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META-EVALUATION OF PREVIOUSLY EVALUATED ITTO PROJECTS

Lessons learned & good practices towards sustainable management of tropical forests

Summary Report

7. Criteria and Indicators for sustainable management of tropical forests

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THEMATIC SUMMARY REPORT No 7

Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests

1. INTRODUCTION

The ITTO Criteria & Indicators for Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests (C&I) were originally published in 1992 and since then they have been revised; training and other support have been provided to countries to facilitate C&I implementation. The purpose of a common set of C&I has been to facilitate governments, forest managers, communities, smallholders and other stakeholders in monitoring, assessing and reporting on the status of forest management and progress made towards sustainable forest management (SFM) at the national and forest management unit (FMU) levels. The ITTA includes several Objectives that are related to the implementation of the C&I to promote sustainable management of tropical forests, including objective (m) *Encouraging members to develop national policies aimed at sustainable utilization and conservation of timber producing forests, and maintaining ecological balance, in the context of the tropical timber trade* and objective (o) *Encouraging information sharing for a better understanding of voluntary mechanisms such as, inter alia, certification, to promote sustainable management of tropical forests, and assisting members with their efforts in this area.*

The ITTO C&I are aimed at serving as a framework for member countries to develop their own system for assessing and monitoring progress towards sustainability at the national and FMU levels. It is expected that when the indicators are made operational in specific country and local contexts, the information generated can facilitate policy design and ground-level implementation of SFM.

The C&I is therefore a useful instrument which enables countries and FMUs to report on the progress made while revealing areas which need additional efforts to achieve SFM.

2. KEY ISSUES

- There is still a lot of misunderstanding on the purpose and value-added of C&I as a tool for implementing SFM at national and FMU levels. Clarity is also lacking on what are the necessary enabling conditions for SFM in national and local contexts.
- National C&I have often been developed through a process which identifies in detail what are appropriate indicators in local contexts. Participation of the development process has sometimes been limited to the government agencies rather than including other relevant stakeholders like the private sector, community forest organizations and NGOs.
- The governments of tropical timber producing countries have programmes to promote and enforce SFM policies and practices by the private sector but there is often no comprehensive data on their impacts;
- The most critical level for implementing SFM is the forest management unit level. The private sector and forest communities being responsible for a large proportion of tropical timber production are therefore the key target groups of C&I implementation. However, their participation has been limited in many producing countries where the focus has been in the government-managed forests.
- There is a strong and growing demand among importers and buyers for information on SFM practices of companies producing tropical timber. The C&I is a potentially useful tool for communication but it is still underutilized and not well understood by target groups in the export markets.
- It is the responsibility of the government to ensure a legally defined Permanent Forest Estate, which is a fundamental element of C&I and necessary for FMUs to achieve SFM.
- The complementary roles of C&I implementation and forest certification processes at local level are not well understood. However, the C&I can provide a useful framework for national certification standards.

3. LESSONS LEARNED

Project design

- C&I implementation in ITTO member countries has proved to provide valuable contributions to the current knowledge on SFM at the ground level and major inputs to national policy development. In forest enterprises implementing C&I, it has been demonstrated that managing forestry operations sustainably is not only essential but also feasible.
- Unless the enabling conditions in national forestry policy and company policies are in place as identified in the C&I and various ITTO Guidelines, progress in SFM implementation will be slow.
- Government commitment to SFM based on C&I can persuade the industry and forest communities to embark on systematic efforts to achieve SFM.
- The adoption of C&I as a positive approach has had a powerful psychological and motivational effect on promoting SFM in many countries. However, good communication is necessary over the entire process involving testing, adjusting to local conditions and implementation.
- During the implementation process it is useful to clarify the link between the government regulations on the use of natural resources and the C&I. This can greatly assist forest managers to understand what SFM means in practical forest management.
- It is essential that, at the project planning stage, there is sufficient baseline information on the state of the forest resource as otherwise testing and implementation of C&I may not be meaningful. This would help stakeholders visualize the scale of the problems and the tasks at hand, to estimate the size and time span of the project.
- The absence of baseline data on the state of the forest, for example, also makes it difficult to measure and evaluate some of the C&I project's physical outputs;
- National level processes in developing and testing C&I can be useful in bringing together government agencies, the private sector and NGOs and contributing to a fruitful dialogue on what SFM is and what are the constraints in achieving it. Broad participation strengthens the legitimacy of C&I as a tool to make progress towards SFM.
- Adopting national level C&I and their integration in the forest monitoring system is an important step in the implementation process of SFM. A field manual on how to implement SFM in FMUs may be required to facilitate the operational-level work carried out by forest managers.
- The training strategy is critical for follow-up work to be done to integrate C&I into management and information systems at different levels. Trainees are expected to play two roles: (a) to serve as a pool of trainers to train responsible staff of concession companies and work in educational institutions and training programmes on SFM, and (b) to work as internal assessors in forest organizations or external auditors of independent certification and verification bodies. Trainees should also be able to advise forest managers on corrective actions required to improve present practices.
- Human resource development in SFM needs to be understood as a long-term continuous effort and periodic assessments based on C&I can reveal gaps in the existing skills. In general, countries should prepare comprehensive national programmes for training on the implementation of SFM targeted at forest managers and communities as well as other stakeholders.
- Valuable lessons can be learned from companies and forest agencies in other tropical and non-tropical countries which are also engaged in applying SFM measures.

Project implementation

- A major risk involved in the implementation of C&I projects has been reluctance of the private sector to participate and share their experiences with others. Industry motivation on the implementation of C&I is linked with government shifting from a purely regulatory approach to one that combines regulation with

incentives and market orientation. There should be clear benefits for companies and communities, such as e.g. reduced bureaucratic requirements to ensure their full participation.

- One reason for reluctance has been the appropriateness of provision of confidential information to other companies and stakeholders. This issue needs careful consideration during C&I related project implementation.
- Lack of involvement of some stakeholders in the national C&I processes has been a critical limitation for dissemination and impacts of the project. The private sector, forest communities and NGOs should be beneficiaries of the results and outputs, and their active participation should be ensured. This involves ready access to information, regular meetings, effective dissemination and broad participation in training events.
- Community organizations are useful in ensuring peoples' broad participation reducing also project costs during the C&I development phase. The absence of community groups in the process has limited project impacts. Specific action is necessary to ensure effective community participation in implementation of C&I projects
- Partnerships have been valuable in C&I projects. Community and NGOs can play a useful role in promoting SFM and assisting FMUs in their efforts to gain efficiency. Building up strong strategic partnerships between the government, the civil society and the private sector is a long-term endeavor which needs to be initiated at the national level during the project formulation stage in order to identify common objectives and ensure transparency and accountability in the C&I implementation process.
- Implications of institutional reforms such as on-going decentralization process, can lead to engaging new stakeholders (local governments, enforcement and environmental authorities, etc.) in the C&I process.
- Many C&I projects have revealed that there is an urgent need to develop better understanding and coordination between the authorities of the central and local governments to avoid overlapping and uncoordinated interventions targeted at FMUs.
- Projects implemented by the private sector often produce important results that would be valuable to government policy development. However, the feedback loop has been weak and there should be a mechanism, identified at project formulation, for validating and bringing the lessons learned to the attention of government (e.g. national workshops, analytical studies).
- Involving representatives from main importing countries in workshops and other phases of C&I projects has proved to be useful for improving understanding on sustainable management of tropical forests in exporting countries.

4. GOOD PRACTICES

Project design

- In the participatory project planning process, it is important to explain the positive nature of the C&I and how this tool can help stakeholders in their efforts towards SFM.
- Learning from other countries' experience is useful when the country has limited experience on C&I implementation.
- Project strategy may include development and implementation of national C&I based on ITTO C&I and their testing which can be on FMU, sub-national or national level, as appropriate.
- The top management of companies participating as pilot FMUs need to be fully informed on the implications concerning sharing of experience on C&I implementation.
- National-level project can preferably be housed in the planning/information unit of the forest agency.

Project implementation

- Strong government commitment to use C&I as a policy tool is critical for achieving the targeted results.
- Participation of all the relevant stakeholders is important in the development of national C&I.
- Close coordination among involved government agencies is necessary.
- Project steering group has a critical role to ensure effective implementation and may be assigned tasks related to feedback of the results to policy decision-making level.
- Multidisciplinary working groups and thematic sub-groups have been useful in elaborating national C&I.
- Community forests may need special measures for their involvement in C&I implementation; pilot FMUs could also include community forests.
- Integration of statistical, economic and forest databases contributes to effective C&I implementation.
- Statistical requirements of reporting to ITTO and other international bodies need to be considered.

Capacity building and dissemination

- Effective transfer of knowledge to local specialists avoids dependence on external technical assistance.
- Training planning need to cover all the levels and target groups.
- Dissemination of the C&I information produced can ensure sustained stakeholder support to periodic monitoring and other follow-up activities.
- Wide dissemination in different forms to all relevant stakeholders is desirable including yearbooks, information bulletins, newsletters, CD-ROMs, web portals, and other interactive means.

Sustainability

- Sustainability in the C&I implementation at national and local levels requires periodic review on the progress made for identifying corrective action needs.
- Pilot projects need to include validation of the results and their implications for policy adjustment should be identified.
- Establishment of a partnership engaging the private sector and other stakeholders can ensure their sustained support to improved systems.
- Regional-level sharing of experiences on C&I implementation through networking is helpful for further development.

SOURCES

This thematic summary is based on the ex-post evaluation reports of the following projects:

PD 48/99 Rev.1 (M,F)	SHARING OF INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES ON PRIVATE SECTOR SUCCESS STORIES IN SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT (MALAYSIA)
PD 80/01 Rev.6 (M)	CONSOLIDATING SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS IN INDONESIA
PD042/00 Rev.1 (F)	TRAINING OF TRAINERS FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE ITTO, AND THE NATIONAL CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AT FOREST MANAGEMENT UNIT LEVEL
PD195/03 Rev.2 (F)	TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL MONITORING INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR THE EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THAILAND'S FOREST RESOURCES
PD021/97 Rev.2 (F)	DEVELOPING TROPICAL FOREST RESOURCES THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT, NUEVA VIZCAYA, PHILIPPINES
PD389/05 Rev.2 (F)	APPLICATION OF THE INTERNAL MONITORING OF SFM PERFORMANCE AT FOREST MANAGEMENT UNIT LEVEL
PD 1/95 Rev.4 (M)	TRAINING DEVELOPMENT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN INDONESIA