

## **“CONSERVATION AND UTILIZATION OF MEDICINAL PLANTS IN GHANAIAN FORESTS FRINGE COMMUNITIES”**

Predominantly poor rural communities in Ghana cannot afford to seek modern health care facilities; rather over 60% of the population in Ghana largely depend on medicinal plants for their health needs.

Traditional herbal practitioners are readily accessible throughout rural Ghana however; these traditional medical practitioners harvest plants of medicinal value from nearby forests indiscriminately without replacement, which put the existence of many of these plants in jeopardy. Forest degradation and deforestation have led to medicinal plants becoming increasingly scarce, with collectors travelling long hours over long distances in search of specific medicinal plants. The loss of medicinal plants means not only an immediate loss of livelihood but also rapid erosion on the knowledge and efficacy of their use.

With the financial assistance from ITTO, a project has been implemented to encourage traditional herbal practitioners to support and develop medicinal plants reforestation and forest management activities. The project focuses on documenting the distribution, availability, conservation methods, sustainability and supply of endangered and common medicinal plants from three different ecological zones in Ghana.

### **Actions taken and achievements**

The project in collaboration with stakeholders identified, documented and validated 394 medicinal plant species (both timber and non-timber) and their uses, with herbarium samples collected and continually updated.



*Dryer for herbarium sample drying at FORIG- Photo by Sparkler Samar*



*Site preparation for planting medicinal plants. Photo by Sparkler Samar*



*Participants receiving training at FORIG Nursery- by Sparkler Samar*

In-situ and ex-situ conservation initiatives carried out. Herbal practitioners were actively involved in planting frequently used but rare plant species and collaborating communities demarcated lands near their source of drinking water as conservation areas. For example, the Mprim community, near Mampong, has demarcated 12 hectares as a conservation area. This aimed at restoring a significant proportion of medicinal plants and encouraging regeneration of harvested high-valued and endangered medicinal plant species.

Through workshops organised at forestry research institute of Ghana (FORIG), participating traditional herbal practitioners have been trained in silvicultural practices and simple nursery tools supplied to them. The provision of incentives has boosted the interest of participating traditional herbal practitioners in establishing their own private nursery and medicinal plant gardens.

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