

**Yati Bun, executive director of the Foundation for People and Community Development in Papua New Guinea, died in February**



Photo: Earth Negotiations Bulletin

Yati Bun was a founding member of ITTO's Civil Society Advisory Group, a frequent attendee at sessions of the International Tropical Timber Council, and a calm presence respected by all members of the Council. Yati was also executive director of the Foundation for People and Community Development (FPCD), a highly regarded non-governmental organization in Papua New Guinea (PNG) with core expertise in community-based forestry and forest certification.

Yati had strong beliefs about how forestry should be conducted in PNG. He believed that the customary resource owners (i.e. the communities who own the forests) should manage their forests and not hand over land and timber rights to outside developers. This brought him into disagreement with conventional forestry practice in his country, which was one of the reasons he left the PNG Forestry Authority after ten years of service there. Through his work with the FPCD he kept true to his vision of forestry by and for the people; it was a difficult path to follow, but he never strayed from it.

Yati was a founding member of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and over the years he was instrumental in using FSC certification as a tool for improving forest management in PNG. He worked tirelessly to obtain an FSC group certificate for the FPCD's Indigenous Community Forestry scheme. When this was achieved, he argued that if communities could manage their forests according to the highest international sustainability principles, there was no excuse for logging companies not to do the same. Yati was one of the architects of the newly established FSC Permanent Indigenous Peoples' Committee.

Yati was a founder of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) and served a term on RRI's board; the FPCD was one of RRI's first partners. Yati played a key role in shaping RRI's approach and programs and was always a positive, generous spirit and charming presence at their meetings.

Yati kept the door open to anyone wanting to work with him to improve forest management and the wellbeing of communities in his country. For example, the FPCD helped implement a private-sector/civil-society partnership (with funding from ITTO) to assist a forest company to take steps towards FSC certification in PNG's Western Province.

Yati was always welcoming and willing to help out in anyway he could. He supported many young foresters who worked with him to pursue higher education overseas, and he was always proud when they returned to PNG and took up new positions. Many other PNG foresters benefited from his guidance.

Yati was highly respected wherever he went—whether he was working with other likeminded people in international circles or with communities in his country, building their capacity to manage their forests wisely. He supported overseas volunteers and many others, and he worked closely with the Forestry Authority and progressive companies to raise the standard of forest management in PNG to a level where the country could take real pride in its forestry. Above all, Yati was a gentle man of principle and a great person to be around. He will be missed by many.

*This obituary was written by Henry Scheyvens, with help from Chen Hin Keong, Alastair Sarre, Ramón Carrillo, Andy White and published sources.*

## ITTO Fellowship Network

ITTO has launched the ITTO Fellowship Network, a social media platform to facilitate interaction and knowledge-sharing among ITTO Fellows and alumni who have benefited from the ITTO Fellowship Programme. The Fellowship Network will:

- promote the sharing of knowledge and information among ITTO Fellows and alumni on the sustainable management and use of tropical forests and related issues;
- disseminate research papers, technical documents, books, etc., produced by ITTO and ITTO Fellows and alumni, including by allowing Fellows and alumni to upload their own work;
- provide a forum for collaborative work among ITTO Fellows and alumni;
- provide a platform for pursuing common interests, such as career development opportunities and networking; and
- provide up-to-date information on alumni activities and events worldwide.

The Fellowship Network is open to all. Join and share your experiences and publications to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests at: [www.ittofellownet.org](http://www.ittofellownet.org).

For more information contact: Dr Chisato Aoki, Fellowship Coordinator, at: [fellownet@itto.int](mailto:fellownet@itto.int).