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A consultative meeting in Burkina Faso.

# Forest partnerships

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## Changing International Markets For Timber Products: How Can Vietnam's Forest Industry Respond?



IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme has just published a report of a timber industry workshop that was held in October last year in Vietnam. The

meeting, organized by IUCN, brought together almost 70 representatives from the private sector, government, and international donors and non-governmental organizations. The main message conveyed by participants was that European and American consumer markets for legal and sustainable timber products are growing, and exporting countries will be expected to provide evidence that the timber they use has been legally harvested. As an important exporter of wooden furniture, Vietnam will be affected by these market trends and the workshop participants discussed a range of options open to the country to help guarantee the legality of its exports. Vietnam is also a major importer and processor of timber and has already gone some way in ensuring legal and sustainable supply chains. However, participants were clear that much more needs to be done to prepare for new market regimes.

The report is available at [www.iucn.org/forest](http://www.iucn.org/forest) or by contacting Jamie Gordon, [james.gordon@iucn.org](mailto:james.gordon@iucn.org).



DGIS is the Development Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

## Editorial

Spurred by the recognition that forests have to serve many interests, there is a new mood of optimism in the forestry community about the role and promise of partnership in forest governance and management. Given the mixed track records of previous initiatives such as the Tropical Forest Action Plan, sceptics might suggest, in the words of Samuel Johnson, that this is a "triumph of hope over experience." Indeed, forest partnerships are now presented as the solution to many problems and are much-liked by donors who see them as a means of bundling funds into efficient packages and ensuring built-in participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

This promise is real, but the reality is that partnerships can present significant challenges to the parties involved and hence to their successful employment. There can be considerable transaction costs to joining a partnership, given the time and effort needed to agree on common goals and run joint activities. There are risks too – such as a tarnished reputation if associated with underperforming or unscrupulous partners, or a lack of voice if the partnership is dominated by one or two powerful members.

This issue of **arborvitae** takes a look at what makes partnerships in forestry work, and how they are delivering on forest management and conservation, and suggests some basic ground rules for successful partnerships. As well as including cases of time-bound partnership initiatives and project-related partnerships, we also look at how the experiences of partnership organizations need to address a similar set of issues. We highlight the case of Growing Forest Partnerships as its development has reflected a clear shift from an ambitious global partnership (that risked repeating the failures of other such efforts) towards one that is based on local, bottom-up, action-oriented collaborations.

What is clear is that for any forest partnership to succeed, it needs to set out with a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties, and a mechanism for dealing with the almost inevitable disagreements and conflicts that will emerge. In other words, a kind of 'pre-nuptial agreement' that will hopefully make the partnership match more sustainable and productive.

*Stewart Maginnis*  
Head of IUCN's

*Forest Conservation Programme*

## news in brief

**US-wide wilderness protected:** The US Congress voted in March to preserve more than 800,000 hectares of wilderness across the country, from California to Virginia. The legislation, which covers nine states and will block oil and gas development on huge areas of federal land, has been hailed by conservationists as the most significant in US history.  
**Source:** [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 26 March, 2009.

**Malaysia brings palm oil venture to the Amazon:** Malaysia's Land Development Authority (FELDA) is joining up with a Brazilian firm to establish 30,000-100,000 hectares of oil palm plantations in the Amazon rainforest, according to the Malaysian Star newspaper. The joint venture could herald many more oil palm projects in the Brazilian Amazon. The Brazilian Congress is currently considering legislation that would enable landowners to count plantations as forest towards their legal forest reserve requirement. By law, landowners in the Amazon must retain 80 percent forest cover on their holdings.  
**Source:** [www.mongabay.com](http://www.mongabay.com), 25 March, 2009.

**Climate changing Europe's borders:** Part of the border between Switzerland and Italy looks set to move as global warming is melting the glaciers that originally guided the line. The Swiss and Italian governments are planning to redraw parts of the border in the Alpine region, including the area around the Matterhorn mountain which will still straddle the two countries. No border communities would be affected as the area is uninhabited and the changes would be small – the line would shift no more than 100 metres. However, experts are warning that similar climate change-induced border changes elsewhere in the world could spark violent conflicts. "I think it's fantastic that these two countries are talking about adjusting their borders," says Mark Zeitoun of the University of East Anglia, UK, an expert on international resource management and conflict. "Elsewhere in the world you see a much more nationalistic attitude."  
**Source:** [www.newscientist.com](http://www.newscientist.com), 27 March, 2009.

# Partnerships in Mount Elgon – rebuilding trust and commitment



Partners undergo training in participatory monitoring techniques

**Barbara Nakangu** of IUCN describes the central role that partner organizations play in a Livelihoods and Landscapes project in Uganda.

IUCN's Livelihoods and Landscapes (LLS) initiative in Mount Elgon ecosystem, Uganda is working with the Benet people who have lived in the forested landscape for hundreds of years. When the Ugandan government declared Mount Elgon a National Park in 1983, the Benet communities were evicted and resettled outside the forest. This has resulted in severe environmental degradation in the resettled areas, deepening poverty among the Benet communities, and tense relations between the Benet and the Ugandan authorities.

The role of the LLS is to mobilize strategic partnerships with governments, civil society and private sector to bring in additional skills, knowledge, and finances to improve livelihoods for the Benet communities, and to enable them to develop, implement and monitor land-use improvement plans. After one year of implementation, the LLS initiative in this area is showing some clear lessons in how to build and maintain effective partnerships. These are outlined below.

**There should be a common problem affecting all partners.** The first step was to identify those partners in the landscape who are affected by, or are addressing, the same

problems that IUCN is focusing on. A scoping exercise was undertaken to identify potential partner institutions that were addressing the problems of poverty and environmental degradation. Among the key institutions are the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) that is dealing with conflicts between the conservation of the park and the livelihoods needs of local communities, the Kapchorwa Community Development Association (KACODA) that works on river bank conservation in the area, the Kapchorwa Landcare Chapter (KADLACC) that is facilitating by-laws for better natural resource management, the Kapchorwa district government that has a mandate for both conservation and development, the Kenya Wildlife Service which offers the potential for cross-border ecotourism, the Mount Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme that is implementing both conservation and livelihoods improvements in the same landscape, and the local Benet communities themselves.

**Partners need to subscribe to common objectives or a common vision.**

Discussions were held with each stakeholder group identified above to inform them of the goals and approaches of the LLS initiative

and to see how these matched with the goals and objectives of these groups. Each partner felt that collaboration would provide an added value in achieving their own goals.

**Procedures and guidelines need to be developed to govern the partnerships.**

In Mount Elgon, clear guidelines for collaboration were discussed, prepared and agreed on with each partner.

**Partners need to be well informed and interested.** The Mount Elgon partners meet twice a year to review implementation of the previous period, share in lessons learnt and develop workplans for the next steps.

**Partners' capacities need to be enhanced to deliver on the program.**

One way to do this is training in new approaches that may enhance partner's performance. However, these new approaches should be useful to partners otherwise they will not be adopted. Partners should feel that the approaches make a difference to their work. In the Mount Elgon landscape, the use of participatory approaches to engage communities was found to be crucial to enhancing project success. Therefore, a three-day training in community participatory planning methods was facilitated by technical staff from IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme in July 2008. This has been one of LLS greatest achievements in 2008. These community planning and monitoring approaches have been adopted by several partners, notably KACODA, KADLACC, and local leadership. These partners have indicated that the level of community commitment created through the use of these approaches is unprecedented and will enhance not only their work but the goals of the LLS initiative too.

We feel that this is a very big step in forging effective partnerships at the local level. The next step will be to engage the national and international levels.

**Contact:** Barbara Nakangu, [Barbara.nakangu@iucn.org](mailto:Barbara.nakangu@iucn.org)

The Mount Elgon work involves three IUCN members – the Uganda Wildlife Authority, the Kenyan Wildlife Services, and the government of Uganda through the Kapchorwa district government.



# Corporate-community partnerships in the Amazon: a cosmetic approach?

**Carla Morsello** of the University of Sao Paulo takes a critical look at the benefits of linking forest communities with cosmetic companies.

Partnerships between companies and Amazonian communities for trading non timber forest products (NTFP) are growing in numbers. These agreements are mostly set up by international cosmetics companies (such as Aveda or The Body Shop) or their Brazilian counterparts (such as Natura), as this sector is now seeking natural sourcing and product diversification, and has largely adopted corporate social responsibility practices. The companies usually advertise these deals and benefit from them financially, on the basis of increased sales and higher value shares. Some chemical companies responsible for other stages of the production process are also involved, as are other partners such as civil society organizations, researchers and governments.

The communities involved in these partnerships are generally small, remote and autarkic or semi-autarkic (i.e. they have little or no links with the market economy). Usually, they have about 100-300 people and are organized into extended families averaging 5 to 10 people. They predominantly live in Indigenous Territories or inhabited protected areas (for instance, Extractive Reserves, Sustainable Development Reserves or National Forests), because of the greater appeal of these areas and people in advertising products. They base their economies on a mix of swidden fallow agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering forest products, mainly for their subsistence, but occasionally for trade.

Partnerships provide these communities with access to domestic and international markets, increasing the likelihood of them having a cash income above zero – a rare situation in remote Amazonian forests. Although not necessary for food acquisition, which is locally produced in these sparsely populated areas, cash incomes serve other purposes. Moreover, when based on NTFP, partnerships provide relatively well distributed cash incomes because rights of access to these resources are held in common.

The cash incomes are nonetheless modest, and certainly insufficient to raise people out of financial deprivation. Although payment of price premiums has often been cited as a benefit of these partnerships, they are not always paid.



**A woman from a community in the Médio Juruá Extractive Reserve shelling murumuru nuts**

Furthermore, even when higher prices are paid, only small amounts of forest products are purchased by the companies. Thus, for example, a cosmetic product can be advertised as produced from Brazil nuts, even when the percentage of Brazil nuts in the final composition is insignificant.

For many of the companies involved, it is the image of partnering with communities that is more important than the product itself. This is demonstrated by a few cases where companies have set up partnerships, but are not buying forest products on a regular basis. Additionally, expanding production might not be feasible when communities need to invest significant effort in food acquisition. If they invest too much time in trading activities, their livelihoods could suffer.

Value-added processing, such as transforming a fruit into oil, has been promoted as a means of increasing the benefits captured by the communities. However, processing activities usually provide few employment opportunities, and these are easily controlled by a few local leaders. Despite this drawback, community-based processing can still offer important development benefits, as women also benefit from this phase (e.g. shelling nuts), while incomes from gathering the forest products are more frequently appropriated only by men. Since paying women has been proven to yield more development benefits, it is important to devise further mechanisms to increase women's cash incomes.

In conclusion, company-communities partnerships in the Amazon are not a panacea. They may provide more benefits than traditional forms of trading non timber forest products in the Amazon, and can also improve market access. Yet, they have not proven to substantially transform communities' living conditions.

**Contact:** Carla Morsello, morsello@usp.br.

Carla is coordinator of the Forest Partnerships project at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. This project aims to evaluate the opportunities and problems associated with NTFP trade partnerships between communities and corporations. For more details, go to [www.parceriasforestais.org](http://www.parceriasforestais.org).

# Ethical biotrade: a collaborative effort



Kalahari melon seed producers in Namibia

**Rik Kutsch Lojenga** of the Union for Ethical BioTrade describes this new partnership organization and some of the challenges facing its members.

The Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) is a newly created association that promotes the ‘sourcing with respect’ of ingredients derived from native biodiversity. The UEBT brings together a wide variety of players including multinationals, small companies, producer communities, NGOs, international government organizations, and government agencies.

The UEBT’s Trading Members have committed to establishing, over a set timeline, sourcing practices that promote biodiversity conservation, respect traditional knowledge, and ensure an equitable sharing of benefits along the supply chain, from producers to final product manufacturers. Trading Members include collectors, farmers, processing companies, and manufacturers, of final products. The UEBT also has Affiliate Members which are not directly involved in trading activities but are supportive of the principles of ethical biotrade and seek to promote and facilitate such practices. These members include IUCN, the United Nations Foundation,

PhytoTrade Africa, and the national BioTrade programmes of Uganda and Peru.

A verification system guides members towards compliance with the Ethical BioTrade Principles and Criteria, which stem from the BioTrade Principles and Criteria developed by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The verification system uses third-party auditors, including those that are FSC-accredited.

Wide recognition exists of the role of ethical biotrade as a sustainable development strategy. Governments in a number of biodiversity-rich regions have embedded the concept into national biodiversity strategies, national development plans, and regional agreements. In addition, some of the Affiliate Members of the UEBT actively seek to engage the private sector in the development efforts of biodiversity-rich countries or regions.

However there are a number of challenges still ahead. For instance, Trading Members

that take up the challenge to implement CBD practices related to biodiversity conservation or benefit sharing are often frustrated to find little legal clarity and an uneven playing field. Although, through the CBD, the basic principles of access and benefit sharing (ABS) have been recognized internationally, they remain largely unimplemented at the national level. Even in the few countries that have legislated ABS, the processes are often long and complex and the relevant government agencies lack capacity to put the legislation into full practice. In addition, some UEBT member cosmetics companies have found that natural ingredients are at times defined as genetic resources (thus falling under ABS rules), and at other times are considered to be biological resources, subject to a different legal regime.

Another challenge is the still limited consumer awareness of the importance of biodiversity. On joining the UEBT, small- and medium-sized enterprises from developing countries expect to gain access to new buyers for ethically sourced products. Recently, some of these smaller founding member companies resigned from the UEBT, as costs related to implementing membership commitments exceeded the financial benefits. Although there is an increased interest in botanicals in industry, there is still limited market recognition of biodiversity-related efforts and ABS issues.

To address all issues involved in ethical biotrade, different partners need to be brought on board at different stages of the supply chain. One area in which members of the UEBT would greatly benefit from additional support is in their efforts to develop practices in sustainable harvesting, monitoring and evaluation, and adaptive management. It is our hope that IUCN member organizations will join the UEBT to share their expertise and to support its members.

Clearly, ethical sourcing of biodiversity is a learning process for all organizations involved. In an interview for the CBD, Rodolfo Guttilla, Vice President of the Board of the UEBT and Executive Director of Natura Cosmetics SA noted in this respect that the UEBT was created “primarily because we are all venturing into new territory and we think the journey will be easier in the company of others”.

**Contact:** Rik Kutsch Lojenga, rik@ethicalbiotrade.org or visit [www.ethicalbiotrade.org](http://www.ethicalbiotrade.org).

# Under construction: a learning network on forest landscape restoration



One of the potential learning sites, Miyun watershed in China

**Cora van Oosten** of Wageningen International and **Carole Saint Laurent** of IUCN present a new initiative of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration.

Forests and their surrounding landscapes have always been shaped and modified by human intervention. At present, 80 percent of the world's original forests has been modified through some form of degradation or deforestation. Many of these degraded landscapes – and their functions – could potentially be restored. Indeed the scale of these 'landscapes of opportunity' is immense. This is the reasoning behind forest landscape restoration (FLR), which is presently being promoted by more and more organizations, governments and civic movements worldwide.

Restoring degraded forest landscapes, however, is not as easy as it is often assumed. It is not simply a matter of planting trees and there is no magic, one-size-fits-all blueprint. Solutions have to be adaptable and flexible over time, since they seek to channel the needs of many different forest stakeholders towards sustainable practices that can serve all concerned in the long term. Specialist expertise is needed as well as a supportive policy environment related to land ownership and land-use planning, and an economic climate that is favourable for renewed forest activities.

In order to be successful, a multiple stakeholder approach to forest landscape restoration is needed, and a framework for continuous monitoring and learning has to be in place. This latter element forms the rationale behind the Learning Network on Forest Landscape Restoration, which is presently under construction. The network is an initiative of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR), an informal grouping of more than 25 countries and organizations, working to develop and strengthen FLR efforts around the world.

The network's focus is on highlighting the diversity of solutions and the transferable lessons from them, not on reducing them to a convenient but unworkable formula. The aim is to raise awareness of real world FLR experiences and make available the tools and knowledge to support practitioners in the field. Mutual learning will be issues-based and cut across different geographic regions, while linking sites with policy-makers, advisors and researchers, to better integrate field-level experimentation with policy development and the formulation of evidence-based policy advice.

As experience has shown, learning networks function best when they include an optimum diversity of stakeholders, amongst which grass-roots representatives are sufficiently represented. At the core of a learning network there needs to be a group of particularly committed and active participants working together within an agreed learning framework.

In the case of the GPFLR Learning Network the participating sites should already be involved in or planning restoration activities that seek to improve both ecological integrity and human well-being. They should be committed to:

- Promoting active engagement, negotiation and collaboration between all stakeholders;
- Restoring an agreed, balanced package of forest functions;
- Working across landscapes; and
- Continuously learning and adapting, including sharing information and participating in face-to-face and online discussions, and other learning activities.

Members of the GPFLR have already proposed a number of sites for participation in the learning network but other sites may be interested in participating, either as part of the active core group of learning sites or as part of a broader global information-sharing network of practitioners and policy-makers.

The greater the diversity of sites and the higher the commitment to the learning network, the more substantive the contributions to forest policy debates and to the ultimate goal of effective restoration of forest landscapes.

If you are working with landscape approaches or on forest landscape restoration and you feel attracted to this shared learning experience, please contact Cora van Oosten ([cora.vanoosten@wur.nl](mailto:cora.vanoosten@wur.nl)), (Wageningen International) or Carole Saint Laurent ([CarSaintL@bellnet.ca](mailto:CarSaintL@bellnet.ca)) (GPFLR, IUCN) so that you can help shape this learning process.



# Partnerships for innovation

**Jeff Sayer**, Senior Scientific Adviser to IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme, reflects on the new kinds of partnerships needed in forest conservation.

Forest conservation is all about innovation. We are constantly seeking new understanding of forests and how to manage them. We look for new ways of recognizing their true value, new ways of processing and marketing their products, new arrangements for ownership and governance and new ways of managing them in response to changing climates.

If we are really so concerned with innovation and learning then one might expect the practitioners of conservation to work very closely with the scientists in research organizations who are studying forest issues. Yet we constantly hear scientists express frustration that their knowledge is not being applied in practice, while practitioners claim that science is driven purely by the curiosity of the scientists and is not relevant to the day-to-day problems of management.

Of course many scientists have made major contributions to the practical conservation of forests and many field practitioners are accomplished scientists. Nonetheless there remains a gulf between science and practice with the result that innovation in forest conservation is frustratingly slow. Partnerships between scientists and practitioners are not working well and there is a need to break down barriers between the research lab and factory (or in this case forest) floor.

Forest conservation in the tropics is especially bad in terms of its ability to shorten the time between discovery and application. Part of the problem is that much conservation work in the tropics is funded by donors who are more concerned with accountability than with learning. Project executants who should be learning from their mistakes are inclined to deny the existence of any failures for fear of losing their next round of funding. We are all slaves to the logframe and busy ticking the donor's boxes to confirm the timely delivery of our outputs – we don't pay so much attention to the outcomes or impacts.

...we constantly hear scientists express frustration that their knowledge is not being applied in practice, while practitioners claim that science is driven purely by the curiosity of the scientists and is not relevant to the day-to-day problems of management.

Another challenge in bringing more innovation to forest conservation is that of accessing and applying the huge wealth of traditional knowledge of forests to help address emerging problems. In the past, anthropologists have focused on cataloguing and archiving this traditional knowledge. But knowledge is like forests – you must use it or lose it. Traditional knowledge has to be constantly tested and updated if it is to survive and be useful. The challenge is to unite the traditional and the modern in a single knowledge and innovation system – a form of partnership.

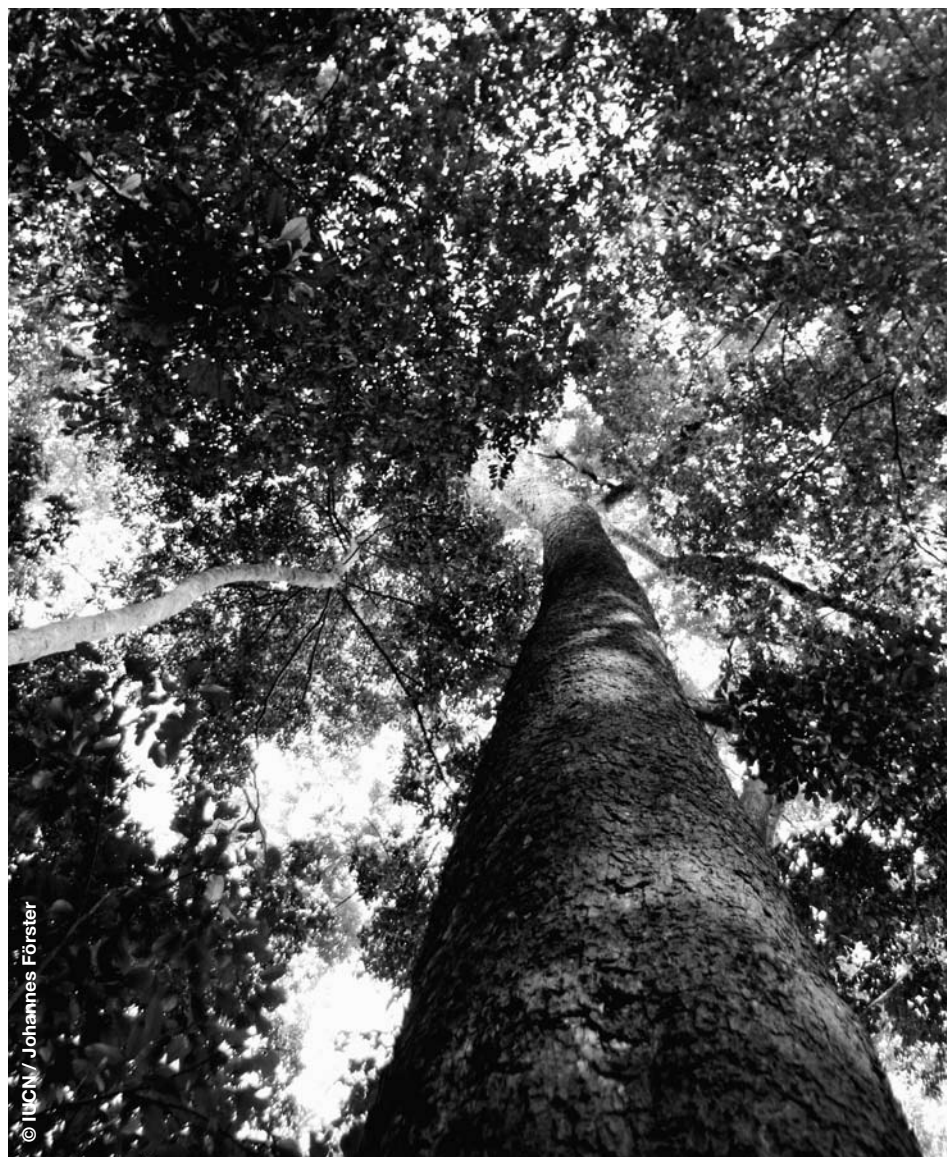
Part of the problem is that much conservation work in the tropics is funded by donors who are more concerned with accountability than with learning. Project executants who should be learning from their mistakes are inclined to deny the existence of any failures for fear of losing their next round of funding.

Despite the challenges and difficulties involved in innovative partnerships for forest conservation, progress is being made. Good examples can be found in the IUCN network of Livelihoods and Landscapes programmes. In these landscapes we are striving to get scientists from advanced research institutes to work alongside the practitioners and local stakeholders on the ground to experiment and learn together. We are using innovative modelling and visualization tools to foster shared understanding amongst the different actors. We are using knowledge management techniques to shorten the feedback loops so that learning can rapidly inform both research and practice. Some of the landscapes where this process has advanced have remote sensing specialists, agronomists, anthropologists and biodiversity scientists working as members of teams that include representatives of local civil society, indigenous groups, government officers, policy makers and forest managers.

With the threats now posed by climate change, forest systems need to be resilient to unexpected challenges from extreme weather events, new pests and diseases and emerging economic and social challenges. This means that the importance of partnerships for innovation is more important than ever. The need to bring together participants covering the entire span from frontier science to local actors has never been greater. IUCN is committed to its role as a convener and facilitator of these partnerships.

**Contact:** Jeff Sayer, [jeff.sayer@iucn.org](mailto:jeff.sayer@iucn.org).

# Growing Forest Partnerships: towards a people's forestry



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**Aiming high: A tall tree in Ghana, a GFP pilot country**

**Barbara Kiser** of IIED reports on a new drive for forest partnerships that empowers forest stakeholders.

When the World Bank unveiled its idea for a 'global forest partnership' in 2007, it presented the plan as no less than a sweeping new vision for the world's forests.

Organizations, governments, donors and business round the world were to be brought together to manage forests sustainably on all fronts – economic, environmental and social.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) was asked to

conduct an independent international consultation on the GFP's relevance and viability. What the over 600 responses overwhelmingly revealed was a recognized need for real bottom-up forest management that works for all parties involved, from big forestry to indigenous people, and away from centralized global plans.

This was a consensus of opinion demanding that partnerships put forest-dependent

people at their centre, bridge the gap between international and local concerns, be action and investment-oriented and ensure forest needs are mainstreamed into other sectors.

The responses IIED gathered proved not only key to reshaping the World Bank's original concept, but have also pointed to steep challenges in making it a reality. Clearly, forming any kind of alliance in forestry – worldwide in scope and focused on a massive, multifaceted resource – is a titanic juggling act.

Now, with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), IIED is supporting stakeholders in moving the partnership on from its Bank-centric beginnings. While just off the starting line, the initiative – renamed Growing Forest Partnerships to reflect that it is now at the stage of forging new alliances – is already offering essential insights into how inclusive management can work in specific countries.

## Putting down roots: complexities and challenges

The need for effective, sustainable management is undisputed. Forests can be flashpoints, fought over by players ranging from governments and conservation pressure groups to smallholders. Their range of guises – as 'sticks of carbon', climate and water regulators and biodiversity havens – is often skewed by their status as goldmines for just one or two products.

This complex picture is complicated further by expectations of huge change in forest area and use through demand for biofuels, food and carbon storage. The pressures are galvanizing forest-dependent communities into claiming their rights in determining how forests are used. Many embattled groups have long been frustrated by the lack of integrated, workable forest management – and the paucity of partnership approaches that can help to ensure several needs are met at once.

Against this backdrop, the World Bank – already engaged with the forest sector through its Forests Strategy and Operational



Policy – set out in 2007 to respond to local needs through the global forest and environment agenda.

Among the 635 responses gathered by IIED from all over the world, many challenged the World Bank's assumptions – and even its involvement, given its persistent focus on top-down investment. The proposed targets, for instance, were felt to be too ambiguous and broad to be workable. Some respondents also queried whether the proposed initiative wasn't simply reinventing the wheel, hot on the heels of the UNFF agreement and the earlier Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

**Clearly, forming any kind of alliance in forestry – worldwide in scope and focused on a massive, multifaceted resource – is a titanic juggling act.**

But most of the initial criticism focused on the hurdles facing partnerships *per se* – and particularly such an ambitious, local-to-global one. For instance, numerous partners can make reaching consensus difficult. The sheer diversity of potential partners (such as the forest-rich and the forest-poor) can lead to a lack of common ground and potential friction. Stakeholders also vary in the emphasis they put on environmental, social and economic issues.

### **Finding what works: analysis and action**

With such pitfalls in mind, a new model began to take shape. To steer the overall process, a 'catalytic group' made up of FAO, IIED and IUCN was formed. This group aimed to kickstart the initial phase of GFP implementation, and develop and establish governance structures such as a 'reference group' – an independent body of stakeholders who would shape the development of the initiative and keep it focused on the range of needs.

The model that began to emerge was of a 'people's forestry' that would create a platform for forest stewards to access useful networks, donors and investors. This was envisioned as working to improve connections between the forest sector and others, helping



**First growth: Children in Guatemala – one of the GFP pilot countries**

to link local demands and priorities with the global forest agenda, increasing responsibility for and local benefits from forest global public goods (such as carbon sequestration), and improving the quantity and quality of forest investment and international support.

A set of key principles lies at the heart of the new model. It demands a recognition and promotion of the multipurpose, multi-stakeholder nature of forest management; inclusivity, by embracing a wide range of stakeholders and public goods; the encouragement of wide-ranging ownership, by offering opportunities for involvement in GFP activities; transparency in communicating processes and decisions; a learning-based approach that supports the continuous improvement of partnerships and to make investments more sustainable; and support for existing structures and processes where possible, adding value and improving synergies between them.

### **First shoots: budding partnerships**

Three countries were picked to roll out the pilot phase of the GFP initiative: Ghana, Guatemala and Mozambique, all significant forest nations where budding partnerships can draw on existing working arrangements and add value. They were evaluated on the basis of criteria such as political dynamics and stakeholder demand; signs of readiness for change, such as good partners and action research potential; and the existence of sound diagnostics, such as consultancy reports and studies.

A range of activities was set out to nurture emergent partnerships in the pilot countries, including 'people's diagnostics' or focus groups to define national outcomes for the GFP process; collaboration between donors based on in-country needs; good knowledge networking on effective partnering among stakeholders; and regular monitoring, as well as national and international targets.

Ghana, for instance, is a country bursting with support and initiative, especially as it has signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement with the European Union. Here, the GFP has begun to develop a diagnostic process that will work in conjunction with this and other initiatives to allow Ghanaians to define the support they need.

In Guatemala, forest programme stakeholder processes have been ongoing at the national and provincial levels since 2004, and these will form the core of the GFP rollout. Forest Connect – an alliance co-run by FAO and IIED and active in 11 countries – has worked in Guatemala on finance and diagnostics in the micro-, small- and medium-sized forest enterprise sector. The GFP is aiming to connect and synergise these processes.

A drive for stronger, more aligned partnerships and real political change forms the basis of early diagnostics in Mozambique. Many institutions here already have overlapping interests and agendas. Several NGOs, for instance, have formed an environmental advocacy grouping, *Amigos da Floresta*, as an outlet for public concern. Meanwhile, local communities have set up simple licensed timber concessions or ecotourism ventures, and the government is also working with mainstream timber companies to create provincial industrial associations.

It is this local momentum and consensus-building that is informing and will also form a national and ultimately a growing international partnership.

There is also potential value added from work at international level downwards, for example, by developing forest investment portfolios, shared task forces on priority issues and developing a small secretariat to assist the GFP's work.

As the GFP evolves into a rolling process facilitating change, one thing is clear. Its focus on, and response to, locally defined consensus ensures that it can avoid simplistic 'cookie-cutter' approaches to a now globally urgent concern. The GFP will create enough of a process for a range of institutions and players to understand each other's agendas, to develop alliances on common ground, and to make the kind of unified noise that big business and governments cannot ignore.

**Contact:** Barbara Kiser, [Barbara.Kiser@iied.org](mailto:Barbara.Kiser@iied.org)

# Multistakeholder initiatives under fire – is it fair?



FSC – is there a better alternative?

**Tony Juniper** and **Brendan May** consider whether campaigning NGOs are right to undermine multistakeholder initiatives they see as fatally flawed.

At the end of last year, two global multistakeholder initiatives came under heavy fire from campaigning NGOs. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) found itself and some of its members targeted by Greenpeace, dissatisfied with its slow progress in creating a sustainable palm oil supply chain.

At around the same time, the much older Forest Stewardship Council once again found itself under pressure. Friends of the Earth UK went so far as to stop recommending FSC to its members. This was a major tactical shift, as FSC has long benefited from the support of environmental campaigners to a degree that comparable initiatives could only dream of.

Friends of the Earth's change of heart on FSC was considerably more surprising than Greenpeace ramping up the pressure on the RSPO, which has yet to deliver the kind of sectoral impact seen since the creation of the

FSC in the early 1990s. Yet Greenpeace has also long been a critic of coalitions it regards as weak. More than ten years after its creation, even the Marine Stewardship Council has yet to win the support of the group's campaign chiefs.

But are these campaign groups right to pull the trigger on global initiatives that enjoy significant buy-in from conservationists, scientists and leading industry players? Is it correct for campaigners to tarnish the image of certification and labelling programmes in ways that could actually retard their very objectives, namely the conservation of ecosystems and protection of livelihoods?

The world is now entering a period of environmental change unprecedented in speed and scale. The transition to an economy that dramatically reduces the causes will be complex, controversial and will create many losers. The changes will

need to occur at several simultaneous levels – in policy and law certainly, but also in culture and campaigners who set out to undermine efforts to change through processes such as FSC and RSPO need to ask themselves some important questions.

Firstly, is there a better alternative? By ending its support for the FSC, what does Friends of the Earth now believe its supporters should do when buying wood and paper products? Not buy ones endorsed by the many inferior schemes out in the marketplace, surely. And for all its faults, there is no forum other than the RSPO that will ever bring together all the major growers of palm oil in south-east Asia with its major users in Europe and the US.

Secondly, undermining a general consensus and process is a sure-fire way to let business off the hook when it comes to adopting higher standards. Killing the credibility of eco-labels and certification schemes gives business a handy licence to carry on as normal.

Also, there is no doubt that campaigning NGOs bring vital insights to sectoral initiatives, helping raise the bar when standards are being established and auditing processes designed. This engagement is vital in achieving the very goals campaigners demand – namely ever stricter standards in the name of sustainable supply chains. Effectively removing themselves from the debate can only slow down that process of continuous improvement.

Campaigning NGOs need to hold multistakeholder initiatives to account. But they must also engage with them. Consumers want clear guidance on what they should do to help achieve more sustainable outcomes and campaigners have a vital role to play in providing that guidance. Certainly there are complexities and imperfections with these approaches, but that is unfortunately the nature of the challenge we face.

Brendan May is managing director of planet 2050 and a board member of the Rainforest Alliance (an IUCN member). Tony Juniper is an independent sustainability adviser and is the former executive director of Friends of the Earth.

This article is an abridged version of one that appeared in Ethical Corporation magazine in February.

# The challenges of partnerships – insights from The Forests Dialogue

**Gary Dunning** of The Forests Dialogue talks with **arborvitae** about the challenges of forest partnerships

First Gary, could you tell us a bit about the history of The Forests Dialogue (TFD)?

Well it began back in 1998 when James Wolfensohn, then-President of the World Bank, convened a meeting between the heads of large forest companies and of large environmental NGOs, to help reduce the conflict between these two groups and encourage them to establish a more constructive engagement. This group then decided to create an ongoing leaders' partnership that was later renamed TFD – so TFD really grew out of this notion of partnership, as a means to develop collaborative ideas and solutions.

I can see it could be difficult to convince donors and other groups about the value of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes. Have you found this to be the case?

Certainly we regularly have to justify to donors who don't know us why this dialogue process is important – that it's not just a talk-shop, it's not just a one-off, and it's not just an opportunity for us to fly someplace nice for a few days! When we talk about our successes, it's often the spin-offs from the actual dialogue – such as the side conversations, the agreements and partnerships that are formed between participating stakeholder groups – that bring real change towards sustainable forest management, which is what we're all about. In fact, the whole premise behind TFD is that we can build trust among the different groups participating in our dialogues, and provide them with tools, ideas and an environment in which they can form their own partnerships.

What do you see as some of the main challenges in developing successful partnerships?

I think that part of the distrust that donors have towards partnerships is that they almost always seem expansive – the partnership starts off as a means to get certain groups together to solve a particular problem but it doesn't stop there, it continues on beyond its original focus. That's one of the challenges in partnership development – putting really firm objective delineations on what the partnership is setting out to achieve. Partnerships should not be unending, ill-focussed love-fests.

Obviously, TFD isn't a great example of this. We were formed as a small entity to work over a small period of time with a small group of participating individuals, and we've



**TFD leaders prepare for the ENA FLEG Dialogue**

now become an open network of leaders that is not really bound by anything other than realizing sustainable forest management and conservation! And we work on different issues as they come up. Mind you, we have a rather tight and efficient operating model – we don't have a huge Secretariat, essentially it's just me and some interns with whom I work. We can do things quickly and we rely a lot on in-kind support, which means that we get a high level of buy-in and ownership from the stakeholder groups.

One of the other criticisms that get laid at the feet of partnerships is that they tend to end up occupying the middle ground. Do you think that's a useful place to be?

I'm convinced that partnerships can achieve much by 'engaging the radical middle'. Change and positive solutions can come from the middle, and not just ones that are watered-down or mediocre. In TFD we consider it very important to have as much representation of opinions as possible in a room but we also know that agreement is going to move towards the centre. This is inevitable and is no bad thing – the outputs of our meetings often include challenging recommendations that nudge stakeholder groups forward.

Also, in order to get real dialogue and learning, we make it clear to all participants that they are coming to listen as much as to talk. They can't simply deliver pre-prepared statements and then leave. Some organizations don't like this more informal format and don't want to participate. Those that do are open to collaborative dialogue – and that's exactly what we want.

**Contact:** Gary Dunning, [gary.dunning@yale.edu](mailto:gary.dunning@yale.edu)



# The EU Voluntary Partnership Agreements – partnerships or diplomatic enforcement tools?

**Adewale Adeleke** of IUCN looks at the ‘partnership’ element of VPAs.



**Signing the Ghana VPA**

Illegal logging is a major global issue, causing severe environmental damage and impoverishing forest-dependent communities. It deprives national and local governments of much-needed revenue, which limits resources available for development programmes. In response to these issues, the European Union launched the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan in 2003 to combat and reduce illegal logging through trade mechanisms. One of the tools in the FLEGT action plan is Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs). These agreements seek to control the trade in illegal timber between the EU and timber-producing countries by supporting legal and policy reform, developing procedures to license the export of legally harvested timber and implementing timber tracking systems and other measures to verify timber legality. While the EU Action Plan is explicit about its emphasis on legality, the VPA process is committed to ensuring that applicable forest law in all partner countries is supportive of sustainable forest management principles. The VPA agreements are being negotiated bilaterally under a set of guidelines established by the EU.

As the term VPA implies, the agreement is voluntary in that partner countries can decide whether or not to sign up. However, once they sign on the licensing

The EU’s interest in the partnership is more focused on environmental considerations while the producer country’s main interest is getting market access in Europe.

scheme is obligatory. This then brings up the question of whether or not the agreement is between equal partners. Although the process started in 2003 when the EU FLEGT Action Plan was approved, only one VPA has been agreed (Ghana) and about six others are in various stages of negotiations (Cameroon, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Congo, Vietnam, and Liberia). It is therefore difficult to ascertain the degree of ‘partnership development’ that these agreements will involve.

**For the partnership to work, it is important that both partners are highly motivated and have realistic expectations.**

However, VPAs do have the potential to dramatically impact forest governance in the producing countries, since they will entail changes in operations and benefits for a broad range of stakeholders. The process of the VPA requires that producer governments consult with a wide variety of stakeholders and consider their input in creating the government’s final negotiating position. This was particularly noted in the case of Ghana where the government effectively included all stakeholder groups in the definition of their negotiating positions. Other countries in Africa, notably Cameroon and Republic of Congo, are following suit.

The challenge however is how to make the partnership meaningful, given the disparities of resources and legitimacy available to the two parties concerned. An examination of the current situations during the negotiation processes has shown that one partner (the EU) is stronger than the other. The EU’s interest in the partnership is more focused on environmental considerations while the producer country’s main interest is getting market access in Europe. Most of the producing countries see the agreement as providing additional sources of funds to implement their forest policy reforms and look towards the EU as the funding source.

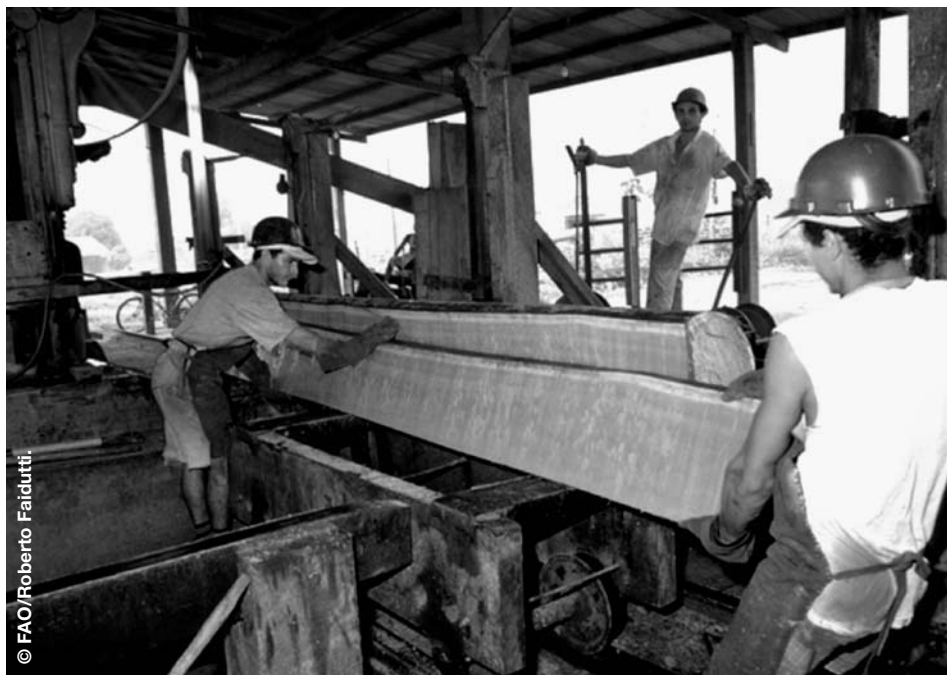
For the partnership to be genuine, it will require recognition of these differences. A meaningful partnership must also involve other key stakeholder groups such as civil society, the private sector and the land-owners. The EU will need to develop a generic process which will need to be applied with each partner – there should not be different rules for different countries.

For the partnership to work, it is important that both partners are highly motivated and have realistic expectations. The partnerships will also need to involve good social capital building processes, ensure good communications between the two partners and with the other stakeholder groups, and of course shared power and responsibilities.

**Contact:** Adewale Adeleke, [Adewale.Adeleke@iucn.org](mailto:Adewale.Adeleke@iucn.org)

# Mobilizing partners for better forest governance

**Marcelo Arguelles** of the Brazilian Forest Service and **Liliana Pires** of IUCN describe a strategy for helping stakeholder groups construct their own agendas and participate in decision-making.



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**The private sector is a major stakeholder group of the project**

Since 2005, IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme has been running a four-year project to help support implementation of the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade programme. The project, entitled Strengthening Voices for Better Choices (SVBC), has been operating in six countries across three continents with the aim of testing and promoting improved forest governance arrangements. The Brazilian component of the project is focused in Acre State which, while of minor territorial or economic importance, has been leading the country's search for environmental and social policy alternatives in the fight against illegal logging.

A core part of the SVBC project in Acre has been working to reduce conflicts and promote integration between the different stakeholder groups that access forest resources, within a context of growing fragility of civil society and its institutions. This fragility is due to a number of factors, including a weakening of external support

to local NGOs, the difficulties which civil society organizations encounter in gaining access to strategic information, and the reduced technical capacity of the NGOs since many of their staff have moved to the popular government sector at municipal, state and federal level.

IUCN and WWF (permanent partner in the SVBC project) have therefore taken up the role of neutral brokers, acting as links between the stakeholders of social movements and the private and governmental sectors in order to broaden participation in forest governance reform. They have also helped specific stakeholder groups within the civil society and private sectors to develop, articulate and implement their own agendas. A stepwise approach has been adopted for this work, starting with activities to help construct the partnership between the project and the sector's stakeholders, then moving on to an analysis of the situation and a debate on the relevant themes for the sector, and culminating in

the elaboration and implementation of proposals to mobilize the sector on forest governance issues.

Thus for example, the project has helped the Federation of Industries of Acre State and the Association of Forest Management Companies to elaborate proposals for state legislation to regulate, and reduce the bureaucracy of, forest management activities and to promote responsible timber procurement practices by the state government. The construction of the civil society agenda, in partnership with GTA (the Amazon Working Group), has resulted in the re-structuring of three tripartite state councils (on forest, environment, and sustainable rural development) to strengthen the participation of NGOs and social movements.

## Main lessons

The experience of creating forest governance reform agendas for each sector has generated the following lessons on these processes of mobilizing stakeholder groups:

- Processes must be educational, participatory, gradual and continuous.
- They need to have a clear and objective approach, based on the group's needs and on concrete results that can be perceived by the stakeholders.
- They must be developed based on an analysis of the situation and the influence that the stakeholders can have and on the factors that can positively or negatively affect their action.
- They must support stakeholders to construct their own agendas enabling them to see things differently and to come up with innovative ideas. This in turn helps them to mobilize themselves and strengthen their demands, bringing reforms to public policies and actions.
- Before starting to elaborate an agenda, the sector must already have a clear idea of the openings in governance it may be able to influence.
- The democratization and availability of information to society are essential elements of a transparent approach, which supports broad-based participation in decision-making and enables pressure to be put on those stakeholders that utilize natural resources unsustainably.

**Contact:** Liliana Pires, [lilianapires@uol.com.br](mailto:lilianapires@uol.com.br)

Marcelo was the IUCN Amazon Projects Office Coordinator until December 2008, and Liliana currently holds this position.

# Multi-stakeholder partnerships for forest governance reform

**Cecilia Luttrell** of ODI looks at some of the issues involved in setting up multi-stakeholder bodies to strengthen forest control.

There has been a proliferation in the sources of authority in public governance over the last couple of decades and this has led to a variety of partnerships between the state, the business sector, NGOs and other civil society actors, and to the development of multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) to reconcile their views. MSPs have also been advocated as a means to engage with stakeholders around Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), including the development of public policy.

In the context of forest governance reform – and, specifically, the design of forest verification systems – MSPs offer the potential to:

- Increase effectiveness through increased capacity and technical input;
- Increase political support for the process by involving influential players and those who may act to undermine its progress; and
- Enhance the legitimacy of the process by involving a wide range of stakeholders.

However, the establishment of MSPs is not a simple or risk-free strategy. Creating these high-profile partnerships and processes can raise expectations, involve high transaction costs, and run the risk of sparking conflict with democratic processes (Brown et al., 2008). Before setting up an MSP, a good deal of thought needs to be given to the objectives of the process, whether it is intended to be a dialogue or decision-making forum, and what mandate the body involved would have for any decision-making it undertakes.

The track record of MSPs has been somewhat mixed. Case studies from a number of countries in a recent study of forest verification systems illustrate the difficulties involved in bringing meaningful and effective multi-stakeholder participation to forest reform decision-making processes.

The researchers argue that gaining policy closure on forest governance is particularly difficult in the tropics where ‘...stakeholder interests are multiple and highly polarised, and blocking a process may seem preferable to some parties to achieving a compromise.’ (Brown et al., 2008).

A key feature of effective MSPs is that they enable and encourage healthy contestation. Attempts to overcome power differences and to focus on reaching consensus can gloss over dissenting views and ignore potential conflicts. Instead, it may be more useful to help the weaker groups strengthen their negotiating and decision-making powers, and encourage all partners to identify when it may be necessary to ‘agree to disagree’. This is well seen in the Costa Rican model of forest control, which involves a rather complex set of partnerships between government, industry, academia and civil society. Here, stakeholders are required to sign up to an open agenda before they engage in deliberations and it is clear that the final authority rests with the national government.

This article has touched on only a few of the numerous issues involved in setting up effective MSPs. Above all, MSPs take time. The design of an MSP therefore needs to take into account a realistic idea of the time needed to build trust and confidence to allow for an open and transparent dialogue and credible decision-making. This is all the more important when the MSPs are being established as part of external donor-led initiatives.

**Contact:** Cecilia Luttrell, c.luttrell@odi.org.uk.

Brown, D. Schreckenber K., Bird, N., Cerutti, P., Del Gatto, F., Diaw, C., Fomété, T., Luttrell, C., Navarro, G., Oberndorf, R., Thiel, H. and Wells, A. (2008). *Legal Timber: Verification and Governance in the Forest Sector*. ODI, London, UK.

This article draws on the above ODI book, particularly the chapter that Cecilia authored on multi-stakeholder processes.

## Ground rules



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**Sarah Stokes Alexander** of The Keystone Center suggests some principles to bear in mind when creating a partnership.

Partnerships can be an essential tool for developing forest conservation and governance strategies. Establishing ground rules early on in a partnership can be key to the overall success of the effort. Ground rules should provide an organizing structure and guidance for how the different entities will work together towards their shared goals. Helpful ground rules tend to be jointly negotiated by the parties involved, and clearly state agreements about the following:

**The scope and goals and objectives of the partnership:** Why are the parties coming together, and what do they hope to accomplish?

**Roles and responsibilities of each of the parties:** What roles will each of the parties play? This may need to cover issues such as funding, technical expertise, and staffing of the partnership.

**Mechanisms to use in the event of potential conflicts of interest or disputes among the partners:** While it may seem that everybody is on the same page at the outset, it can be important to anticipate that this may not always be the case. Having agreed guidelines for how to handle potential problems down the road



# for forest partnerships



## Good communication and consultation are key to effective partnerships

can help keep partnerships working rather than dissolving when difficulties arise.

**Mechanisms for broadening the partnerships or sharing information with other stakeholders:** In forest governance issues, there tend to be many stakeholders who are not necessarily able to be a part of every discussion or action. Keeping them informed and seeking their input can help strengthen the work of partnerships over time.

**Consultative principles:** Consultative principles can provide an important framework for helping foster and create partnerships that support shared goals. Below are some examples of principles that could be used to guide the process of creating a partnership. These principles would need to be discussed, modified, and agreed to by the stakeholders concerned to address the specific concerns and situations that the partnership is designed to address.

### 1. Engage diverse stakeholders

We will make efforts to consult with a broad range of stakeholders within government, civil society and industry.

### 2. Institute reliable operating structure and process management

We will ensure that meetings are adequately planned, facilitated, and documented in a timely manner.

### 3. Practice transparency

We will ensure that the process is transparent to outside stakeholders through representation of diverse interests in our discussions, regular external reporting of deliberations, and additional consultation.

### 4. Use effective communication channels

We will use multiple communication channels to reach

as many stakeholders as possible and raise their awareness of our process and its possible implications.

### 5. Foster focus on interests, not positions or personalities

In our own deliberations, we will seek to address the interests underlying issues raised. When issues are raised we will ask for solutions.

### 6. Allow for independent verification

In reporting our successes, we will ensure that those outside the process can verify our positions and outcomes.

### 7. Be responsive to all concerns

While we will not be able to address every concern that is raised with respect to our work, we will strive to be responsive to them, explaining what action has been taken and if no action can be taken why that is the case.

### 8. Make use of existing networks

We will rely on members of our partnerships to use their own networks to communicate our work and solicit feedback and concerns.

### 9. Incorporate capacity building

We will look for opportunities to build capacity in each of the sectors to effectively participate in the process.

### 10. Allow for process adjustments

We will revisit the roadmap as necessary to ensure we are adequately achieving the milestones and including the necessary stakeholder consultation.

**Contact:** Sarah Stokes Alexander, [salexander@keystone.org](mailto:salexander@keystone.org).

The Keystone Center is a US-based non-profit organization working on environmental, energy, and public health issues. The President of the Keystone Center, Peter Adler, is a member of IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication and Sarah has worked with IUCN's Forest Law Enforcement and Governance program in Ghana and Cameroon.

## arborvitae

The next issue of **arborvitae** will be produced in August 2009 (copy deadline early June) and will look at forests and climate change. If you have any material to send or comments please contact:

Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken  
85 chemin de la ferme du château  
74520 Vulbens  
France  
jennifer.rietbergen@wanadoo.fr

Communications regarding the **arborvitae** mailing list (subscription requests, address changes etc.) should be sent to Sizakele Noko, [sizakele.noko@iucn.org](mailto:sizakele.noko@iucn.org)

Back issues of **arborvitae** can be found on: [www.iucn.org/forest/av](http://www.iucn.org/forest/av)

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**Jan L. McAlpine**, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests, talks with **arborvitae** about her views on partnerships.

The need for partnerships for sustainable development first gained prominence at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 – do you think they work better than other project approaches and if so, what do you think is important about forest partnerships?

Personally, I can't imagine a world in which just one person, one country, one group can successfully do all that needs to be done. My views on this come in part from growing up in a large family of six children, and also from my childhood spent in Central Africa, a continent with a rich communal heritage where I learned what it means to work with others, to think for the "village" and not just oneself.

Partnerships bring together all the goodness and richness of individual partners, while at the same time compensating for areas of weakness in others. When the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) was first conceived, the very thought that we could find enough financial resources, enough political commitment, enough sheer momentum to support sustainable forest management in the second largest area of tropical forest in the world seemed an overwhelming challenge. And there were many who were sceptical that such a partnership could succeed. But we found the true richness of the more than 40 partners – governments, civil society, NGOs, industry (including IUCN) – which decided to work together to do what they could, through their own

mechanisms, with the resources they could tap, to address a shared objective.

I think that forests naturally lend themselves to partnerships among a diverse set of organizations, specialties and expertise. We haven't tapped into the real potential of partnerships for forests yet, and I believe that we will see more cross-sectoral, cross-institutional and less fragmented approaches to financing forests in the future. I believe that UN Forum on Forests, a body with membership of all 192 countries, is in an extraordinary position to tap into far more significant sources of funding and substantially influence sustainable forest management. The Forum works closely with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), an innovative partnership which promotes management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and is made up of 14 forest-related multilateral organizations, institutions and bodies, including IUCN. The CPF has already shown its potential, and will undoubtedly be a powerhouse for change.

What is the next 'frontier' for forests in your view? What challenges remain for the CPF and other partnerships?

One of the most fascinating challenges we face is how to integrate aggressive, ambitious action to mitigate climate change, while adapting with agility and speed to the effects of climate change that are already impacting forests and the people and critters that depend on them.

I recently spent a night on an airplane reading a book called "The Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell. The author describes a number of interesting phenomena where an action by one individual or a group of individuals becomes a "positive epidemic", catalyzing amazing change. Gladwell describes why the effect can sometimes happen quickly and unexpectedly with massive impact. "One of the things I explore in the book is that ideas can be contagious in exactly the same way that a virus is... [and people can] start "positive" epidemics of their own. The virtue of an epidemic, after all, is that just a little input is enough to get it started, and it can spread very, very quickly..."

It is my view that forests are at such a "tipping point", where, if we act together as partners, from all walks of life, all kinds of forests, all types of economies, we can decisively achieve sustainable forest management in a way we have never come close to achieving before. As citizens of the world we understand the threat of climate change. We have long understood the value of forests. Now, we simply need to work together to start a "positive epidemic" of our own – one which makes all the difference to forests.

**Contact:** Jan McAlpine, [mc Alpine@un.org](mailto:mc Alpine@un.org)