With the organisation of an expert meeting on “Capacity building for forest scientists in Latin America in criteria & indicators, auditing of sustainable forest management and forest certification” that took place in Costa Rica in May 2003, IUFRO-SPDC successfully re-established its activities in Latin America. In order to mobilise scientific knowledge for C&I and forest certification processes, this expert meeting jointly organised by CATIE, CIFOR, IUFRO-SPDC and in technical collaboration with FAO aimed at discussing a training programme for forest scientists in Latin America. The results of this meeting to be published in a special issue of “Revista Forestal Centroamericana” will provide the basis for designing this new training programme. A report on the workshop is provided in this issue.

In Africa the official launching of the Coastal West Africa Node of GFIS took place at the Forest Research Institute (FORIG) in Kumasi, Ghana on 24th March, 2003. The presence of the Deputy Minister of Environment and Science and participation of representatives of several research organisations from Ghana and neighbouring countries is the result of the active role the GFIS Ghana Node has taken in mobilising scientific information and making it available in GFIS. More details about the launching and the training workshop for GFIS information providers that took place following the launching are given in a special report in this issue. Also within the framework of the GFIS Africa Project the scientific networking initiative on rehabilitation of degraded lands in Africa successfully completed a one-month e-discussion session supported by the ETFRN Coordination Unit and VITRI of the University of Helsinki. The final workshop planned in Nairobi, Kenya at the beginning of June as a joint event with the trees, agroforestry and climate change initiative (TACCCA) of ETFRN and VITRI, was postponed and relocated. Because of security concerns in Eastern Africa the venue and dates of the workshop were changed to Finland in early July, 2003. More information about this event can be obtained from the ETFRN website at http://www.etfrn.org/etfrn/workshop/degradedlands/agendaframe.htm.

Over the last several weeks efforts have been made to revise IUFRO-SPDC’s website. Three new sections, namely “About IUFRO-SPDC”, “Noticeboard” and “IUFRO-SPDC in the Regions” have been introduced on the main site (http://iufro.boku.ac.at/iufro/spdc/) and allow the visitor to rapidly access the desired information.

The section “About IUFRO-SPDC” provides visitors with the basic information on IUFRO-SPDC including mission, publications, donors/sponsors, photo gallery, staff members and contact details. Sponsors are listed and presented with their logos on a separate site. Donors including BMZ (Germany), ODA Japan, European Commission, Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management continue their valuable contributions. Additional support could be secured from the USDA Forest Service and GTZ (Germany). IUFRO-SPDC gratefully acknowledges the financial and in-kind contributions provided by these organisations. The “Noticeboard” serves visitors to obtain the latest news on forthcoming events, announcements and sponsorship opportunities. A section on previous events includes also links to publications, reports and proceedings of past workshops and training courses. The section on “IUFRO-SPDC in the regions” informs visitors about ongoing projects in the regions such as Africa, Asia/Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

A change in IUFRO-SPDC’s administrative staff took place on 13 June, 2003. After two years of maternity leave Mag. Eva-Maria Schimpf will return to her position as the IUFRO-SPDC administrative assistant. Mag. Birgit Buxbaum who has worked during these two years will leave IUFRO. On behalf of all the colleagues associated with IUFRO-SPDC I would like to thank Birgit Buxbaum for her dedicated work to keep the administration running. We wish her all the best for the future.

IUFRO-SPDC will be present at the World Forestry Congress in Quebec, Canada with information material at the IUFRO information booth from 21 to 25 September, 2003. I am looking forward to personally meet many of you in Quebec.

Michael Kleine
Coordinator IUFRO-SPDC
Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) - Coastal West Africa Node (Ghana) Launching and Training Workshop

Introduction

The Global Forest Information Service was set up with the prime responsibility of enhancing access to and provision of quality forest-related information, especially with regards to information that is available through electronic media.

Recognizing the peculiar problems regarding access to information in ACP countries, it was agreed that the project would be initiated in Africa as the GFIS Africa project. Thus five countries were selected to serve as Nodal Countries. The Institutes selected were:

- Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG)
- Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI)
- Centre National de Recherches Forestieres - CNRF (Senegal)
- Forestry Research Center - FRC (Zimbabwe)
- Association pour le Developpement des Economies des Pays de l’Afrique - ADIE (Gabon)

These five nodes have now been operationalized with the compilation of the databases an ongoing activity. It is in the light of this that FORIG as the West African Node decided to promote GFIS in order to create awareness that would encourage the use of the GFIS system.

The GFIS-Ghana Node

The GFIS node operations started following the inaugural meeting of GFIS-Africa in Dakar from 23rd October 2000. The Ghana node was supplied with hardware (A server, Computer, Printer, Scanner, CD Writer) Software (Windows 2000 Advanced Server, Microsoft Office, GFIS Nodal software Norton Antivirus) and operational funds all totaling 65,000.00.

The Key personnel at the node are:
- Dr. J. R. Cobbinah – Nodal Director
- Ms. S. Britwum – Nodal Webmaster
- Mrs. Sraku-Lartey – Nodal Content Manager
- Mr. K. Asamoah – Librarian
- Mr. E. Asiedu-Opoku – Data Entry Clerk

Launching

The node was formally launched on 24th March 2003 at the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG). Eighty participants representing a broad spectrum of researchers, policy makers, forest managers, Environmental NGO’s, Timber Merchants, small, medium and large scale forest plantation developers and students attended. Others were Librarians/ documentalist from in country partner institutions and the seven catchment countries.

The launching was a high profile affair. In attendance was Honourable Anna Nyamekye, the Deputy Minister of Environment and Science, who launched the humid West Africa Node.

Presentations

There were two key presentations by Dr. J. R. Cobbinah, Nodal Director and a member of the GFIS Taskforce and Dr. Atse Yapi, Deputy Co-ordinator of IUFRO SPDC programme on GFIS and GFIS-Africa Project respectively.

Their presentations underscored the importance of Forest Information to decision making, planning and Sustainable Forest Management. Both emphasized that a major problem facing information seekers is the location of information sources corresponding to their needs. They underlined the fact that with the rapidly growing number of websites containing forestry related information it is a huge task to search for relevant information.

They reiterated that even the best search engines have been incapable of locating all pertinent forestry sites, thus the need for GFIS.

The vision of GFIS 5-years from now as expressed by the presenters is to provide a ONE STOP SHOP for forestry information worldwide.

Achievements of Ghana Node

Achievements of the Ghana node since its establishment include:

- Formalization of agreements for information exchange on research data and mechanisms for future management of the information service within the catchment zone.
- Training of core group at FORIG on:
  a. GFIS Concept
  b. Database Design
  c. Metadata Standards and Indexing
  d. Introduction to Windows 2000 system
  e. Abstracting
- Training of in country partner institutions and representatives of catchment countries on:
  a. GFIS Concept
  b. Cataloguing and Indexing
  c. Metadata Standard
- Inputting of 690 metadata records as at 24th March 2003
- Launching of the GFIS Concept and technical development to a cross section of forestry practitioners including researchers, policy makers, forest managers, Environmental NGO’s Timber Merchants, small, medium and large-scale forest plantation developers and students.
- Recognition of GFIS as a source of authoritative research information on forests within the catchment zone.

Demonstration

Ms Stella Britwum, webmaster of the West African node gave an excellent demonstration on the operation of the website. The various options for searching for information were demonstrated. General opinion of participants was that the GFIS software is user friendly. Available information on the site includes data on
organisations, daily announcements, calendars and a bibliographic database that captures all the relevant forestry literature. Users could search from various angles including - by creator, species, country or keywords.

**Training Workshop**

Immediately after the launching ceremony, FORIG organised a four-day intensive training course for Librarians and Documentalists from the catchment countries of the Humid West African Node. All the countries were represented with the exception of Togo. The countries were Guinea, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, Benin and Nigeria. Also participants from partner institutions in Ghana were represented.

These included the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forestry Commission and the Plant Genetic Resources Centre. A total of 12 trainees representing various forestry related institutions in the sub-region were trained.

The main objective for the training was to equip participants with the skills and knowledge in ensuring that high quality data would be submitted into the database. Areas of emphasis included cataloguing, indexing and abstracting of resources for GFIS database and standardization of the metadata.

The resource persons for the course were experts from FORIG who had previously been trained in metadata and editorial quality. The course was designed to be interactive and was made up of combinations of lectures, practical works and exercises.

At the end of the course, participants expressed their commitments to submit records to the Node for the smooth running of the GFIS-AFRICA project. It is hoped that the knowledge gained after the course would enhance the ability of personnel working on the project to input and submit high quality information into the system to enhance easy accessibility to forestry information in Africa.

**Background**

Within its mandate to expand and foster research capacity in developing and economically disadvantaged countries, IUFRO-SPDC continuously strives to develop new training programmes for implementation. Within the broader context of technology transfer in forestry, one of the new areas under consideration is related to auditing of sustainable forest management (SFM) through the application of criteria & indicators and the processes of forest certification. Forest scientists play an important role not only in providing the scientific base for the formulation of C&I, but also in the design of local auditing systems for SFM. Contributions from forest scientists are also needed once forest certification systems are in place in terms of peer reviews of audit reports and advice to further develop the C&I and audit procedures.

Recognising the importance of both scientific and socio-political dimensions within the process of building adequate auditing systems, the role of forest scientists in developing countries is critical. Full participation of scientists is required, particularly to ensure that forest management standards are based on the latest results of local research and development activities. Local scientists may contribute significantly to the formulation of C&I and auditing procedures through their local experience with field assessments, data processing and interpretation of results. Their in-depth knowledge with regard to the local socio-cultural environment is indispensable to establish workable auditing and certification systems.

Experiences over the past decade have shown that the scientific community has been very supportive towards the idea of promoting improved social and environmental standards in forestry. With the further expansion of sustainable forest management in the developing world, forest scientists in these countries need to play a greater role in the C&I development, auditing and certification processes. Overall, this will serve the purpose of improving forest management in the field, thus scientific results can be promoted at field level through the application of C&I, systematic auditing and certification.

**Expert meeting**

In order to develop a training programme that is based on the regional and local experiences and truly enhances the ability of scientists to participate in the processes of auditing of sustainable forest management and forest certification, it was decided to hold an expert meeting in the region. For this purpose a technical committee between CATIE (Costa Rica), CIFOR (Belem,
SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

in C&I and forest certification. The in-
gional initiatives on capacity building
management and forest certification. A good mix
of disciplines in forestry, spanning from
traditional forest management to bio-
logical and social sciences present in
the workshop allowed to discuss the
issues in a multifaceted manner.

The expert meeting aimed at
obtaining information for the design of
a strategy for training of Latin Ameri-
forest scientists in the field of C&I,
auditing of sustainable forest manage-
ment and forest certification. In particu-
lar, the workshop focussed on the fol-
lowing issues:
- The contributions that scientists can
make in the development of C&I;
- The role of scientists in national cer-
tification processes including setting-
up of auditing systems, advising cer-
tification bodies, assisting in their im-
plementation through participation in
auditing and peer reviews;
- Identification of priority areas for
training such as translation of scien-
tific results into practical C&I, com-
munication with stakeholders and re-
view of audit reports;
- Strategic considerations for a train-
ing programme.

Programme

On the first day of the meeting partici-
pants presented papers on the subject
focussing on the development of C&I
in Latin America, status of forest certi-
fication, schemes of accreditation and
certification, local experiences with the
application of C&I at the national and
forest management unit levels and re-
gional initiatives on capacity building
in C&I and forest certification. The in-
formation presented in these papers
provided the background for the dis-
cussions and group work during the
following days.

During the second day, four work-
ing groups were formed to discuss
training needs on the basis of the role
of forest scientists, problems with the
application of C&I and certification as
encountered in Latin America and the
identification of specific training needs.
The groups discussed these issues
comparatively for broad themes such as
tools for sustainable forest manage-
ment, standard setting and monitoring
and evaluation.

A field trip was organised on
the third day to demonstrate an audit-
ing system of natural forest manage-
ment as currently practiced by
FUNDECOR in the private forest in
Costa Rica.

The expert meeting concluded
on the fourth day with plenary discus-
sions based on the results obtained by
the working groups. Detailed recom-
mendations made by the groups were
briefly discussed, followed by the for-
mulation of some preliminary results
and recommendations.

Results and recommendations

In conclusion, the principal objectives
of C&I, their use to elaborate tools and
guidelines for sustainable forest man-
agement and the role of forest certifi-
cation as a market instrument are high-
lighted. It is, however, also noted that
for several reasons the mechanisms for
C&I and forest certification in Latin
America have not met expectations.
It is therefore necessary that the pro-
cesses of developing, validation and
application of C&I require research,
capacity building and technology
training programme would not only be
to familiarise and train scientists on the
subject but also to motivate them to
more actively engage in these pro-
cesses.

The meeting recommends the
establishment of a programme for the
mobilisation, motivation and capacity
building of forest scientists in C&I and
their application at the different levels
and management contexts. It is further
recommended that the technical com-
nittees that organised the expert meet-
ing, establishes a working group which
would elaborate a detailed proposal for
the training. The technical committee
should continue its work to overlook
the development and implementation
of the training programme. The results
of the expert meeting including the pres-
entations and outcome of the deliber-
actions will be published in a special is-
ue of the “Revista Forestal Centroameri-
ca”, in December 2003.

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Coordinator of IUFRO-SPDC