

ITTO Tropical Forest

UPDATE

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



Earning more from forests

Many people make a good living by harvesting and processing timber and non-timber forest products, but a great many more are poor. A key task for forest policymakers, foresters and extension agencies is to enable forest-dwelling people to earn more from forests.

This edition of the *TFU* looks at the role of forests in livelihoods. Ewald Rametsteiner and Adrian Whiteman (p. 3) present an article

summarizing FAO's *State of the World's Forests 2014*, which surveyed the socioeconomic benefits provided by forests. They estimate that the total income earned from forests worldwide was US\$730 billion in 2011, more than 80% of which was due to the

Inside: socioeconomic benefits, ITTO projects and livelihoods, reduced-impact logging in Gabon ...



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Editor	Ramón Carrillo
Consulting editor	Alastair Sarre
Editorial assistant	Kenneth Sato
Secretarial assistant	Kanako Ishii
Design	DesignOne (Australia)
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International Tropical Timber Organization
International Organizations Center – 5th Floor
Pacifico-Yokohama, 1-1-1 Minato Mirai, Nishi-ku
Yokohama 220-0012 Japan
t 81-45-223 1110
f 81-45-223 1111
tftu@itto.int
www.itto.int

Images: Workers put the finishing touches on a bamboo chair as part of value-added training in Peru (cover); two project beneficiaries pose with a newly planted bamboo seedling (above). *Photos: J. Takahashi*

wood-based forest sector. While this is substantial, it constitutes only about 1% of the total global economy. The lion's share of socioeconomic benefits from forests is not monetized because it is derived from the direct consumption of forest goods and services—billions of people use forest products and environmental services to directly meet their needs for food, energy and shelter. Better policies could increase the benefits derived from forests, say Rametsteiner and Whiteman: providing people with greater access to forests and markets and improving the enabling environment for producer organizations, for example, are powerful ways of increasing benefits.

Other articles in this edition present ITTO projects¹ that have been working at the local level to help communities improve their forest-based livelihoods. Herry Subagiadi and Harianto Arifin (p. 7) report on a project to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and environmental services in the Cibodas Biosphere Reserve in Java, Indonesia, by strengthening forest law enforcement and governance. Among other things, the project helped developed a cadre of local trainers and extension workers with knowledge of the Reserve and its management; the aim was to build the capacity of communities to pursue sustainable economic development opportunities, such as those based on ecotourism, crafts manufacture, renewable energy and organic farming.

Another ITTO project, described by Josefina Takahashi (p. 10), aimed to assist local people in the Peruvian Amazon in realizing the huge commercial potential of bamboo. Bamboo forests in the region are under threat from degradation and conversion, but improvements in the quality of bamboo culms as a result of project interventions have increased prices in the area by 400% or more. Bamboo production is now a more profitable land use in the project's areas of influence than any other annual or biannual agricultural crop.

An article by Cécile Ndjebet and Patrice Ngokoy (p. 13) describes the threats faced by mangrove forests in the Cameroon

Estuary and the activities of an ITTO project to address those threats. The project helped develop a master plan for the management of the mangrove forests and also worked with local people to develop new livelihood strategies. The project worked with more than 900 people in “common interest groups”, who were able to increase their income by up to 40%.

An article by Arsenio Ella and Emmanuel Domingo (p. 16) describes an ITTO project in the Philippines that taught new methods for making use of non-timber forest products to three communities through seminars, hands-on training and work experience. Those communities are now better equipped to boost their livelihoods while managing the forest resource sustainably.

Finally, and on a different tack, an article by Vincent Medjibe (p. 18) presents the results of a study in Gabon on the impacts of three logging regimes. Timber harvesting is an important source of livelihoods in Gabon, employing more than one-quarter of the country's workforce, but conventional logging is highly destructive of the forest. Medjibe concludes that reduced-impact logging, combined with silvicultural operations to stimulate the regeneration of okoumé, is required to ensure the longevity of the timber industry and the livelihoods associated with it.

People are most likely to manage forests well when it benefits them to do so. Ensuring such benefits is perhaps the ultimate challenge for forest policymakers: it might mean reforming forest tenure, supporting forest producer organizations and clearing away the hurdles to value-added processing and fair market access, among other things. Well-managed forests have tremendous potential to contribute to people's livelihoods; through its project program, ITTO is working with its partners to demonstrate how. The task now is to scale up such efforts.

Ramón Carrillo
Editor

¹ ITTO now has a searchable online database of its completed, operational and pending projects. See page 26 for details.