plans and strategies as outlined in ITTO's Objective 2000 and the ITTO Yokohama Action Plan.

All of the projects were primarily aimed at achieving the ITTO Objective 2000 through the training and development of forestry professionals servicing the forestry sector. In addition, Project PD 26/92 (Cameroon) assisted a private sector partner (Wijma-Douala SARL) to achieve FSC certification of its operations.

The actual contribution of the four projects to ITTO's SFM work is in the large number of forestry professionals trained in SFM and the fact that many of them are now in positions, either in government or the private sector, to influence national forest policy. In addition, many training manuals and research documents have been produced, which, when disseminated, will provide the tools for more widespread implementation. Project sponsored workshops and seminars have served to increase the awareness of all stakeholders in the importance and value of SFM.

This pool of trained human resources has an enormous potential to promote SFM practice, assuming that these staff be given the opportunity, the environment, and further encouragement to become active advocates of SFM in their respective organizations. This will require both governments (national and local) and forest concessionaires to harness this resource as trainers and advocates for SFM.

The impact of the four projects on all forestry stakeholders is not yet very discernible, except in those companies that have proceeded to seriously consider SFM and the implementation of the C&I in their operations. However, assuming that the appropriate policy and implementation environment for SFM is put in place, the projects may be credited as having contributed very substantially to fulfilling the various interests of forestry stakeholders in the countries concerned.

The development and specific objectives of the four projects were substantially achieved. The post-graduate programs, training activities, manuals, documents, studies and research done under the projects are all significant contributions to SFM, in many instances going beyond the original scope of the projects.

The overall effectiveness of the four projects can only be gauged as moderately effective, but this is not a reflection on the projects themselves. A large human resource pool has been developed and stakeholder awareness has been increased, but it remains to be seen whether such a pool of expertise and increased awareness can effectively influence the attainment of SFM in the countries concerned. The factors that determine this are beyond the scope of the projects, and often beyond the control of the executing agencies themselves.

Lessons Learned

Human resource development is an on-going process, and is of utmost importance in increasing the capacities of ITTO member countries to achieve SFM. Projects on human resource development for SFM must continue to be supported. In the case of the two Indonesian projects, where a great many training manuals were developed solely in the Indonesian language, it is important to ensure that all manuals, guidelines and other training documents developed by human resource development projects or those resulting from practical on site application of forest management techniques be translated and shared among other countries.

The virtual training modules developed by ESFOR (Bolivia) in implementing its specialization course has been an innovative approach and as such should be considered in training nationals on sustainable forest management in future projects in other countries.

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With regard to the organizational arrangements of these projects, there were several key lessons learned:

- Project organizational structures need to be simple, compact and efficient, such as in Bolivia's PD 63/97, which was composed of Steering Committee, Technical Consultative Committee and Technical-Administrative Coordination Council. This proved adequate for the successful implementation of the project and should be replicated in future projects.
- All projects, but especially complex, multi-disciplinary projects such as Indonesia's PD 89/90, require a dedicated project manager to ensure the efficient and timely coordination of all activities.
- On projects such as PD 42/00 (Indonesia), several national core training teams should have been organized in order to ensure the availability of trainers when and where required.
- Both of the Indonesian projects contained a component for testing ITTO's C&I for SFM, and were being implemented at about the same time. Project Steering Committees should be aware of other projects which may have overlapping scope or objectives with the project which they oversee. Complementarity and collaboration with such related projects would be extremely beneficial and productive.
- Ex-post evaluations should be scheduled no more than two years following project completion to avoid the loss of institutional memory and important project documents that could result in a less than adequate evaluation, as was the case with PD 26/92 (Cameroon)

which was completed in 2001. At the time of the evaluation, the team was unable to verify the exact numbers of trainees or the various disciplines in which they were trained.

Recommendations

Future projects on human resource development for SFM should have, at the minimum, the following generic objectives:

- to educate major decision makers in government and the forest industry so that SFM becomes institutionalized in the decision-making processes for forest management;
- to establish a comprehensive training curriculum, appropriate to the conditions of the country, that can continue to be developed and implemented even after the phase-out of ITTO support;
- to expand the coverage of training to a broader spectrum of forestry practitioners at many levels; and
- to ensure that training documents be shared among other countries.

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The following innovative practices/designs may be adopted in future SFM training projects:

- incorporating SFM and C&I training modules in the regular human resource development programs of forestry companies, government forestry agencies and in the curricula of forestry schools and universities;
- identifying, and popularizing, 'best practices' that exemplify SFM in a country;
- including SFM and C&I in the coverage of forestry licensure examinations in countries where such licensure processes are present;
- organizing workshops and seminars on SFM and C&I for a broader range of stakeholders and especially for indigenous communities; and
- replicating ESFOR's innovative virtual training modules in other countries.

In addition, all countries would benefit from SFM training for the following target groups:

- senior decision makers in forestry agencies and other government agencies, including local governments;
- senior decision makers in forestry companies and other related forestry organizations/associations;
- middle-level managers and field staff of forestry companies and related forestry organizations;
- staff of planning units of forestry companies, government forestry agencies, and local government units;

- faculty and staff of forestry schools and universities;
- staff of forestry consulting organizations and forestry professional associations;
- leaders of indigenous communities whose livelihoods are dependent on the forest resources; and
- females (future projects should identify ways to stimulate a greater presence of women in SFM training courses as they were under-represented in all four of the projects evaluated).

Mid-term monitoring and mid-term evaluations of projects should deliberately identify the presence and applicability of post-project sustainability plans, including the existence of potential threats to such sustainability plans, in order to ensure that there is a smooth phase-out of the project and a smooth phase-in of project results into the 'regular' work of beneficiary organizations of the project. The need for second or follow-up project phases, if appropriate, should be identified early and the required documentation and approvals processed in such a way so as to ensure there is no, or minimal, loss of momentum from the first phase.

Consideration should be given to supporting more SFM training projects with private sector organizations or associations as executing agencies. Such projects will likely benefit from a more streamlined, efficient management system and greater uptake of results by the forest sector. Finally, there is a need to evaluate how human and physical resources generated by SFM-related projects have been utilized, and how effective these resources have been in contributing to the attainment of SFM.

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The complete report of the ex-post evaluation is available on request from the ITTO Secretariat (rfm@itto.or.jp).