

ITTO-IUFRO-FORNESSA PROJECT

Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Services from Forests (REDDes)

Pilot Site in Ghana



“Collaborative participation to fight forest resource degradation in the Offinso District, Ghana”

- Area: 134 000 ha
- Altitude: 106 m
- Average annual rainfall: 1 600 mm
- Average annual temperature: 27 °C
- Climate: Tropical wet & dry, Savannah climate (Aw/As)
- Population: 133 776

Context

With support from the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), IUFRO-SPDC and FORNESSA have embarked on a new project addressing the **challenges of deforestation and forest degradation** in Africa. The project aims at generating scientific information on specific pilot areas in Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, and disseminating this information to policy makers and forest practitioners at the national and regional levels.

To this end, national expert groups composed of scientists from various

fields have been in the process of conducting comprehensive scientific assessments in the pilot areas. The whole range of aspects such as natural resources-related, socio-economic situations and institutional environments that have impacts on natural resources use have been covered.

Based on these independent assessments and analyses, specific strategies and actions for reducing deforestation and forest degradation have been formulated for each pilot area.



Pilot Site

The pilot site in Ghana is located in the Offinso district and has an area of 134 000 ha. The forest is dominated by tree species such as *Triplochiton scleroxylon*, *Entandrophragma spp.* and *Khaya spp.*, representing species with high economic value. However, the economic timber tree species are now scarce. There are nine forest reserves in the district,

covering an area of 73 300 ha, mostly managed for timber production, and approximately 893 ha are devoted to scientific research. The land is typically owned by the traditional authorities, and individuals. In the district the main activity is agriculture, which employs 70% of the active population. Timber and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) exploitation are

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also important for local communities. The population is mainly dominated by the Ashantis. NTFPs are mainly extracted for traditional medicinal use, food or materials for wrapping. Timber extraction has been carried

out in the district for over half a century. Thus, almost all the reserves have been degraded and timber exploitation still persists both in areas inside and outside forest reserves. or insects.

Unsustainable farming practices contribute to forest degradation in the district (Photo: E. Foli).



State of Landscape Degradation

In the Offinso District, the main drivers of deforestation and landscape degradation are attributed to the:

- increase of populations;
- unsustainable agricultural practices;
- regular occurrence of forest fires;
- poor harvesting practices and over-exploitation of timber;
- illegal timber harvesting;
- corruption;
- inadequate manpower in the forest service;
- lack of involvement of chiefs in forest management decision-making process; and
- weak law enforcement.

REDD+ Strategies

While similar problems can be identified among the pilot sites, solutions have to be developed site-by-site in order to be effective.

In Ghana, the stakeholder consultation process resulted in the proposal of six main REDD+ strategies, namely:

1. Promote community-based **fire prevention** and management.
2. Establish **plantations** (afforestation, reforestation and forest restoration) and community woodlots.
3. Promote sustainable community-based **enterprises** as alternative livelihood schemes.
4. Promote sustainable **agro-forestry** and on-farm practices.
5. Create **awareness** and build capacity of public institutions, local communities, media and other identifiable groups on linkages between sustainable forest management, environmental services and livelihoods and also to effectively engage in conservation mechanisms such as REDD+.
6. Promote community-based **sustainable forest management**.

Nursery of indigenous tree species



Indigenous species orchard
(Photo: E. Foli)



Conclusion

The success of this project is largely due to the strategy of integrating forest stakeholders and policy makers at a common forum. Indeed, the lack of involvement of forest communities in forest management decision-making at the local level has been identified as a strong factor of forest degradation. It is expected that those strategies and proposed activities will be considered by policy-

makers whose mandate is see to their implementation locally. One way forward would be to kick-start the process by supporting **community-based fire prevention and management** on a demonstrational scale. Such demonstration activities will engender community buy-in and future scale-up in other nearby communities.

« Involving local communities in forest management processes. »

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