



PEOPLE and TREES

SCOPE OF INTERCOOPERATION'S FORESTRY ACTIVITIES WITHIN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INTERCOOPERATION

FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENT SECTOR

Swiss Organisation for Development and Cooperation

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this document

In July 1997, INTERCOOPERATION evolved from the legal status of an association to that of a foundation. This decision, providing the organisation greater long-term stability, has also served as a catalyst for INTERCOOPERATION to reflect upon its role and contribution to rural development, and to rethink its overall strategy. This paper represents one step in the development of this new strategy, its purpose being to outline INTERCOOPERATION's specific contribution to forestry within sustainable development. All the ideas and activities that follow are based on an overall, long-term goal of the organisation, to support sustainable and improved inter-relations between people and trees.

Context

As a discipline, forestry grew out of a need to manage forests for wood products, and where appropriate, to protect tree cover in water catchment areas. To a large extent, this reflected a bias towards urban needs and priorities. International recognition of the vital contribution of forests and tree products to rural people's livelihoods came only in the late 1970s. This sparked, during the 1980s, wide-ranging initiatives promoting tree planting by rural communities - particularly for future fuelwood supplies. Working with local communities was new to many foresters, and inevitably mistakes were sometimes made - including at the fundamental level of project design. The 1990s have seen a shift away from educating local people about forestry to an approach based on mutual respect and learning. Emphasis is no longer on tree planting but on the wider management of trees in a given landscape, and, in particular, collaborative approaches to managing natural forests. There is also growing acknowledgement of the wide variety of different actors involved in forest management, and the need for a pluralistic approach to decision-making over trees and forests. This is the essence of a focus on people and trees.

INTERCOOPERATION's experience

INTERCOOPERATION has played an active role in the above described evolution of regional and international forestry perceptions and priorities. Furthermore, the organisation endeavours to be continuously open and adaptable to learning opportunities as they arise - following a process approach to development. Thus forestry activities have shifted over the last decade to conform with a more holistic concept of forestry for sustainable rural development. Greater emphasis is given to economic analyses, multiple stakeholder participation, support for institutional change, human resource development, and a broadening of forest management objectives to encompass multiple products and functions. Of the numerous terms employed to describe the enhanced – indeed central – role of people in forest management, INTERCOOPERATION prefers the term collaborative forest management. This is defined as a working partnership between the key stakeholders in the management of a given forest, in particular the immediate, local users, and the responsible forest authorities.

SKILLS AND SPHERES OF COMPETENCE

Execution of services

The services provided by INTERCOOPERATION include full scale project implementation, mandates for specific tasks, and advisory work in project identification, preparation, monitoring and evaluation. To date, the majority of these services have been conducted on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC, although mandates are also undertaken for international organisations such as the World Bank, and a number of Swiss public institutions. Within the context of its new status of a foundation, INTERCOOPERATION is actively seeking to expand its working partnerships with other donor organisations.

Geographical skills and spheres of competence

INTERCOOPERATION is working with its partner organisations and collaborators to develop sustainable forestry in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The countries of particular focus for field activities are, at present, Madagascar, Mali, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Bolivia, and Ecuador. INTERCOOPERATION is also contributing to various regional programmes, both in field-based activities and in an advisory capacity - particularly in the Andes, the Amazon Basin, the Himalayas, South East Asia, and the Congo Basin. It was also active in the past in certain countries such as Rwanda, Peru and Burkina Faso, where forestry projects have now been phased out. Thus collective experience covers a wide range of forest types, land use patterns, and social, economic, cultural and political settings.

Forest types in which INTERCOOPERATION supports collaborative activities range from wet lowland to dry montane, and from tropical to temperate forests.

Land use patterns range from extremely intensive agricultural use, where trees form only a scattered feature in the landscape, to areas of extensive forest cover in which agricultural production takes a secondary role to forest production.

Social, economic, cultural and political differences between and within the countries of focus give rise to a wide variety of livelihood strategies and organisational structures - with important implications for forestry development. Livelihood strategies include, for example, sedentary farming, shifting cultivation and nomadic pastoralism - with household economies ranging from subsistence-orientated to market-based, or largely remittance-dependent. At the organisational level, INTERCOOPERATION has experience in building partnerships with private individuals, households, user groups, collectives, non-government organisations, government agencies and departments, and technical forestry institutions and universities. It also has considerable experience in working in societies where certain groups - for example women, ethnic minorities and the poor - are highly disadvantaged.

The organisation's experience in furthering sustainable forestry at a national level ranges across a varied political spectrum – including multi-party democracies and countries newly-emerging from a Communist past. The economic conditions encountered vary correspondingly, and strongly influence the type of forestry activities that may be appropriate. Thus INTERCOOPERATION has experience of

working with partners in countries experiencing essentially free-market conditions; in countries undergoing stringent structural adjustment; and in countries with economies in transition.

Given this pluralistic working environment, INTERCOOPERATION seeks to foster in its forestry staff not only technical skills, but an awareness of, and skill in working within, different social, cultural, political, and economic contexts.

Professional skills and spheres of competence

The professional capacity of INTERCOOPERATION 's forestry personnel ranges from undertaking a leading role in projects and programmes to providing advisory support and backstopping. Emphasis is given to networking with other institutions and social organisations, and to active participation in national, regional and international fora. Within INTERCOOPERATION as a whole, emphasis is placed on collaboration between the three sectors of Forestry and Environment, Agriculture and Self-help Promotion.

Five forestry professionals, collectively possessing a wide range of specialist skills and geographical expertise, are employed at INTERCOOPERATION's headquarters to manage its forestry programmes. At any one time, approximately 20 expatriate forestry professionals and more than double - sometimes triple - this number of local counterparts and collaborators are employed in the field in direct project management with local partners. INTERCOOPERATION also has a core group of regular consultants whom it engages for specific tasks and assignments. In addition, it works closely with a number of Swiss and international collaborating institutions.

KEY WORKING PRINCIPLES

Sustainability

Sustainable forest and tree management is the fundamental tenet on which INTERCOOPERATION 's forestry activities are based. The concept of sustainability is here taken to encompass four inextricably linked goals: appropriate environmental management, economic viability, social well-being and institutional sustainability. Appropriate environmental management requires an understanding of forest ecosystems, and a system of harvesting of forest products - timber and non-timber – that is compatible with the maintenance or enhancement of ecological functions; long-term biological productivity; and biodiversity. Economic viability should be assessed according to mid and long-term cost-benefit analyses. These should incorporate benefits to the local population, and indirect forest services. Social well-being implies both the maintenance and improvement of local livelihoods, and the active, long-term involvement of key stakeholders in forest management decisions – including the support of institutional structures to this effect.

Economic benefits

It is important that economic analyses of forest management should be conducted within a long term perspective, in a manner which

- maximises profitability without detrimentally affecting the forest resource
- ensures equitable distribution of the revenue generated from forest activities
- considers all forest benefits, including those without a market price.

Thus economic analyses of forest management should include the indirect products and services of the forest (such as water regulation, soil conservation, carbon sinks, etc), in a clear link with the goal of appropriate environmental management.

Regarding direct benefits from forest management, INTERCOOPERATION supports the development of local processing and appropriate marketing, since both can substantially augment benefits to local people.

Collaborative approach

INTERCOOPERATION considers that forest management must be viewed in a pluralistic context, and therefore seeks to facilitate collaboration between all major stakeholders in decision-making – emphasising the role and voice of local forest users. In any given forestry initiative, the level of participation appropriate is likely to vary according to the stakeholders and the circumstances concerned. However, the approach in all activities is one of:

- mutual learning and respect, building on existing experience, skills and indigenous knowledge;
- developing committed working partnerships, in a spirit of openness and transparency;
- sensitivity to gender relations and biases – seeking equity between women and men in access to and control of forest and tree resources, and acknowledging the particular role that women may play in their management;
- seeking to improve the participation and well being of the disadvantaged members of society – being aware, and prepared for the consequences of, the changes in the balance of power relations within communities that this may entail;
- facilitating the management of conflict between different interest groups over forest resource use in a constructive manner; and,
- within this context, recognising and working with traditional management systems as appropriate.

Supporting institutional change

A broad trend over the last two decades, common to otherwise widely different governments, has been to devolve responsibility within civil society away from centralised decision-making bodies to a more local level. INTERCOOPERATION supports this process of decentralisation in forestry, which may entail considerable change in the organisational structure of forest institutions, and a re-orientation in the roles and thinking of their staff - or, in other cases, a strengthening of existing structures and practices. The organisation advises its partners and collaborators over the major changes in forest policy and legislation which are often necessitated by the decentralisation process.

Human resource development

Forest management that is consistent with the themes outlined here, and appropriate for the activities outlined in the following section, requires a broad range of skills on the part of all stakeholders, but particularly forestry professionals and local people. INTERCOOPERATION therefore places emphasis on the development of human resources to meet this challenge, and on supporting the important role of women in forestry.

Forest management for multiple products and functions

Forestry for rural development requires a wide perspective, with productive management covering a broad range of timber and non-timber forest products (such as rattan, bamboo, fruits, medicinal plants, livestock fodder, etc), in response to local needs. Forest management objectives must be clearly defined from the outset, and not necessarily limited to production and protection; they may often include important services such as contributions to soil conservation and fertility, the regulation of hydrological regimes, the conservation of biodiversity, recreation, tourism, and cultural and spiritual functions.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Natural forest management

INTERCOOPERATION is working with local partners to support sustainable management practices in a wide range of natural forest types. The broad aim is to determine management objectives through a collaborative process, and to further this process in developing management plans consistent with the working principles outlined previously. In some cases, the main management objective is still commercial timber production, in which case particular attention is given to aspects such as low impact logging, maximising the utilisation of different species, and the promotion of natural regeneration. More often, management plans must allow for a wide range of uses, including the harvesting of non-timber forest products and the grazing of livestock, and services or functions such as watershed protection and the preservation of sites, or individual plants/species, of cultural or spiritual significance.

In the management of areas for biodiversity conservation, emphasis is placed on the integration of ecosystem conservation and development. Since conservation measures must be compatible with local people being able to gain an acceptable livelihood, INTERCOOPERATION supports an approach of controlled, low impact harvesting of non-vulnerable species, and the development of alternative sources of income, such as through eco-tourism.

Whatever the specific objectives of forest management, INTERCOOPERATION recognises the importance of sound planning in the context of the wider pattern of land use, as well as at the level of forest management unit, and seeks to support the implementation of collaborative planning processes.

Afforestation

INTERCOOPERATION is active in supporting afforestation in various parts of the

world. This is particularly true in mountainous areas and semi-arid zones, where restoring tree cover to fragile, degraded slopes can be crucial for soil and water conservation. In this respect, the organisation has particular experience in bio-engineering techniques for slope rehabilitation. It tries to support the use of indigenous tree species and varieties as far as possible, while acknowledging that exotic species also have an important role in certain cases. Tree product and species choice is considered a matter for local decision-making, based on the preferences of local people and professional forestry judgement. Similarly, the mode of seedling production must be tailored to local circumstances - with a highly decentralised system of farmer nurseries being appropriate in some situations, and a more tiered system of centralised nurseries combined with smaller satellite production units, in others.

Agroforestry systems

INTERCOOPERATION seeks to further the integration of trees into farming systems wherever this is appropriate. Appropriateness, in this context, may be determined by a variety of factors, including the agricultural cropping pattern, availability of labour, land ownership patterns, tree tenure and usufruct rights, etc. Support for agroforestry focuses particularly on the rehabilitation of fragile agricultural production systems - using trees as a means of soil stabilisation and improvement, as well as a source of products such as wood, fodder and food. Particular experience has been gained in the integration of multiple-use trees into mountain agricultural systems, and areas of sloping agricultural land in both semi-arid and humid tropical regions.

Forest product processing and marketing

Important gains in the efficiency of utilisation of forest products – both for subsistence and cash - can be made through appropriate processing and marketing. In particular, income generated by local people from the sale of timber and non-timber products (NTFPs) can be considerably improved if the products are first locally processed and then marketed effectively. INTERCOOPERATION therefore supports collaborative initiatives to develop small- and medium-scale, locally managed processing units – ranging from saw mills to processing units for fruits, medicinal plants, fibres, etc. Local harvesters and producers are also supported in forming marketing co-operatives or similar organisations to facilitate access to markets and credit, and to improve their marketing knowledge through market analysis, product identification, etc. A further practice supported in this regard is the labelling of forests and the certification of sound management practices, as a tool for improved marketing.

Research capacity development

Research has an important role in most of the field activities in which INTERCOOPERATION is involved. In some circumstances, a lack of base-line information may mean that new field activities commence with a programme of Action Research on which subsequent activities can be built. Research is always viewed as an integral part of strategic, collaborative planning processes, allowing for the identification of priority information needs. Where a need for a particular study is identified, every effort is made to support this - including doctoral

research, if appropriate.

INTERCOOPERATION tries to ensure that adequate emphasis is given to preliminary investigations before new research is undertaken. This includes, for example, a full review of existing research results and information, and thorough institutional analysis. Every endeavour is also made to facilitate communication between different research institutions - not only to stimulate the cross-fertilisation of ideas and reduce duplication of efforts, but also to promote the harmonisation of methodologies and collaboration in the dissemination of results. With respect to dissemination, INTERCOOPERATION believes strongly in producing research findings in a form that is accessible to a wide audience - and in particular at the local level, where the field investigation was conducted.

Human resource and institutional development

INTERCOOPERATION is active in developing links between those seeking and those providing training - facilitating information exchange and the thorough assessment of training needs. Particular training experience lies in:

- participatory natural resource management
- silviculture for multiple forest products
- farming and agroforestry systems analysis (including the integration of livestock)
- participatory action learning
- project and regional level planning and management.

Training is provided at a wide variety of levels, including, specifically:

- team-building for project professionals
- grassroots level workshops (for local individuals and organisations)
- environmental education for primary schools
- curriculum development for secondary and tertiary level education
- training of trainers
- practical field level training of under- and post-graduates
- conflict management.

In addition, INTERCOOPERATION is able to offer within the scope of its forestry activities a number of short-term volunteer opportunities for young expatriates to gain practical experience as part of their academic training, serving to the mutual benefit of both project and trainee.

Forest policy development at national, regional and international level

INTERCOOPERATION has considerable experience in collaborating with its locally-based partners in the analysis of forest policy, the elaboration of such policy at national and regional levels, and in the updating of forest legislation. This is particularly in the context of decentralisation, and the introduction of participatory or collaborative approaches to forest management.

INTERCOOPERATION'S forestry personnel participate actively in regional, national and international networks, and in advising international organisations. Combined with working partnerships with State forest agencies and practical experience at project level, this provides a wide-ranging background for analysing and understanding the complexity of relationships in forestry and environmental issues.

INTERCOOPERATION also supports the secondment of its staff to international organisations.

Documentation and information dissemination

INTERCOOPERATION offers a documentation and information service, called INFOREST. This catalogues, and provides a centralised source, of unpublished project documents and other material concerning forestry and the environment - making them available to users in the South and North. It facilitates access to information electronically and on paper with regular updates.

The service represents a contribution to the training of network members and includes support to local documentation centres in the south. It collaborates and networks with existing forestry documentation centres in Switzerland and abroad.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In order for its staff to take a full and active role in forestry development, INTERCOOPERATION encourages an environment of creative thinking, supported through regular training. INTERCOOPERATION'S role is further strengthened through international and national networking and the sharing of experiences in programmes in different countries.

Forestry in the next century will need to focus even more on the needs of local people, particularly the poorest members of society. The global gulf between rich and poor is ever widening, with clear implications for natural resource development – the poor being usually the first and immediate victims of environmental degradation. Forestry and agroforestry have a particular role to play in improving the productivity of poor rural livelihood systems.

Geographically, the growing economic divide between North and South is now being supplemented by a new geographical dimension of West – East, as countries formerly under Communist rule are gradually and painfully adapting to free market economies and new forms of political and social organisation. There are complex and challenging opportunities for natural resource management in such countries – moving away from past collective, centrally planned forest management to locally directed management, based primarily on local needs.

The urbanisation of human populations, while perhaps not as rapid as once predicted, is still a major trend throughout most of the world. Here too there are challenges for foresters, particularly in respect of the management of trees in urban environments to meet the needs of the urban poor.

The above are selected examples of emerging needs and possibilities; there are many others. The global environment is a fast changing one, but INTERCOOPERATION is committed to meeting the challenges posed by the inter-

relations between people and trees beyond the turn of the 21st century.

The photographic illustrations were taken in different continents by IC staff and collaborators.