

Pilot plan for the sustainable management of 10'000 ha of secondary forest in San Lorenzo, Esmeraldas Ecuador

Final Report

PD 49/99 Rev. 2 (F)

I. Introduction

The Council approved the project at its Twenty-eighth Session and was fully financed at the Thirtieth ITTC Session in Yaoundé, Cameroon in June 2001. The Agreement regulating the implementation of the project was signed in October 2001. The first disbursement of funds was made in November 2001. An Independent Mid-Term Evaluation was carried out in April 2004. A Project Addendum with a budget for a seven-month project extension with additional funds in the amount of US\$ 84,240 was approved and financed at the Thirty-seventh Council Session in December 2004.

II. Project Objective

The project aimed to contribute to the sustainable management of secondary forests in the Province of Esmeraldas for the production of timber to supply the national and international forest industries and markets; to the development of technology to be applied at the national level; and towards the training of the local population.

III. Project Strategy and Activities

The project strategically contemplated the establishment and implementation of i) a pilot plan to facilitate the management and valuation of 10,000 ha of secondary forests and revert the process of forest degradation through sustainable resource management and community training; and ii) the development of technological packages to ensure the sustainable management of secondary forests at the regional and national levels.

IV. Project Achievements and Outputs

The Project was reported as completed in June 2006. In accordance with the project document and its related addendum, planned activities were carried out during the project's lifespan and can be summarized as follows:

Output 1: Sustainable forest management plans over 10,000 ha of secondary forests implemented

- The original 10,000 ha of secondary forests to be managed were bought out from the local communities and cleared for the establishment of palm oil plantations before the project could even initiate its activities there. In this light, the project was forced to secure another 10,000 ha elsewhere, albeit fragmented throughout several areas;
- After evaluating another potential 14,000 ha of secondary sites, the project initiated its activities in 3 areas covering a total of 3,250 ha of secondary forests; and
- A total of 22 management mini-plans for “colono” family plots covering in total 128 ha and another 88 work plans over 177 ha were developed and at various stages of implementation in these areas.

Output 2: Training courses for secondary forest-owning communities carried out

- A model secondary forest management area was established in an area of 40 ha in San Lorenzo for demonstration, training and dissemination purposes;
- 15 short training courses on SFM were organized to the benefit of 345 farmers;
- Several pamphlets on secondary forest management techniques were prepared and disseminated throughout the Esmeraldas region of Ecuador; and
- A video on Secondary forest management practices was divulged amongst interested stakeholders.

Output 3: Develop and test technological packages allowing the sustainable management of secondary forests for future use by communities and the Ministry of Environment

- A practical guide for the sustainable management of secondary forests in Ecuador was published and disseminated;
- 27 permanent sample plots were established in secondary forests, 18 of them with silvicultural treatments. Two yearly measurements were carried out during the project’s lifespan;
- A market study for products derived from secondary forest species was carried out;
- Papers on secondary forest management were presented at two conferences and three workshops;
- A draft legal regulation on secondary forest management was prepared and presented to the Ministry of Environment; and
- Several technical documents and reports were produced and disseminated.

V. Target Beneficiaries Involvement

With the assistance of the project, the local black and indigenous communities were directly involved, both at the local authority level and at the family unit level, in carrying out forest inventories and developing and implementing the mini-plans for the sustainable management of secondary forests at both the communal and family farm levels.

VI. Lessons Learnt

Development Lessons:

- The success of these types of forestry projects hinges on the active participation of the communities, but if responsibilities are given to the community as a whole, these usually become too dispersed and people have difficulty assuming any responsibility at all. It is preferable and far more practical to distribute responsibilities at the family unit level.
- Training and developing a local work group within the communities is far more productive than hiring outside technicians to provide assistance.
- As most communities dwelling in secondary forests are basically subsistence farmers, there is a need to simultaneously develop income-producing short-term activities with the long-term sustainable forestry objectives, lest they lose interest.
- Lack of clear land tenures discourages rural communities from committing themselves to long-term objectives.

Operational Lessons:

- It is important to enter into participatory agreements or other arrangements with previously motivated communities for secondary forest management activities to become established in the long-run.
- It is best to seek continuous blocks of secondary forests rather than settling to work in fragmented patches, as the logistics of providing assistance becomes cumbersome and reduces its cost-effectiveness.

VII. Dissemination of Results

At the community level, project results were mostly disseminated by word of mouth in the forest and through training sessions and workshops, plus simple pamphlets. At the national level, several workshops were organized and technical documents disseminated in order to raise awareness and provide technical information the public sector can utilize to develop strategies for the rehabilitation of secondary forests.

VIII. Recommendations Related to Future Work

The Ministry of the Environment should consider modifying current legislation and regulations in order to promote and encourage the rehabilitation of Ecuador's vast secondary forests. It currently prohibits the utilization of small-diameter trees of fast growing species in secondary natural forests and this limiting the overall interest in rehabilitating Ecuador's secondary forests.