



Conservation organisations are not supposed to fail. Our donors want to know that their money has been well spent. Besides the occasional scare story, we keep our supporters on a strict diet of conservation victories in order to keep the contributions flowing. We also have a personal interest in looking good: those running successful projects are the ones who get promotion or more funding, and bask in the seductive glow of praise from their colleagues. Conservation professionals rarely take time to reflect on things that go wrong.

But of course conservationists do fail: we fail all the time. Projects and even whole programmes go wrong because of over-ambitious design, lack of attention to context, political problems, poor execution and a host of other causes: it would be unreasonable to expect anything else. Apart from

Historical Background

September's World Summit on Sustainable Development generated a great deal of concern over the results of deliberations on topics ranging from global warming to fisheries. However, amidst this concern a pair of groundbreaking announcements raised hopes for global forest conservation. Both announcements concerned large-scale, comprehensive forest conservation initiatives, and

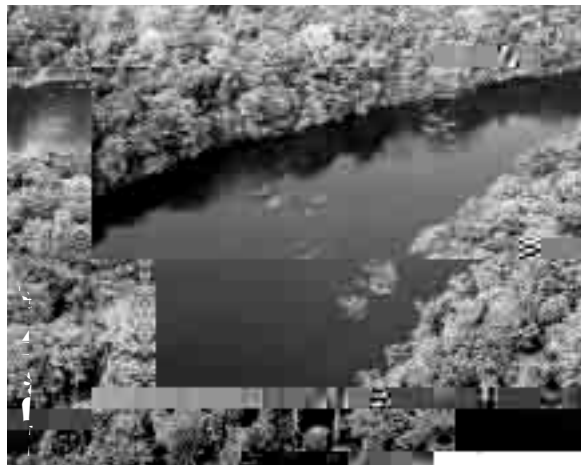
both benefited from longstanding support by the World Bank/WWF Alliance for Forest Conservation & Sustainable Use.

On September 3, Brazil's President

Fernando Henrique Cardoso was joined by officials of WWF, the World Bank, and GEF to launch the landmark Amazon Region Protected Areas (ARPA) programme, the largest tropical forest conservation initiative in history. The next day, United States Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that the U.S. will commit at least US\$36 million in newly allocated money over the next three years to forest conservation in the Congo Basin (see overleaf).

Over the course of ten years, ARPA will expand the extent of well-managed protected areas in the Brazilian Amazon to 50 million ha, an area equivalent to the size of Spain. In doing so, ARPA will help preserve representative samples of all Amazonian ecoregions with their various types of landscapes, plants, and animals.

Conservation of the Amazon's tropical forests is a top conservation priority because of the area's incredible biodiversity, high rates of endemism, and valuable ecological services and products. It is also home to numerous indigenous cultures, with one of the highest rates of linguistic diversity on the planet. But despite the importance of the Amazon in the ecological and economic activity of the world, it is rapidly disappearing. From 1996 to 2001 uncontrolled logging, forest fires, conversion to agricultural use, and major infrastructure works degraded the Amazon at a rate of approximately 1.8 million ha each year.



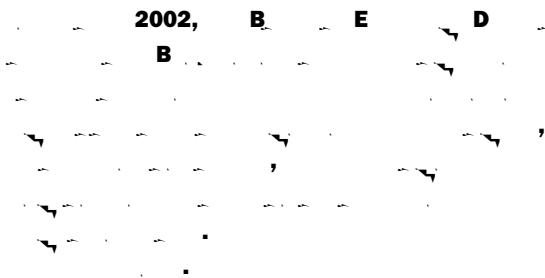
Responding to these threats, in 1998 President Cardoso publicly pledged to protect at least 10 per cent of Brazil's Amazon forests. That same year, the World Bank and WWF formed the Alliance with the goal of protecting at least 10 per cent of each of the world's forest biomes. Challenging conservation partners to unite behind the Alliance's goal served as inspiration for President Cardoso's pledge.

An influential group of organisations committed to forest conservation have joined the Government of Brazil to build a foundation that will sustain the protected areas of ARPA and contribute to a healthy forest sector in Brazil. ARPA donors including the GEF, the Government of Brazil, WWF and the German Federal Government Development Bank KfW who have committed more than US\$80 million to the project so far. A trust fund will be managed by the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (FUNBIO) and will enable donor funds to support the protected areas in perpetuity. FUNBIO will also disburse project funds for services and goods needed by the Government of Brazil for protected area management, a novel private-public sector approach to the business side of conservation. The total cost for ARPA is estimated at US\$400 million, with US\$260 million designated for the trust fund and US\$140 million for project investments including protected area demarcation, establishing basic park infrastructure and developing long-term management plans.

There are several categories of protected areas within the ARPA design. ARPA will create new strict-use protected areas totalling 28.5 million ha and implement effective management in 12.5 million ha of existing strict-use protected areas. At the same time, the project will create 9 million ha of community sustainable use areas where certain levels of natural resource extraction are permitted.

Just prior to the signing of the ARPA declaration, President Cardoso announced the creation of the world's largest tropical forest protected area: Mountains of Tumucumaque National Park. At 3.8 million ha, this park is the first instalment of ARPA. Formal declarations of more protected areas in the ARPA system are expected before the end of 2002.





The revised Forest Strategy covers all forest types and has been built on three equally important interdependent pillars:

- Harnessing the potential of forests to reduce poverty;
- Integrating forests in sustainable economic development; and
- Protecting vital local and global environmental services and values.

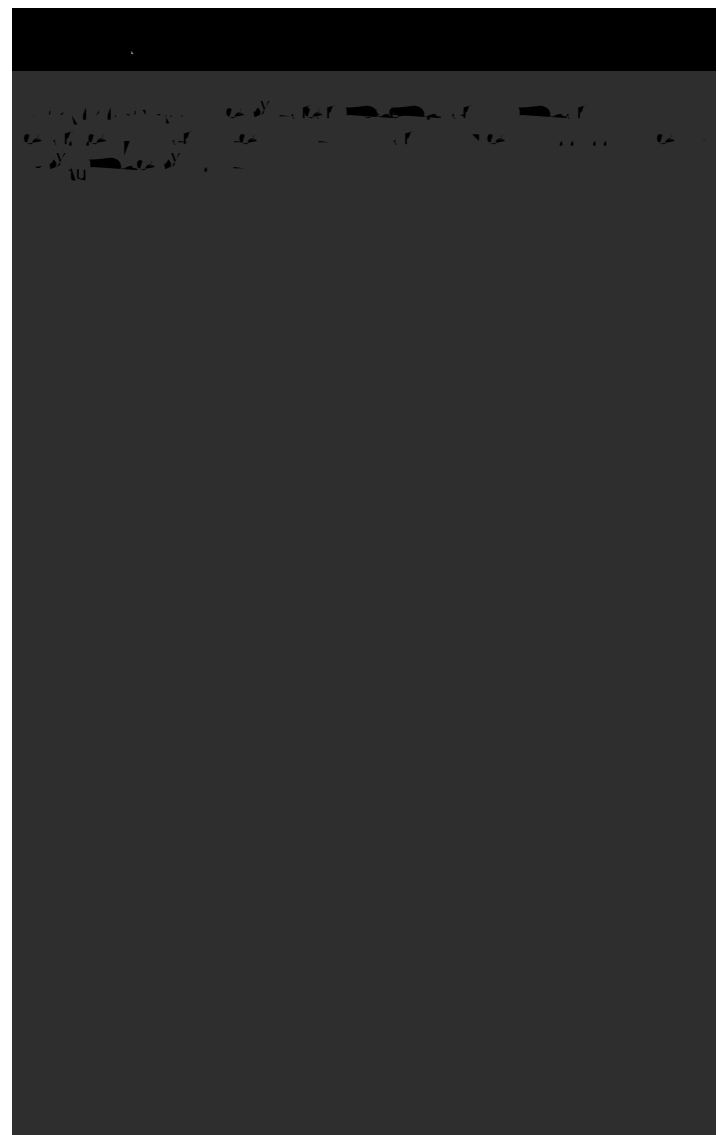
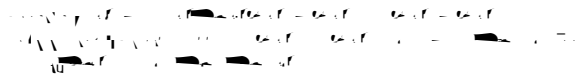
Earlier this year, WWF withdrew from the Technical Reference Committee of the AFS when it became clear that contentious and environmentally damaging forestry practices in Australia were not going to be satisfactorily addressed by the process. For example, WWF was concerned that the AFS was going to rubber stamp ongoing logging of high conservation value forests such as old growth forests, and the large-scale conversion of native forest to plantations. Whilst most states have ceased the practice of forest conversion, it is still widespread in Tasmania, where in 2000-2001, 64 per cent of native forest clear-felled on government-managed land was replaced with plantations, and 67 per cent was replaced on private land (*Forest Practices Board Annual Report 2000-2001*). With some conditions, this large-scale forest conversion could be certified under the AFS.

By failing to address contentious and environmentally damaging forestry practices, the AFS is unable to meet its stated objective of providing assurance to purchasers of Australian timber that it has been sourced from sustainably managed forests. WWF's assessment is that the AFS cannot provide this assurance until the minimum performance requirements are improved to address poor forestry practices such as those mentioned above.

The Australian Government's response to WWF and other groups who are critical of the AFS, is that it is a step in the right direction. This it may be, however by failing to address poor forestry practices the AFS is unable to provide an assurance to consumers and markets that forests certified to the AFS are managed to broadly supported standards.

The new policy will proactively identify and protect critical forests in all forest types and all Bank client countries. It will also seek to expand forest areas under protection in developing countries, and strictly maintain a ban on logging in these critical forests. Finally the policy provides scope for the Bank to support sustainable forest management provided that such activities are independently certified in accordance with strictly defined requirements.

The strategy will be implemented through partnerships with governments, civil society organisations and private sector. Programmes and projects will build on strong country and local community ownership. Priority will be given to work with local groups, NGOs, and other partners to integrate forest, agro-forestry, and small forest enterprise activities in rural development strategies and benefit poor people.





A paragraph on forests was included in the Plan of Implementation agreed on by nations attending the WSSD. The paragraph, however, contains no new commitments and few surprises, as it largely represents the consensus reached previously by Ministers during the 2nd session of the UN Forum on Forests in March 2002.

Among other things, paragraph 43 calls for accelerated implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel and Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF), with reporting on progress by 2005. The Summit also urged implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) expanded action-oriented work programme on all types of forest biological diversity. The IPF/IFF proposals for action and the CBD expanded work programme include key forest issues such as restoration of forest landscapes and livelihoods, community-based forest management, protected areas and forest governance. Very few specific issues were singled out in the forests paragraph, although domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products were mentioned. In addition, the paragraph calls for immediate action to promote the means to achieve sustainable timber harvesting; initiatives to address the parts of the world suffering from poverty and the highest rates of deforestation; and recognition of the importance of indigenous and community-based forest management systems.

A number of other sections in the Plan of Implementation also refer specifically to forests. These include:

- Combating desertification through forest management (Para. 39d)
- Addressing deforestation in mountain ecosystems (Para. 40)
- Support for afforestation and reforestation and capacity building for sustainable forest management in Africa (Para. 56n)



Creating the conditions under which significant numbers of poor people can attain a sustainable and desirable livelihood over the next 15 years is undoubtedly one of the most urgent priorities for achieving sustainable development. Although the World Bank estimates that 90 per cent of the 1.2 billion people who live in absolute poverty depend on forest resources to some degree, it is still unclear to many policy makers what meaningful role forests can play in developing countries' poverty reduction strategies.

In early October the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought together government, civil society and academic representatives from twelve sub-Saharan African countries, four donor countries and staff from a number of international organisations, to consider how forest management and conservation can better contribute to the goal of poverty reduction. In what was



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project of breath-taking ambition. The idea was for the indigenous community's organisation, working with the national government, to co-manage an area of over 5 million ha which included an indigenous area and a national park. This is the sort of thing many of us thought was the wave of the future, an opportunity to create coalitions across frequently combative groups which would be able to withstand extreme predatory development pressures and ensure victories for both local people and biodiversity. The donors agreed, and significant money was put into this project with many positive initial results.

But the NGO knew there was a major hurdle that would have to be crossed before anything approaching project sustainability could be achieved. This hurdle had to do with cultural differences in money management. In many indigenous groups, money goes to a "big man" who fulfils his obligations and consolidates his power by dispersing funds in ways appropriate to his position. This disbursement policy conflicts with the norms of our western society, which expects receipts, disbursements, and full accounting. Further, honest local role models for the tribal leaders were sorely lacking in the broader society of this country, notorious for corruption. Knowing there was going to be a culture clash, and knowing that the indigenous organisation would have to learn and practice the methods expected by the donor, the NGO arranged for an audit of the indigenous organisation. Sure enough, money was unaccounted for, people resigned, and the indigenous organisation showed signs of reorienting its ways. Ironically, the financial mismanagement was perpetrated largely by non-indigenous but local employees whose malfeasance seemed partially racially motivated. The take-home message to the indigenous organisation was to get their financial house in order, watch who they hire more carefully, and redouble efforts to train indigenous accountants. This sounded to many of us like a successful learning experience that might serve as a foundation for sustainable change.

Unfortunately, it did not sound that way to the donor. Rarely accustomed to auditing grantees, or having them audited, the donor is now threatening not to renew funding. What was construed as a learning experience, a necessary step on the path to effective and path-breaking conservation, has turned into a potential project killer. The indigenous organisation, the NGO, and the park all stand to suffer. Why? Because they tried to make learning through experience – through adaptive management where successes and failures are explicitly stated – a fundamental part of the project's implementation.

We come to the point of this editorial. The conservation industry and the donors who fund it have enabled each other

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to create a highly dangerous situation. Conservation practitioners rarely write about the work they do; instead, what writing is done in conservation organisations is most frequently undertaken by development staff. This group of



people is paid to raise money. No one wants to fund unsuccessful projects, so success is declared in the reports submitted to the donors. Successes are shined and spun out, partial successes are puttied and repainted as successes, and most everything else is ignored. A strong process of self-censorship

is employed: why tell development staff what did not work if they are not going to use it? Anything other than success is left on the cutting room floor to be swept up and thrown away.

Such a process of self-censorship on the part of conservation organisations lays the groundwork for this dangerous situation, but the second ingredient is also vital: donors want to report their own achievements, so they want to hear only that their money has been spent successfully. Donors have their own constituents to whom they are responsible. Foundation program officers must report up the line, and the foundation president must report to the board. Bilateral organisations must report to their respective governments, and multilateral organisations must report to their board members and the entities they represent. Further, all three types of funders have their own reputations and institutional egos at stake. Subtle though it may be, foundations are in competition with one another, as are bilateral and multilateral organisations. And, unfortunately, the currency used in this competition is composed of grantee successes.

The atmosphere of enabling is complete. Funders want to report only the successes of their grantees, so only successes are reported to them. Nothing ever goes wrong because no one ever says that anything has gone wrong. To read the record, conservation is an overwhelming success. But we all know this is absolutely not the case. Everywhere you look there are failures, half failures, and almost successes. But to discover these failures you have to find the implementers

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and take them out for a beer, or visit the site yourself. Heaven forbid if you should want to read about these experiences, because the cycle of success is actively guarded – renewal of funding is contingent on success. Few have ever been rewarded for anything other than success. We in the conservation business have locked ourselves into a straitjacket of partial truths.

Inside this straitjacket we will not achieve effective conservation because we will never learn. Learning requires experimentation, and experimentation sometimes means failure. When failure is not tolerated, learning will never take place. The slogan should read “no experimentation, no learning, no conservation,” instead of “experimentation or funding.” Although harshly described, and exaggerated to a minor degree, this is the climate in which we work. The incident with the internal audit of the indigenous organisation sends a clear signal to the conservation community: experiment at your own peril.

This situation, in which experimentation, failure, and learning are not tolerated, is a death spiral for conservation. We are being forced into smaller and tighter circles by our own culture and its reinforcement by funders. We and all we are trying to save will not survive if we do not break out of this inward-turning spiral and move into the uneven and unpredictable terrain of a highly self-critical adaptive management approach. We must work with our supporters to develop what Buzz Holling has termed a “safe-fail” environment. Within this environment we must be encouraged to innovate, experiment, and learn. Most of all, we must document what has been tried and what has failed.

Writing experiences down and sharing them with others is a fundamental part of doing conservation – not just the successes but the failures as well, maybe even particularly the failures. We have travelled the world finding countless examples of failed projects, many of them trying and retrying the same things. Why? At least in part because failure of such projects when attempted by others has never been reported. This is a waste of money, effort, and – most important – time. Time is short as we try to slow the juggernaut of biotic impoverishment. We cannot waste time trying things that others have tried and found wanting. But we cannot do otherwise unless we all document our failures as well as our successes. We must unite to change the culture of funding in conservation. We need a new culture in which experimentation and learning are given as much importance as on-the-ground project success. We suggest that the long-term success of conservation depends on our willingness not only to admit our failures but to share them as well.

The aim of the project 'Sustainable Utilisation of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)' in Vietnam, the first phase of which ran from 1998 to 2002, was to explore ways to promote sustainable NTFP management as a means to improve forest conservation and rural livelihoods. The project was conceived as an action-research project where new approaches and methods were a primary output, rather than the associated physical achievements. The project was implemented by the Non-Timber Forest Products' Research Centre, and had technical and managerial support from IUCN. Field activities were implemented by two NGO members of IUCN, ECO ECO and CRES.

Action-research is a cyclical process of testing-analysing-improving in which farmers and researchers jointly learn and collaborate to develop innovations that are appropriate and applicable to the farmers' context. One of the key action research questions for the project was how NTFPs can contribute to both improved livelihoods and improved forest management. Other questions were concerned with the identification of appropriate methods for analysing conservation -development linkages, and of suitable mechanisms for establishing and managing government/ NGO partnerships.

At the onset of the project, the attitude of some field partners was one of 'we know it all' and there was pressure to show immediate physical outputs (i.e. NTFP seedlings). A few things helped to gradually improve the ability of the project to learn from experience.

- At the start, the project committed an implementation blunder in the field: an unsuitable NTFP species was planted with project support. The error was obvious to all involved in the project and led to the conviction that a learning-by-doing approach would be more appropriate than a technocratic one.
- The establishment of monitoring mechanisms allowed lessons to be picked up at an early stage and project activities to be reoriented and adjusted as a consequence. This also helped to increase the confidence of the donor in the approach chosen.
- Training initiatives, in particular an exchange visit to a similar but more advanced project in Lao PDR, demonstrated the practical benefits of adopting a learning approach to project partners.

The project emphasised the recording of lessons learned as a means to promote learning among project partners and share important project results with others. Specific mechanisms built-in to the project were:

- Testing and analysing integrated conservation and development approaches through pilot field activities.



- promoting consensus, ownership, and broad political commitment among stakeholders;
- enabling the Bank to work in partnership with bi-laterals and NGOs working with similar flexible instruments.

A LIL focuses on experimentation, learning and piloting in search of possible developmental solutions, prior to potential larger-scale operations. It includes clearly stated testable hypotheses and incorporates intensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Developing the institutional flexibility to refine the project in response to M&E is paramount for LILs to becoming true learning tools and not just stand-alone small loans. Thus, the project activities might include a detailed assessment of borrower capacity, stakeholders' response (social assessment), or economic rate of return as part of the project activities, when these are unknown in advance. A LIL includes clear indications of how results will aid the borrower in making decisions about replicability and scaling up.

LILs are predominantly used in sectors or situations in which behavioural change and stakeholder attitudes are critical to progress. They can also help address complex technical or sensitive political situations by keeping the intervention as a small-scale pilot project, with a relatively modest burden on the client country (since the loans cannot be more than US\$5m). The first batch of LILs were approved in 1998 and the Bank has since approved more, covering issues such as adult literacy, preservation of cultural heritage, gender, forestry, indigenous peoples development, land titling, rural micro-finance services, etc.

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- Learning by doing - an ongoing process of analysis of activities through monitoring and evaluation teams and systems involving rapid action-learning cycles.
- Specific learning and review exercises such as internal reviews, training courses and project evaluation.

Many of the lessons learned from the project were incorporated in the design of Phase II and have also been documented in a range of reports (most are available on a CD-ROM in Vietnamese and English).



Participatory and model approaches are a novelty in the Russian context. The Pskov model forest has provided the first opportunity in Northwest Russia for district governments, forest administrators, NGOs and community representatives to come together to discuss and influence forest issues, and has allowed the local population to influence what happens to the 46,000 ha forest from the outset.

A model forest project views a forest as much more than simply a collection of trees. Instead it looks at the values a forest can provide – for nature and for people. The aim of the model is to provide a learning environment where combined expertise and resources are used to develop innovative, region-specific approaches to sustainable forest management. Forest specialists and other interested parties start by analysing the advantages and shortcomings of different types of forest use. Forestry and forest use methods are developed that balance economic and ecological needs, based on forecasting forest dynamics. The model project also helps participants to learn about a GIS based system of conservation planning, new forest use practices and models of forecasting forest dynamics. Ecological trails and demonstration plots in the area are thought to be the tools best suited to convey the key findings.

The WWF model project in Pskov has worked with a wide range of groups from local people and organisations to international partners like Stora Enso and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The involvement of local partners has been particularly successful and a district wide eco-information network has



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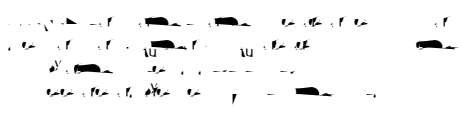
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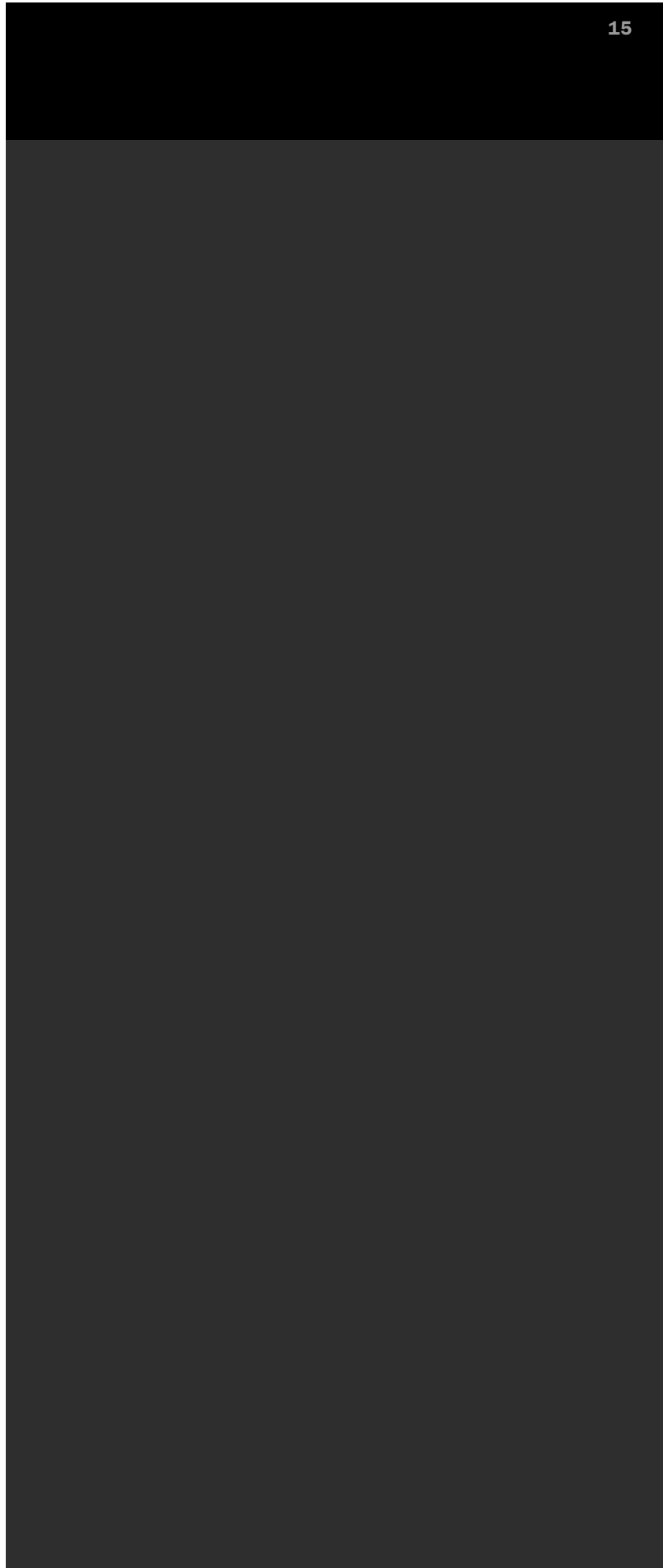


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Using a draft analytical framework developed with the guidance of an interim task force, this second expert meeting (attended by more than 50 participants) discussed and agreed proposals towards the harmonisation/improved compatibility of a number of key forest-related definitions developed by four prominent International processes, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, FAO Forest Resource Assessment and International Tropical Timber Organization.

These recommendations (along with the analytical framework) are being communicated to the various International processes, and FAO as secretariat of the process has agreed to monitor and report back to the meeting participants on follow up actions made by the relevant processes in response. In general WWF and IUCN, who both contributed to the process, were pleased with the outcomes. In particular, the objectivity of the process which did not simply look to harmonise at all costs, but also documented some of the clear differences between definitions, and why they are likely to remain.





The Wellbeing of Forests

Forest wellbeing is a concept that has been used in a number of ways. It can refer to the health of the forest ecosystem, the social and economic wellbeing of the people who depend on the forest, or a combination of the two.

For more information, visit www.woodwellbeing.org

Uncovering the Hidden Harvest: Valuation Methods for Woodland and Forest Resources

This report explores the hidden harvest of woodland and forest resources, including the value of ecosystem services and the impact of land-use change.

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Making Markets Work for Forest Communities?

This report examines the challenges of making markets work for forest communities, particularly in the context of land-use change and the impact of land-use change.

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Forest Conservation and the rural poor, A Call to Broaden the Conservation Agenda

This report discusses the need to broaden the conservation agenda to include the rural poor, who are often the most vulnerable to land-use change.

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In search of the Lost Gender: Equity in Protected Areas

This report explores the issue of equity in protected areas, particularly the role of women and the impact of land-use change.

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Chile's Frontier Forests – Conserving a Global Treasure

This report highlights the importance of Chile's frontier forests and the need for conservation to protect this global treasure.

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Trading away the last ancient forests

This report discusses the impact of land-use change on ancient forests and the need for conservation to protect these irreplaceable ecosystems.

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Africa: forests under threat

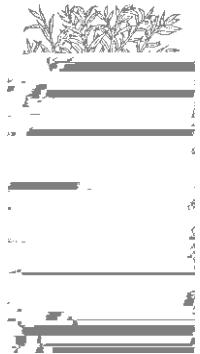
This report examines the threats to forests in Africa and the need for conservation to protect these vital ecosystems.

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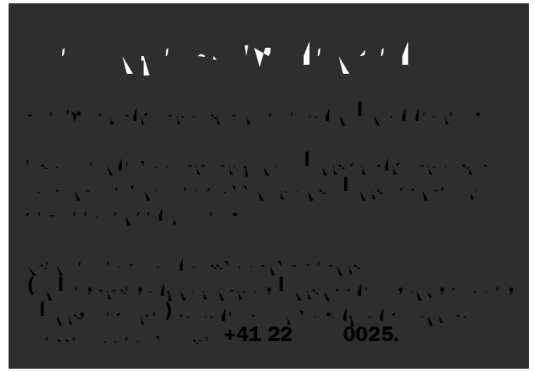
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