

**INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION**

**ITTO PROJECT PD 5/94 Rev. 3 (M)**

**DEVELOPMENT OF COMPUTERIZED INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR THE FORESTRY  
COMMISSION OF GHANA**

**EX-POST EVALUATION REPORT**

**Prepared for the ITTO  
by  
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## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT**

Project PD 5/94 Rev. 3 (M) concerns the enhancement of the Information Service of Ghana Forestry Commission (GFC). Before 1995, computers played a relatively minor role in forest sector information management in Ghana. The sector's operations were loosely monitored, and reliable and timely analysis of sector performance was not consistently available. These problems were believed to be among the causes of resources vulnerability. The project was formulated to enhance GFC's capability and the capacity in formulating, planning, and evaluating national forest and wildlife policies and programs. It was expected to establish methodologies to standardize information gathering, coordinate operations among forest sector agencies and to develop information exchange network for the country's forest sector agencies.

The data base developed, with an equipment of stronger processing capabilities, verification methods and more regular reporting, was meant to assist in felling control, financial management, policy analysis, environmental monitoring and environmental impact assessment. For an effective coordination of the forest sector activities, five areas of operations requiring the development of computer systems were described as forest management, revenue collection, research analysis, policy analysis.

## **2. EVALUATION PURPOSE**

This evaluation was conducted on the request of the ITTO secretariat following the decision by the Committee on Economic Information and Market Intelligence in its XXIII Session to recommend the ex-post evaluation of PD 5/94 Rev. 3 (M). The purpose of this ex-post evaluation was to assess the project's contribution to Ghana Forestry Commission's data processing, analysis and dissemination activities, to establish reasons for the longer duration of the project than planned, the long delay between the cessation of the project activities and the submission of the final report, the delay in refunding to ITTO the balance of resources which were granted for securing a permanent internet connection, and to make recommendations where appropriate to avoid such delays in other projects.

## **3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION**

The scope and focus of the evaluation are to determine the impact and relevance of project PD 29/96 Rev. 1 (M). The terms of reference given to the evaluator, as specified in Appendix to the "Special Service Agreement", are quoted as follows:

- i. To assess the achievement of the project objectives and outputs.
- ii. To assess the appropriateness of the Information System developed taking into account the data-processing structure in place within the Forestry Commission and other collaborating agencies prior to the project.
- iii. To evaluate the impact and relevance of the project in terms of its impact on strengthening the Forestry Commission's linkages with other agencies in the Ghanaian forestry sector and associated improvements in forest management, revenue collection, research analysis and policy analysis.
- iv. To assess the overall post-project situation, including the utilization of the permanent Internet connection authorized with project funds.
- v. To assess unexpected effects and impacts, either harmful or beneficial, and present the reasons for their occurrence.
- vi. Analyze and assess implementation efficiency, including the technical, financial and managerial aspects.
- vii. Recommend follow-up actions to enhance the contribution of the Information System to the Forestry Commission.
- viii. Taking into account the results of the evaluation, make an overall assessment of the project's relative success or failure; summarize the key lessons learnt; and identify any

issues or problems which should be taken into account in designing and implementing similar projects in future.

- ix. Prepare the evaluation report in accordance with the terms of reference for the Project Evaluation Report, as contained in the ITTO Manual for Project Monitoring, Review and Evaluation (pages 28-31).
- x. Assess the project contribution to ITTA objectives and ITTO Action Plan.

It was further mentioned in the terms of reference that "the evaluation work shall also be conducted in such a way as to allow answering questions identified in the ex-post evaluation checklist provided in the ITTO Manual for project Monitoring, Review and Evaluation (page 25).

#### **4. EFFICIENCY AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS**

The project has been implemented in a sufficiently efficient manner thanks to the high professional qualities and dedication of the staff of GFC, and the cooperation of the forest sector agencies which are data custodians for the information system. The successful implementation is due to the enthusiasm, the attitude of cooperation and the professional qualities of GFC's staff, and to the training program which was set-up. The good collaboration of the forest sector agencies that supply data to the Information Service was also a key factor.

In spite of its successes PD 5/94 Rev. 3 (M) suffered non-negligible implementation difficulties. The major implementation problem was the delay in completion. The project, which was planned to start in January 1995 for a duration of 24 months, started in August 1995, and took 30 months to complete. This resulted into a duration of 4 months longer, as the activities were terminated in October 1997. For such an area of limited previous implementation experience, if ITTO should have paid more attention to the initial delay to advise on how to reduce it.

#### **5. EFFECTIVENESS**

PD 5/94 Rev. 3 (M) established methodologies to standardize information gathering from various agencies of Ghana's forest sector, and to develop information exchange network. With the acquired computer equipment, GFC's Information System manages a databank based on 7 database units: Forest and Wildlife Resources, GIS, Forest and Wildlife Products Trade, Forest and Wildlife Research, NGOs and International Affiliations, Forest and Wildlife Policies and Legislation, Forest and Wildlife Industries. The databases are maintained with data supplied by the forest institutions. The project effectively enhanced the capacity of GFC to produce publications. The Commission's Information Service publishes annual reports, workshop proceedings and other publications. The project also successfully developed computer skills of the staff of the GFC. All of them, at different levels of responsibility, have had training in computer use for different roles (supervision of the information system, supervision of the GIS, computer appreciation, use of the software). This has enormously increased work efficiency.

#### **6. IMPACT**

Project 5/94 Rev. 3 (M) has had a lasting impact on the users and functioning of the GFC's services themselves, and on other agencies and stakeholders of Ghana's forest sector. Work efficiency of the staff has improved. GFC publishes information on a regular basis and can better reach out the public because of enhanced capability of dissemination. Data for sector policy development are available and there are new interactions between agencies because information managers meet for harmonization. The capacity of reporting has been enhanced, and annual reports are published at low cost without delays. Besides GFC and other sector

agencies, beneficiaries of project's results who visit GFC for information include financial institutions, students, and journalists.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Implementation efficiency and project effectiveness**

Implementation of PD 5/94 Rev. 3 (M) has been generally efficient. The commitment of the Implementing Agency and the enthusiasm of the staff involved in project have been key factors for the smooth implementation of the project. However, in certain respects the implementation of the project was not totally efficient. Looking at delays in completion, in final reporting and in balance fund payment to ITTO, it can be concluded that internal monitoring as well as monitoring by ITTO have been weak.

As far as effectiveness is concerned, the project has achieved most of the outputs and objectives, and can be regarded as a success. However, it has not achieved some of the important outputs, like Output 1.1 *"Technical systems, operating guidelines and procedures for forestry planning, monitoring and evaluation developed"*. In other cases where the objectives look like partially achieved, it is mostly because of bloated outputs that include those which should be considered as impacts, and not necessarily attainable right at the end of the project. The information system installed at GFC is by and large appropriate for the present and foreseen needs of Ghana. Thanks to a well-planned training program the project has had an important lasting impact on the personnel of GFC and on this institution itself.

Concerning cost effectiveness, no final conclusion can be drawn because the project still presents a contrasting situation. On the one hand, certain outputs and specific objectives have not been entirely achieved, while on the other, an unplanned output has been achieved and there is a net funds balance which is yet to be refunded to ITTO.

### **7.2 Overall assessment of successes and failures**

The project has been a valuable contribution to the enhancement of GFC's information Service and to Ghana's forest sector. It enhanced the capabilities of GFC in sectoral data collection and dissemination. The major failure is the non-achievement or partial achievements of important outputs and specific objectives, because of a too ambitious planning and perhaps lack of tools for internal monitoring. For example, Forest sector data were not analyzed as planned, a master plan for the forestry sector was not developed (because it not the role of GFC), processed data were not used to review policy issues and legislation in the sector, etc. However, it must be underlined that this failure reflects an inadequate planning which did not duly take into account the time factor. There was a confusion between certain outputs and impacts, and it was assumed in the project document that they will be achieved at the termination of the project.

### **7.3 Alternative design of the project**

The project's basic idea was good. Non-negligible imperfections were noted in the definition of the development objective which qualifies for a specific objective, and in the confusion between the concepts of project outputs and project impacts and effects. Furthermore, the design of the project would have benefited from a better logical framework matrix, defining indicators, means of verification and assumptions.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following recommendations have been drawn:

- The interaction of the database managers with the industry needs to be further developed to ensure timely supply of information to the GFC's information system.
- To avoid having a truncated experience with its disadvantage of not allowing for learning all the lessons that can be derived, Ghana and ITTO should cooperate further to achieve the outputs that have not been achieved or have been only partially achieved.
- Project proposals should be formulated based on the indications given in ITTO Project Formulation Manual. In particular, attention must be paid to the project's logical framework.