

shared rules of behaviour, is one approach to increasing confidence.

Collective action among the powerless groups increases their influence, as does networking among themselves and with the powerful. Increasingly, involving third parties, such as non-governmental organisations as advocates and links between stakeholder groups, increases the impact of the initiatives.

"These approaches complement one another," concluded Colfer. "No one approach is enough on its own.

But in combination they can increase equity in forest management for women and other disadvantaged groups in the forest."

Fuller accounts of these stories will be available later this year in an as yet untitled collection on strengthening equity in forest management, edited by Carol J. Pierce Colfer. The collection is to be published by RFF and CIFOR, in a new series on Adaptive Collaborative Management. Visit CIFOR's web site over coming months for further details or e-mail [c.colfer@cgiar.org](mailto:c.colfer@cgiar.org) after June 2003.

## Learning from past rehabilitation efforts

**National governments, international donors and private agencies have invested in numerous forest rehabilitation projects in the tropics over the past three decades. But there has been very little assessment of the different types of projects and their impacts. This is all about to change with a recently undertaken lessons-learned study by CIFOR.**

The study is part of a larger forest rehabilitation research project supported by the Government of Japan, known as "Review of rehabilitation initiatives - Lessons from the past". It will involve CIFOR working with national partners to review ongoing and past rehabilitation initiatives and to disseminate lessons learned.

The study will focus on rehabilitation in Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, China, Peru, Brazil and will be expanded by the World Wild Fund into a number of other countries, including India. The participants in the study will include governments, forest research and development agencies, non-government organizations, local communities, industries and donors.

**Unna Chokkalingam**, co-ordinator of the Southeast Asian component of the study, says evaluation of past rehabilitation initiatives is well over-due.

"There has been all sorts of research and action into rehabilitating degraded forest areas. Until now those efforts have not had much assessment made of their impact or of how they might be improved. It is critical to draw strategic lessons from past experiences and use them to plan and guide future efforts," Chokkalingam says.

"Our aim is to increase the chances of success of future rehabilitation initiatives. We will do this by identifying approaches which contribute to longer-term sustainability and which have had minimal negative impact on different stakeholders. Of particular interest to CIFOR is the impact of forest rehabilitation on local livelihoods. We want to know if the impact has been positive or negative and under what situations."

One feature of the project is its examination of the socio-economic and institutional aspects of rehabilitating forests. "Often it's the absence of supporting social or government action that prevents rehabilitation projects from successfully re-growing trees on degraded land," says **Takeshi Toma**, task manager of the CIFOR/Japan rehabilitation research project.

"For example, there may not be sufficient interaction between industry and local people to ensure there is a market for the end products coming out of the rehabilitated forests. Or tenure of land may be so insecure it discourages long-term management investment."

CIFOR and partners will focus on rehabilitation activities undertaken on formerly forested lands with

inhibited natural forest recovery, such as Imperata grasslands, scrub, and barren land. Bringing back forests on barren lands or scrub may be important in reducing pressure exerted on remaining forests.

The assessment looks at all rehabilitation methods that involve trees, including agroforestry, plantations and assisted natural regeneration. The assessment also covers a diversity of ecological and socio-economic rehabilitation scenarios and works closely with a representative range of stakeholders.

"The study will look at government-driven watershed reforestation, private company plantations, integrated livelihood projects, and spontaneous private tree farming. We hope to identify where stakeholders have benefited from each of these and other initiatives," Chokkalingam says.

Toma says it is important to examine the broadest possible range of factors that determine the success of forest rehabilitation initiatives. These include the scale and duration of past initiatives, their underlying objectives, the key actors involved, and actions undertaken.

"It's crucial that assessment of rehabilitation efforts take an across-the-board approach. Unless we address all of the identifiable factors and variables that affect forest rehabilitation, the same mistakes may happen again in future projects," says Toma.

According to **Cesar Sabogal**, co-ordinator of the Latin American component of the study, a key element of the research is its applicability to countries across the tropics, whether in Asia, Africa or Latin America.

"Often the underlying concerns and motivations driving rehabilitation efforts are similar throughout the tropics. So the experience gained during an older rehabilitation scheme on one side of the world may be highly relevant to a similar scheme starting up on the other side. The lessons learned should be shared," Sabogal says.

The study could not be more timely, as it will feed into policy processes underway in many of the study countries. For example, Indonesia may soon review its rehabilitation program while China has several reforestation programs and is looking at incentives to ensure longer-term

*(continued on page 8)*

CIFOR will develop a step-by-step guide for planning, implementing and evaluating future rehabilitation projects that will be targeted at project funders, developers and managers

## The flawed wisdom of sustainable forest management



"Conventional wisdom is a funny thing," says *David Kaimowitz*, CIFOR's Director General, "Many people in the forestry community have repeated the same ideas for so long about sustainable forest management that everyone assumes they are true. In fact, they may not be."

Kaimowitz suggests we think more critically, especially when 'received' wisdom is used to justify giving control of public forests to small groups of wealthy people, rather than the large numbers of communities and smallholders that might otherwise benefit from them.

The first bit of wisdom Kaimowitz critiques is the notion that secure tenure of the forest will encourage forest dwellers to manage it better.

"Secure tenure is not a necessary or sufficient condition for sustainable forest management. Managing natural tropical forests sustainably is rarely as financially profitable as rapid and uncontrolled logging," Kaimowitz says.

Under most current circumstances, companies will manage tropical natural forests sustainably only if external regulators force them to. If it is more profitable for the companies to comply with the regulations than not, they will comply, regardless of tenure.

But if complying with regulations is unprofitable, most companies will ignore them. Companies with ten, twenty, forty, or a thousand years of tenure, will do exactly the same thing. With serious regulation, sustainable forest management can be achieved without secure tenure. Without serious regulation, sustainable forest management cannot be achieved, even with secure tenure.

Another myth Kaimowitz takes aim at is the belief that increased efficiency will necessarily reduce pressure on forests. "No," says Kaimowitz, "In many situations more efficient production is just as likely to increase pressure on forests, not reduce it."

More efficient technologies usually increase the profitability of logging. This may encourage more logging by making it more profitable than alternative investments and by providing expansion capital. Frequently, more efficient wood processing technologies allow the profitable use of smaller diameter timber and species that previously had no commercial value. Logging becomes financially viable where it was not previously profitable to do so. This encourages loggers to re-enter areas of previously little commercial interest.

Convention also dictates that higher timber prices encourage companies to implement long-term sustainable forest management strategies. Again, not always true, says Kaimowitz.

"Higher timber prices increase the demand for logs. This means more logging. As long as unsustainable logging remains more profitable than sustainable forest management, higher timber prices will only lead to more logging, not to more sustainable management," Kaimowitz says. Conventional wisdom is correct that higher prices will encourage investment in plantations and forest management, but it ignores the fact that it will also encouraged exploitation of unmanaged forests.

Kaimowitz also queries the widely-held notion that sustainability would be guaranteed if only companies had management plans. "Sounds nice in theory," says

Kaimowitz, "But it doesn't stand up to close scrutiny, especially in the tropics. The presence of a formal management plan doesn't necessarily mean a forest is being managed sustainably. Even when management plans make ecological sense, they are very difficult to enforce."

Kaimowitz says it is relatively easy to make a company to do its paperwork, but it is not so easy for government regulators to ensure companies follow their plans.

"Some sustainable forest management practices, such as reduced impact logging, are more profitable than conventional logging techniques. But overall, managing forests sustainably is usually less profitable than managing them unsustainably. It is highly unlikely a company will undertake sustainable forest management unless there is substantial monitoring and high penalties to get them to do those things that are not profitable."

"But the fact is most tropical countries lack both the resources and the political will for that sort of monitoring and regulating," Kaimowitz says.

Most logging on government-owned forests, which today make up about 80 percent of all the forests in the world, involves some type of subsidy. This is because loggers rarely pay the government the full value of the logs they harvest. Given this simple fact, Kaimowitz asks why a few wealthy individuals and companies should have access to these subsidised resources rather than the millions of poor and marginalized people living in or near forests? Industrial loggers are at least as likely to destroy the forest as smallholders, communities and indigenous people.

"Large-scale industrial logging can be improved and made more sustainable," says Kaimowitz. "By the same token, sustainable practices don't belong to the exclusive domain of large companies, as conventional wisdom strongly implies. It is high time we started giving poor people greater access to public forest resources."

### Learning from... *(continued from page 7)*

sustainability. Brazil also has a number of government-sponsored programmes that would benefit from the study.

To ensure the research findings achieve maximum impact with key groups, the study includes a thorough outreach strategy. Lessons learned from past projects and advice in designing and implementing future projects will be disseminated through seminars, workshops, policy briefs, news articles, website postings and networking activities. CIFOR's work will also interlink with other important initiatives into forest rehabilitation led by WWF, IUCN (The World Conservation Union), the International Tropical Timber Organization, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), the ASEAN-Korea Environmental Cooperation Project, the Asia Forest Partnership and the Food and Agriculture Organization.