

MODEL FORESTS

Landscapes – Partnerships – Sustainability



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY RESEARCH

People and forests cannot be separated. Every day, people around the world use forest resources such as fruit, timber, bushmeat, agroforestry products and rattan for their livelihoods.

Participatory and inclusive approaches to sustainable forest management (SFM) and use can help prevent conflicts over resources and forest degradation. With this in mind, a **model forest** is an innovative approach that combines the social, cultural and economic needs of local communities with the long-term sustainability of forest landscapes. It is both a place and a voluntary partnership between different forest stakeholders—from local communities to logging companies and development projects—where all involved can meet and discuss the impact of their activities on the landbase then develop a shared understanding and approach to achieving SFM in a locally relevant context. Meetings, workshops, discussions, media and education are used to achieve this goal.

What makes the model forest concept stand out from other like-minded forest-based development initiatives is the comprehensiveness of its approach, its scale of operation, the level of policy it can affect, and the nature and range of partnerships it unites.

Model Forests in Africa

In 2005 the Cameroonian sites of Campo Ma'an and Dja & Mpomo were selected as pilots for Central Africa. In both model forests, stakeholders are building large scale development and management platforms based on voluntary partnerships.

Campo Ma'an

- In the southwest corner of the country, 770,000 hectares;
- Rich in biodiversity: elephants, buffalo, gorilla, chimpanzee, panther and 300 bird species;
- 60,000 people, divided into seven ethnic groups live in the area;
- Population depends mainly on agriculture, fishing and hunting;
- One third of the landscape is a national park, a quarter is an agroforestry zone (rubber, oil palm) and there are two logging companies;

- Problems of environmental degradation, equity and persistent poverty translate into increased deforestation, unequal social access to resources and benefits, degrading environmental services, low land and labor productivity and a weak policy and institutional environment. These problems make the area an appropriate site for the **model forest** initiative.

Dja & Mpomo

- Found in the Eastern province, 700,000 hectares;
- Striking biological diversity; 600 tree species, 165 mammalian species, 120 fish species and 320 bird species. A number of local mammals are listed as threatened and endangered: forest elephants, leopard, gorilla and chimpanzee;
- 25,000 inhabitants, five main indigenous groups, including Baka pygmies;
- 40% of the landscape consists of forest management units, almost a quarter is a protected area;
- Informal economy, forestry related activities, handicraft and mining;
- The economic value of the zone is high, but local populations do not benefit. Many conflicts arise between forest actors over the equitable use of, and benefits from, forest resources and revenues. The **Model Forest** provides a coherent network for these actors to experiment with sustainable management practices on the basis of voluntary partnerships.

Model Forests Internationally

The model forests in Cameroon are part of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN). With more than 40 sites in existence or under development around the world, IMFN's role is to convert the collective experience and lessons learned from each model forest into services that help new ventures to begin and existing ones to grow. The IMFN Secretariat, based in Ottawa, Canada, provides the central day-to-day coordination of support and development services to the Network.

Actors

The Government of Cameroon and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) initiated the creation of model forests in Cameroon. Many partners provide financial and facilitating support. Stakeholders such as women's platforms, logging companies, local communities and local and international NGO's take part in the participative process of sustainable forest management.

Want to know more?

<http://www.imfn.net>

