

To Establish a National Monitoring Information System for the Effective Conservation and Sustainable Management of Thailand's Forest Resources

Final Report

PD 195/03 Rev.2 (F)

I. Introduction

The project was approved and funded by the ITTC at its Thirty-fifth Session in November 2003 and full financing was pledged at the same Session. The agreement regulating the project implementation was signed on 27 January 2004 and the first disbursement of funds was made on 8 June 2004.

II. Project Objectives

The project was a follow up to Project PD 2/99 Rev.2 (F) that had been successfully completed. It aimed to generate monitoring information to support informed policy decision-making by the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation of Thailand and other agencies involved in forest conservation and sustainable forest management. The specific objective of the project was to set up a national monitoring system to provide change and trend data on timber and non-timber forest resources. When linked with socio-economic information, these data will provide basis for policy decisions and for measuring progress towards SFM.

III. Project Strategy and Activities

The project strategy was to establish a network of forest resources monitoring permanent plots to collect biophysical data over the entire country within a short timeframe and to link these data with socio-economic data from relevant institutions, as follows:

- To hold a national workshop to train the field crew chiefs on the use of the THAIFORM procedures developed under ITTO Project PD 2/99 Rev.2 (F) for establishing permanent plots;
- To install permanent plots over the entire country on the 20 km x 20 km grid;
- To prepare products (e.g. thematic maps, statistical tables) from the permanent plot database and link these with the socio-economic data that are to be imported and integrated with the forest resources monitoring data through GIS;
- To prepare a baseline C & I reporting template following the ITTO Guidelines;

- To hold a joint national workshop of policy makers to promote use of the forest resources monitoring database, publicize the C & I report and to provide feedback to data generators; and
- To update the monitoring system taking into account the workshop feedback, and develop a strategy to address any emerging issues.

IV. Project Achievements and Outputs

All planned outputs of the project have been achieved and contributed to the achievement of the specific objective and objective of the project. Specifically, all three planned outputs have been realized and the achievements can be summarized as follows:

- A national network of permanent monitoring points on a 20 km x 20 km grid was established for collecting biophysical data overtime. Permanent sample plots were installed at 1,129 monitoring points, out of a total of 1,287 points; plots could not be established at the rest of the points due to unsafe conditions at these locations. The field data were collected on tally sheets. An independent quality assurance check of 7% of the established plots concluded that the field crew measurements were accurate. A “panel” approach for plot re-measurement whereby 1/5th of the plots are re-measured per year was also developed. The detailed process of establishing the national baseline forest resource monitoring system (Output 1) is presented in the Technical Report No. 2.
- A modeling approach for linking the biophysical data from the permanent plots with socio-economic data from relevant institutions was identified and elaborated in the Technical Report No.3.
- A template to use the forest resource monitoring information for the reporting of the national C & I of SFM has been developed and presented in Technical Report No. 4 (Output 3).
- A national workshop of policy makers was conducted to promote use of the forest resource monitoring database, the C & I report publicize and feedback provided to data generators (Output 2).

In summary, this ITTO project has strengthened Thailand’s ability to create and manage forest resources monitoring information for better policy decision making. The Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) will now be responsible for the sample plot re-measurement, development of the socio-economic models when time series data become available and maintenance of the monitoring information database.

V. Target Beneficiaries Involvement

The ultimate target beneficiaries, when the monitoring system starts generating time series data nationally, are policy makers in DNP and RFD (Royal Forest Department), academia and NGOs. These stakeholders participated in the national workshop to review the developed monitoring information system and to recommend the next steps. A key recommendation from this workshop was that the DNP’s Forest Resources Assessment Division initiates the development of a regulation requiring the continuous monitoring of Thailand’s forest resources and fund re-measurement of the established plots on a 5-year re-measurement cycle and based on a “panel approach.

VI. Lessons Learnt

Among the important lessons learnt from the implementation of this project are:

- The development objective of the project could not be achieved during the term of the project but will be after the plots are re-measured and start generating time series data nationally;
- The project has strengthened Thailand's ability to create and manage forest resources monitoring information for better policy decision making;
- The field crew faced several challenges in plot establishment including danger from illegal loggers, poachers, land encroachers, national border conflicts, climbing steep terrain, wildlife; the travel from plot-to-plot that time consuming due to the wide 20 km x 20 km grid plot spacing; limited access to restricted areas such as army bases; the difficulty of field crew identifying unknown flora and fauna especially the non-tree smaller vegetation and seedlings; and
- Increased training time for field crews in plant and animal species identification could have speeded up field data collection.

VII. Dissemination of Results

The results of the project had been disseminated nation wide through the workshops, trainings, meetings, establishment of permanent plots and collection of field data. The Completion Report and four Technical Documents will be made available by the Executing Agency and Secretariat upon request.

VIII. Recommendations Related to Future Work

The Government of Thailand must ensure that the core staff of the National Monitoring Information System for the Effective Conservation and Sustainable Management of Thailand's Forest is maintained permanently in order to manage the monitoring system and database maintenance. It should further employ regional inventory field crews trained by the project to conduct periodically plot re-measurements and analysis.

(December 2007)