Fellowship report

Two ITTO Fellowship recipients identify trends and developments in African forest management and governance

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AFRICA'S TROPICAL MOIST FORESTS are primarily concentrated in the countries of the Congo Basin (Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Central African Republic) and in the equatorial parts of West Africa (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria). They respectively cover 236 million and 75 million hectares and support a population of almost 200 million inhabitants. They are managed for various purposes: a quarter of the total area is assigned for multiple uses, a third primarily to the production of timber, a sixth to biodiversity conservation and approximately five percent to the protection of soils and water. African forests are currently characterized by the absence of a common model of sustainable management, with approaches to their management varying by use.

Industrial concessions

In tropical Africa (and Central Africa in particular), commercial forestry is primarily carried out under the concession system. Concessions are forests of variable size in which companies are awarded the right to the industrial exploitation of timber for a specified period. In recent decades, the management of production forests has been based on the concept of development-exploitation which involves the concessionaire-industrialist in all stages of the management plans, from development through implementation. Management plans, in addition to technical and economic aspects, must now take into account social and environmental considerations. Therefore, partnerships are established and various actors or parties concerned (governments, companies, NGOs and populations) take part in the management of forest areas. Many forest concessions in the Congo Basin have initiated a process of long-term development and certification, the latter being the recognition of good sustainable management practices. The total areas of forest concessions in Central Africa committed to the process of sustainable management is estimated at almost 31 million hectares. Sustainable management is characterized by a thorough knowledge of the resource, a low rate of extraction per hectare, the introduction of reduced impact logging and long cutting cycles. Major gaps in the sustainable management of industrial concessions have included a low level of concern for regeneration of the forest and weaknesses in public participation and consultation mechanisms for permitting equitable access to the decision-making process by all stakeholders.

Protected forest areas

The management of protected forest areas in the region has undergone radical changes during the past decade. Protected forest areas cover approximately 32 million hectares in tropical Africa. Some of them, established before independence, were formerly characterized by the central government's monopoly over control and protection, including the exclusion of local populations and, frequently, the prohibition of traditional uses of the fauna and flora. Nowadays, the participation of rural populations living within or near protected areas in their management is generally accepted and is implemented under a combination of integrated development and conservation approaches. The need for managing protected areas by taking into account the needs and rights of the local populations was clearly stated at the time of the 1982 World Congress on Parks. The best way to achieve conservation goals is not to exclude people from protected areas, but to manage human activities so that they do not undermine the values which led to their establishment. Various initiatives throughout the region show that conservation entrusted to local communities can give satisfactory results (e.g. Dja fauna reserve in Cameroon, Lopé reserve in Gabon, ECOFAC in Central Africa). While the main characteristic of this type

Fellowships awarded

Twenty-two fellowships were awarded at the 43rd session of the International Tropical Timber Council in November 2007. Awardees were:

Mr Nelson Abila (Nigeria), to participate in a short training internship on 'Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Ecosystem Service Valuation'; **Mr Winston Adams Asante (Ghana)**, to undertake Masters research on 'Controlled Felling and Skidder Disturbance in Reduced Impact Logging'; **Mr Mvondo Samuel Assembe (Cameroon)**, to undertake PhD research on 'Sustainable Forests Management Principles and International Customary Law'; **Mr Constantino Aucca Chutas (Peru)**, to attend a training program on 'Use and Management of Cloud Forests in the Abra Patricia—Alto Nieva Private Conservation Area'; **Ms Teodora Dogup Balangcod (Philippines)**, to prepare a PhD thesis titled 'Geographic Distribution, Ecology and Reproductive Biology of *Lilium philippinense* Baker, an Endemic Species in the Cordillera Central Range, Luzon Island, Philippines'; **Mr Sharad Kumar Baral (Nepal)**, to undertake Masters research on 'Impacts of Forest Management on Selected Ecosystem Properties: A Case Study from Two Community Forests of Mid-hills in Nepal'; **Mr Diego Fernando Bermeo (Ecuador)**, to undertake a Masters program in 'Management and Conservation of Tropical Forest and Biodiversity'; **Ms Savita Bisht (India)**, to prepare a technical document on 'NTFPs in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, India'; **Ms Raquel Correas Bulegio (Bolivia)**, to undertake Masters program in 'Forest Science'; **Dr Claudio Henrique Soares Del Menezzi (Brazil)**, to participate in the 10th World Conference on Timber Engineering in Miyazaki, Japan; **Mr Arun Dhakal (Nepal)**, to prepare a technical document on 'Productivity and Silviculture of Five Economically Important Timber Species of Central Terai of Nepal'; **Mr Oyétoundé Djiwa (Togo)**, to prepare a Masters thesis on 'Participation of Populations in the Sustainable Management of Community Forests in Francophone West Africa: Case of Togo'; **Mr Jean-Pierre Kampé (Congo)**, to prepare a PhD thesis on 'Influence of the parameters of the soil on the space distribution and the growth of *Pterocarpus soyauxii* Taubert (Fabaceae) and its associated flora in Mayombe'; **Mr Kouakou Bob Kouadio (Cote d'Ivoire)**, to undertake a short training course on 'Forest Management Tools'; **Ms Alba Lucia Marin Valencia (Colombia)**, to undertake a Masters program in 'Wild Area and Nature Conservation'; **Mr Pierre Paul Mbarga (Cameroon)**, to attend a short training course on 'Forest Management Tools'; **Ms Mercy Che Ndikum (Cameroon)**, to undertake a post-graduate diploma in 'Sustainable Forest Ecosystem and Landscape Management in the Tropics and Sub-tropics'; **Ms Gladys Nchang Neba (Cameroon)**, to undertake a horticultural internship program; **Ms Philomène Nkoulou (Gabon)**, to undertake a program in 'Economics and Sustainable Forest Management'; **Mr Caleb Boateng Ofori (Ghana)**, to undertake PhD research on 'Monitoring Forest Resources using Amphibians as Indicators'; **Mr Josua Vu Ralulu (Fiji)**, to earn a diploma in 'Wood Manufacturing'; and **Ms Rina Susanti (Indonesia)**, to undertake a MSc program in 'Tropical Forestry and Management'.

of participative management remains biodiversity conservation, priority is also given to the supply of environmental goods and services to local stakeholders in order to guarantee the sustainable conservation of the ecosystem involved.

Community forests

Innovative approaches to the management of community forests are being experimented with throughout the region, especially in Cameroon. These forests are designed to meet the needs of local stakeholders for social justice, economic benefits, healthy forests and responsible use. They have evolved with the trend towards decentralizing forest management in many countries, in order to ensure the respect of customary rights and to ensure a more equitable distribution of the benefits derived from forests. However, the practice of community forestry gives rise to many controversies. Objectives to safeguard biodiversity resources and improve the well-being of the communities concerned are often not attained. The sharing of rights and responsibilities is often far from equitable. Nevertheless, the importance of engaging with local communities to improve forest management justifies on-going efforts to build technical and socio-economic capacity for SFM within them.

Plantation forests

Plantations cover 1 678 000 and 612 000 hectares in West and Central Africa, respectively. Plantation establishment has been most rapid in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and Togo. Tropical plantations in the region are extremely diverse in terms of species, objectives and stakeholders (and, consequently, social, economic and ecological impacts). Large scale plantations are undertaken by State organisations or private companies. They are generally established on non-forest land or land that has long remained inactive. Plantations have been established with commercial species such iroko, moabi, sipo, sapele, etc, or with fast growing species such as framiré, fraké, ayous, limba, teak, eucalyptus, pine, etc. In spite of the controversies they sometimes raise, the development of forest plantations generates potentially positive effects on sustainable development at the local, national and regional level. However, problems of land use allocation and the rights of local populations have raised questions about the management and sustainability of some plantations.

African tropical forest governance

The increased focus on sustainable management has led many African governments to initiate several activities to improve overall forest governance in the region. Prominent among these are the African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) process, participative management of protected areas and new tax reforms.

AFLEG

Realizing that corruption, illegal logging and illegal trade of forest products created enormous economic and social costs, the G-8 countries and the World Bank launched a Forest Action Plan to fight against these problems less than a decade ago. The related African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) process was subsequently initiated within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The first AFLEG ministerial conference was convened in October 2003. The AFLEG Declaration or Action Plan arising from the conference advocated actions relating to legislative and institutional reform, capacity-building, information, the enforcement of laws and follow-up actions, protection of faunal resources, management of forests and the financing of markets and trade. To this end, the majority of countries in the region have put in place new forest policies and initiated the development of rules applicable to either the whole forest sector or to particular fields which needed to be regulated. In addition, civil society, international organizations, NGOs and donors have become involved through new partnerships to assist programmes for the management of the forest sector and the implementation of forest codes.

Participative management

The largely government-led monopoly on management of national forests in Africa has led to decline of the sector and degradation of the resource. Democratic movements and the ongoing international dialogue on sustainable forests management prompted a search for solutions to the problems arising from traditional systems of forest management. Participative management or co-administration of protected areas has been defined as a form of partnership allowing the various actors involved in safeguarding nature to share the functions, rights and responsibilities of managing a territory or a range of resources enjoying statutory protection. This new alternative is at the heart of legislative reforms in Africa and has

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species by end-use application, grouping species by common physical and mechanical properties.

Forest-based communities and small forest enterprises will particularly benefit from the outputs of this project, since the areas available to them will have greater relative value compared to current levels of utilization and market focus. Often, these entities do not have knowledge of extended species utilization, nor the resources for marketing and product development. The entire forest industry will benefit from expanding the current species utilization base, allowing increased production while maintaining sustainable forest management principles.

Future activities

The results of all LUS testing and the subsequent forest industry training program will be included in the final report of the project. In addition, promotional booklets on targeted LUS will be distributed at the local and regional levels.

The GFC has already commenced work on additional activities to boost development of the forest sector. The local industry in Guyana has shown significant interest in adding value locally and many mills have undertaken production of high quality timber products for niche markets. Demand has remained strong for Guyana's timber products for use in outdoor applications, including marine, construction and decking end-uses, along with indoor applications such as flooring and furniture. The GFC will continue to work with the forest sector in Guyana to ensure that a high level of quality is maintained in forest products to raise Guyana's image in international markets.

The project has been very successful in building a solid foundation for expanding the species utilization base of Guyana. This will certainly decrease the pressure on prime commercial species and continue to enhance the development of the forest sector in Guyana.

Project outputs are available from the ITTO Secretariat (fi@itto.or.jp).

been tested in several countries, including in the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tomé and Principe.

New laws in many African countries have enshrined the participative process in the development of policies and programs relating to protected areas, community forests, program planning and forest management activities, through consultation mechanisms, decentralization and privatization. Community initiatives remain the main type of participative approach in Africa, although some countries are not particularly favourable to them.

Forest taxation

Studies of the contribution of revenue from forest taxation to the economic and industrial development of African countries have been on-going for many years. They have shown that taxes can increase forest rent and promote the economy if the proceeds are properly invested for the benefit of national entrepreneurs and to promote local processing of raw material. Recent tax reforms in many countries have been undertaken within the framework of improving forest governance. Others have been mandated by the World Bank as part of structural adjustment programs. The aim of many tax reforms is to define a dual economic and ecological objective of taxation (e.g. a tax on deforestation). In addition to more specific taxes and charges, the majority of the countries of the Congo Basin have retained taxes on surface area exploited and on felling and export volumes. In addition to the taxes stipulated by national forest codes, some countries, such as the Central African Republic, have retained forest taxes in the customs taxation system. In 2003, the Democratic Republic of Congo was applying nearly 155 different taxes and charges to an over-burdened forest sector. However, in spite of the multiplicity of taxes, rates are rarely adjusted and (at least individually) are not prohibitive. New tax mechanisms are also being tested, especially in Western Africa. They entail decentralization of the whole taxation system (Nigeria) or within a common national framework (Mali, Niger and Cameroon) or under centralized management with the sharing of the revenue from taxation with regions (Ghana, Togo). The outcome of these at times controversial reforms remains debatable. In general government revenues from taxation have increased throughout the region but the sustainable management of forests has been slower to show improvements.

Generally speaking, the multiplication of taxes and charges, the absence or weakness of controls and the corruption of state agents facilitate illegal logging and illegal trade. These shady practices hinder the progress intended to result from the reforms, with the risk of competitiveness loss, decline of the sector, and obstacles to national development.

Conclusion

The need for sustainable management of Africa's forests is undeniable. Central and Western Africa are different in regards to the management of their forest resources because of their differing development in economic and demographic terms. In Central Africa, there is a desire to establish sustainable management of forest concessions and to establish protected areas for the conservation of biodiversity. West Africa is more concerned with not only the conservation and sustainable management of the remaining forests, but mainly with the restoration of its vegetation cover and its forest resources, hence the interest in establishing plantations, in particular with fast growing species. Decentralization and privatization initiatives are generally more effective in Western than in Central Africa. Forest governance has evolved at the theoretical level, with legislative reforms already carried out or in progress in many countries to fulfil the requirements of the AFLEG process. However, practical implementation of reforms has not yet proven effective because of the resistance to new reforms and insufficient capacity.

The complete reports of the ITTO Fellowships that this article is based on are available from the ITTO Secretariat (fellowship@itto.or.jp).

ITTO fellowships offered

ITTO offers fellowships through the Freezailah Fellowship Fund to promote human resource development and to strengthen professional expertise in member countries in tropical forestry and related disciplines. The goal is to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests, the efficient use and processing of tropical timber, and better economic information about the international trade in tropical timber.

Eligible activities include:

- participation in short-term training courses, training internships, study tours, lecture/demonstration tours and international/regional conferences;
- technical document preparation, publication and dissemination, such as manuals and monographs; and
- post-graduate studies.

Priority areas: eligible activities aim to develop human resources and professional expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- improving transparency of the international tropical timber market;
- promoting tropical timber from sustainably managed sources;
- supporting activities to secure tropical timber resources;
- promoting sustainable management of tropical forest resources;
- promoting increased and further processing of tropical timber from sustainable sources; and
- improving industry's efficiency in the processing and utilization of tropical timber from sustainable sources.

In any of the above, the following are relevant:

- enhancing public relations, awareness and education;
- sharing information, knowledge and technology; and
- research and development.

Selection criteria: Fellowship applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria (in no priority order):

- consistency of the proposed activity with the Program's objective and priority areas;
- qualifications of the applicant to undertake the proposed fellowship activity;
- the potential of the skills and knowledge acquired or advanced under the fellowship activity to lead to wider applications and benefits nationally and internationally; and
- reasonableness of costs in relation to the proposed fellowship activity.

The maximum amount for a fellowship grant is US$10 000. Only nationals of ITTO member countries are eligible to apply. The next deadline for applications is **3 September 2008** for activities that will begin no sooner than 1 January 2009. Applications will be appraised in November 2008.

Further details and application forms (in English, French or Spanish) are available at www.itto.or.jp or please write to Dr Chisato Aoki, Fellowship Program, ITTO; Fax 81–45–223 1111; fellowship@itto.or.jp (see page 2 for ITTO's postal address).