

Participatory forest management:
improving policy and institutional capacity for development

Evaluation of a project implemented
by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
with support from the FAO – National Forest Programme Facility

Final report

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ALG	Action Learning Group
ALP	Action Learning Project
CANARI	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
CBO	Community-based organisation
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IWCAM	Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management
LFMC	Local Forest Management Committee
LoA	Letter of Agreement
NTFP	Non-timber forest product
NFP	National Forest Programme
NFPF	National Forest Programme Facility
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PFM	Participatory forest management

Presentation

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the project entitled: “Participatory forest management: improving policy and institutional capacity for development” which is being implemented by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) with support from the National Forest Programme Facility (NFPF) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

This document is based on:

- interviews with colleagues who have participated in the project in various capacities (members of the Action Learning Group – ALG, recipients of small grants, participants in study tours and training sessions, members of organisations covered in case studies, participants in the regional conference held in May 2010, and implementers of Action Learning Projects – ALP), see Appendix for interview outline;
- discussions held and views expressed during a meeting of the ALG held in Trinidad on 7 May 2010;
- a review of project documents as well as selected titles relevant to participatory forest management in the Caribbean;
- comments received from colleagues on a discussion note presenting preliminary findings.

Overview of the project

The main objectives of this project, as defined in the original project document, are to:

- build the capacity of forest stakeholders for participatory policy analysis, policy formulation and forest management through effective training, technical assistance, and regional and cross-sectoral dialogue;
- improve the institutional frameworks for participatory forest policy analysis, policy formulation and forest management, and the integration of forest policy in national sustainable development strategies, through the promotion and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices, technical assistance and training; and
- develop and transfer methods for sustainable management of forest resources.

The project involves regional activities as well as national activities in seven project countries: Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Christopher (St. Kitts) & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad & Tobago. Jamaica, which has its own NFPF project, was invited to participate in and contribute to regional activities.

The project was originally designed as a three-year undertaking, to be implemented through Letters of Agreement (LoA) between CANARI and FAO, each LoA specifying the activities to be implemented and the resources allocated over successive periods of one year. Four LoAs have been signed and implemented to date, with the first three effectively covering periods longer than twelve months. As a result this project, which began in 2006, has actually been running for a little over four years.

In 2007, CANARI initiated a project funded by the European Commission (EC) and entitled: “Practices and policies that improve forest management and livelihoods of the

rural poor in the insular Caribbean”. This has provided support for a number of activities complementary to those supported by the NFPF, with a focus on case studies, communications and the action learning approach. It is thanks to the EC-funded project that CANARI was able to establish and support the operations of the ALG, which first met in May 2007. Over the period March 2007 – mid 2010, CANARI therefore effectively ran an integrated programme on forests and livelihoods, thanks to the synergies between the EC-funded and NFPF-funded projects, and to the policy processes implemented in Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago. While this programme did not cover all countries and all possible areas of intervention, it is obvious that it was much more than a mere assemblage of projects, owing to the complementary nature of the various activities.

The main activities implemented under the terms of the LoAs between CANARI and FAO were:

LoA #1:

- national reviews in the seven project countries of the opportunities and constraints for stakeholder participation in forest policy, institutions and management, sometimes referred to as “snapshots”;
- assessments of national capacity and development of capacity building strategies in the seven project countries and a regional strategy;
- facilitation of a regional workshop on skills and methods for participatory forest management (July 2006); and
- preparation for the sector study on links between participation, improved livelihoods and improved management.

LoA#2:

- a review of the forest policy process used in Grenada, its impacts, and the factors that have constrained or facilitated its implementation. Members of the forestry departments and senior policy makers in the other six project countries (Barbados, Dominica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago) participated in this exercise;
- provision of technical assistance to the seven project countries (Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago) in the design of national forest policy processes, including assistance with identifying development partners and funding agencies;
- design of four local action learning projects, which focus on priority themes of interest to all project countries, and phase 1 of the implementation through the provision of a small grants to each of the projects;
- formulation of a strategy for recognition and integration of forestry issues in national land and land use policies in Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis;
- facilitation of a regional training-of-trainers workshop (August 2007); and
- facilitation of a first round of national training activities in three project countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica and Barbados).

LoA #3:

- design and implementation of a small grant scheme executed by civil society organisations in the seven project countries (Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Trinidad &

- Tobago) so that they meaningfully contribute to the National Forest Programmes (NFP) of these countries;
- implementation of four ALPs, which focused on priority themes of interest to all project countries; and
 - facilitation of a second round of national training activities in four project countries (St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines).

The fourth LoA specifically covered this evaluation and related activities.

Because the LoAs cover relatively short periods of time, there is no overarching document (such as a logical framework) that captures the main elements of this work. On the basis of the various project documents, it is however possible to summarise the project's framework as follows:

Goal	Livelihoods and environmental benefits from forest resources
Result	Institutions and policies for participatory forest management (PFM)
Outcomes	Capacity for PFM, within governmental and civil society actors, in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Programmes • Interactions • Behaviour • Competencies • Financing • Legitimacy and visibility of actors
Outputs	Skills for PFM Policy instruments and linkages Methods for PFM New activities in PFM Links to sources of funding
Inputs	Training Networking Information and communications Small grants and ALPs

Assessment of relevance

This section is concerned with the relevance of project design and implementation, i.e. the extent to which the project that was conceived and the activities that were planned were consistent with the needs, expectations and capacities of the various stakeholders and responded adequately to identified needs, goals and objectives. In this regard, the main conclusions of this evaluation are as follows.

Linking forest management and livelihoods is directly relevant to the needs of the Caribbean. The concept of livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities that determine the way people, households and communities live. It therefore incorporates more than income, work, food and shelter, and also encompasses critical requirements such as access to information, social relationships and the ways they are organised, as well as collective and individual identity. Livelihoods revolve around people

and their resources (in this case the forests and their products), but understood within specific environmental, political, economic, cultural and socio-cultural contexts, and with explicit concern for equity and changes in power relations in favour of the weak and marginalised.

The approach taken by CANARI in these and all the other activities implemented under its Forests and Livelihoods programme is fully consistent with this understanding of the concept of livelihoods, and therefore makes it very relevant. Project interventions have usefully focused on the goods and services provided by forests, on the capacities of the various stakeholders (communities, government agencies, civil society organisations), and on the relationships between these stakeholders. As such, the project has sought to modify power relations by giving a stronger voice to users of forest resources and by encouraging the most powerful actors to recognise and formalise the role of civil society and communities.

The focus on poverty reduction, which has been a part of the collaboration between CANARI and FAO (and a more central and explicit objective of the EC-funded project) is also fully justified. Poverty must be understood as a multidimensional concept that is characterised by the inability to meet material needs such as food, water, shelter and sanitation, but that also incorporates a number of other dimensions, including: access to social services, health and social care, education, and social security; natural, financial, physical and social assets; security and safety; dignity, respect, self-esteem and cultural identity; as well as rights and opportunities to participate in economic, social, political as well as other local and national processes.

In the Caribbean as in many other parts of the world, people and communities that are dependent, even in a small way, on forest resources for their livelihoods are typically among the poorest groups in society, and these resources, if properly managed and used, have the potential to reduce their poverty. Yet, as frequently noted by CANARI, poverty reduction policies, strategies and programmes in the region rarely take into account that potential. Even the most fundamental services provided by forest ecosystems (watersheds, soil conservation) are insufficiently understood and appreciated by decision-makers and other actors in society, and the role of the other goods and services provided by forest ecosystems, especially the non-timber forest products (NTFP), is largely unrecognised. In contrast, CANARI's Forests and Livelihoods programme is directly relevant to the poverty reduction agenda, not only because it aims at generating or securing income from forest products, but also because it seeks to empower marginalised forest users and formalise their rights. Poverty is not only a matter of resources; it is above all a question of social status.

The project's additional focus on participation, as a form of governance that is based on shared benefits and responsibilities among a range of actors, is also very relevant to the needs and realities of the countries and the overall region served by this project. While most organisations involved in natural resource management in the Caribbean have now embraced the concept of participation in their discourse, this has in many instances not yet been translated into practice, and there are many forces militating against the actual adoption of participatory forms of governance (resistance to change within organisations, negative attitudes towards traditional rural cultures and communities, growth of consumerism and dominance of market forces, weakening of state and civil society agencies). CANARI is therefore right to keep this focus.

Against this background, the project's original intent to work at the same time on capacity-building and policy appears entirely relevant. Participatory forest management is an approach that requires a range of skills, instruments and capabilities, within a diversity of organisations and communities. At the same time, these capacities will not be applicable and applied in the absence of a favourable policy environment. Change needs to happen at both levels – practice and policy – and this is something the design of this project has fully recognised.

In the realm of participatory forest management and livelihoods, there is however one important domain in which the project has not been significantly involved, and that is private forestry. Apart from an attempt to involve the Jamaica Tree Growers Association in the ALG (with attendance at one meeting), most of the activities of the project have focused on the role of community-based organisations (CBO), on partnerships between state agencies and civil society actors, and on the capacities and policies of these institutions. It has however not been very concerned with forests that are under private ownership, although these resources are very relevant to the livelihood and poverty reduction agendas, either because they are on small holdings of poor households or because they are or could be accessible, under some arrangement, to people in poorer and marginalised communities. If there is one area of need that the project has not sufficiently addressed, it is this one.

One additional issue of relevance concerns the islands of Barbados and St. Kitts, because forest resources are very different there from what they are in the other islands that were involved in this project. In spite of the perceived irrelevance of the concept of participatory forest management to these islands, the project managed to make its activities (mainly a national workshop and the formulation of national strategies) pertinent and useful. In Barbados, says one participant, “several people at the workshop were from the craft business, and they found the discussion very useful”. It stills remains an issue for CANARI and FAO to consider, in order to “keep them in the loop”, as recommended by one project participant, but with the understanding that many of the approaches and activities that would be at the core of any programme on forests and livelihoods in the Caribbean would not be relevant to these two islands.

Analysis of impacts

This section focuses on the outcomes produced as a direct or indirect result of project activities, in terms of knowledge, capacities, policy reform and changes in patterns of forest use and management.

Knowledge impacts

The project has undoubtedly helped in developing a better understanding of what is participatory forest management and what is required to make it happen. Participatory natural resource governance is still work in progress, with many elements, approaches and tools not yet tested and developed. This project has been particularly useful in its exploration of the business dimension of PFM. As one forestry officer describes, “they [CANARI] have introduced a business approach to forestry, and that's very good, we did not have that before”. This was done particularly through the training activities and the exchange visits, and through the involvement of individuals and community groups that are involved in very concrete activities linking forests and micro-enterprise.

In this understanding, the project has also helped the participating countries and institutions to make a better connection between forests, livelihoods and poverty reduction. “For me”, says one forest officer, “the main thing I’ve learned from this project is that forests can create opportunities for poor people, that’s something that was long overdue. True, in Forestry sometimes it’s like we’re competing with poor people, we need to change that”. There remain, of course, many issues and areas to explore, but it is obvious that this project has contributed significantly to making forest management an instrument of social and economic development in the region.

The project has also helped to introduce the issue of climate change in the debate on PFM. Two of the participants in the regional conference (May 2010) who were interviewed for this evaluation indeed noted that, in their view, one of the main benefits of the conference was that it has introduced them to the relationship between forest management, climate change and livelihoods.

Because of these emphases, the project has helped to consolidate the view that good forest management implies sustainable use. “I was glad”, says one community participant, “when I hear FAO and CANARI telling me trees have to cut. We can use the forest and protect it, we just have to replant. We not criminals again”.

The project has also resulted in a better understanding of the type of governance needed for effectively linking forest, livelihoods and poverty reduction. Several of the activities have introduced community groups, forestry administrations and other stakeholders to various options for institutional arrangements, including memorandums of understanding and other types of co-management agreements. But while understanding has improved, it has not always been applied. In the words of a civil society project partner, “we’re talking participation, but participatory forest management is not really happening in this country, it’s not serious because there are no agreements, and communities do not really see any change. We need models of co-management”.

Capacity impacts

The primary intent of the project was to build capacity for forest management. In addition to the creation and improvement of knowledge described above, the project has built capacity in a number of ways:

- *by enhancing the skills of participants in several areas, including project formulation, project management (thanks in large part to the mentoring arrangements), stakeholder identification and analysis, design and negotiation of forest co-management arrangements;*
- *by improving or creating new relationships between actors: several participants emphasise the extent to which the project’s activities have allowed them to establish or strengthen relationships and partnerships with a range of actors with whom they would not normally collaborate and communicate. Several forestry department officials note in particular how the project has helped them to build links with CBOs and small business people;*
- *by supporting institutional development, again through mentoring and small grants, and by including strategic planning and management topics in the training activities;*
- *by identifying and promoting business ideas with opportunities for community fundraising and income generation for group members;*

- *by linking actors, especially CBOs, to sources of financial and technical assistance*: this is something that the project sought to achieve through the national training activities, the ALPs and to a lesser extent the small grants. To me, says an ALG member, “this was one of the highlights of this project, because there is very little knowledge out there of the sources of support for small grants and community capacity building, and, apart from the forestry departments, it’s only CANARI that knows and talks to the communities that do forestry work”. It however proved difficult, in some instances, to secure the participation of local funding sources, e.g. social funds, in the workshops. “To me”, says a forest officer who helped design and facilitate one of the courses, “this was a clear demonstration of their lack of appreciation of the value of forest, these agencies, they just can’t see what forests can bring to communities and economic development”.

An additional ‘capacity by-product’ of the project, which some participants describe as an impact that is very important to them, is that several of the participating institutions are now using some of the methods to which they were exposed during the course of this project. “I have helped with one of the national workshops, and I like the way CANARI does these things, with people getting really involved, and I’m now using some of these [facilitation] techniques in my own work”, says a forest officer. These are significant outcomes, because they help other organisations to use similar participatory methods, and they contribute, indirectly, to positive cultural changes within these organisations.

Thanks to its active promotion of exchanges and mutual learning, the project has created (or strengthened if it existed previously, but there is no evidence that it did exist) a regional community of actors with a shared commitment to managing forests in ways that are beneficial to both nature and people, especially people living in poverty. “Many times you feel you’re alone fighting in the dark”, says a highly committed forest officer, “and then you realise that in the other territories there are people thinking the same way and trying the same kind of things. This makes a difference”. Indeed, this could well be one of the most significant and potentially powerful impacts of this project: there is now, in the region, a group of people with very different backgrounds and affiliations, but with a shared interest in and commitment to placing forests closer to the heart of sustainable community development.

More specifically, the project has contributed to informal networking, on a regional scale, among actors at community-level. Groups involved in forest-related activities at the local level are typically not aware of nor linked to other community organisations doing similar work in other parts of their country, even in small islands. It is therefore easy to appreciate the usefulness of activities that bring these groups together, not only within countries (primarily through the workshops) but also at the regional level. “They talk about the environment”, says a dynamic community leader, “they talk about climate change, they talk about saving the forests but we doing it, and now we know we’re not alone”.

One capacity area in which the project may have failed to deliver the expected impacts is in relation to its stated objective of developing and transferring methods for sustainable management of forest resources. All the impacts described above relate primarily to management planning, institutions and business, and much less to the technical requirements for forest management. Of course, participation, shared governance and income generation opportunities are critical for sustainable forest management, but they

are not sufficient to ensure sustainability. The project has touched on some of the skills involved when it looked for example at the management of nurseries, but there may be a number of technical areas where stakeholders in PFM, especially the CBOs, would benefit from the acquisition of specific technical skills in natural resource management, silviculture or conservation.

While the impacts on capacity (awareness, skills, institutional arrangements) are real and somewhat easy to identify, it is much more difficult to assess the project's impacts on actual practice. This evaluation suggests that the situation varies greatly between countries, especially in the forestry administrations. In some cases, it is clear that there has been very little change in the behaviour, actions and modes of operation of forest officers and their organisations, and that they are not applying most of the methods and approaches discussed in workshops or ALG meetings. In other cases, however, the changes are claimed as significant: "it's been tremendous", says an enthusiastic project participant, "thanks to this project and other work we're doing with CANARI, we have created new and different relationships, we have changed our approach... it's just because people learned to work better together, and they discovered a different way of doing things".

This sharp contrast raises the question of understanding why such differences exist. The evidence available to this evaluation suggests that it has little to do with the design and delivery of the project. If a forest officer is happy to talk about participation in a regional conference but behave as an autocratic manager when returning to office, it will be very difficult to make him or her change, except through a slow process of institutional reform and changes in power relations within that organisation. If an organisation is happy with the old, technocratic way of managing forests without inputs from other stakeholders, if it cannot plan strategically and work towards a long-term vision, it will take a long time to change that. These are realities that cannot be escaped, but that do not put into question the justification for a project like this one. They do however shed some useful light on the most suitable methods for capacity-building and advocacy (and therefore on the criteria for the selection of the most suitable individuals for training or membership in learning groups), and this point is discussed in the following section.

Another tangible benefit from the project, which relates at the same time to capacity and policy, is that thanks to most of the impacts described in the preceding sections, it has significantly broadened the scope and understanding of forestry in the region, and has brought more stakeholders into the realm of forest management. This is of course true in the special case of Barbados and St. Kitts, where the project has helped to reveal the forestry dimension of resource management and rural development, but it is also true because the project has involved many actors who perhaps did not see themselves as forest managers before, but who now appreciate better their role and potential. The 'community' of forest managers is now larger than it was five years ago.

Policy impacts

The project has had limited impact on formal policy and has not, contrary to its stated objectives, resulted in the integration of forest policy in national sustainable development strategies. This is a very broad issue that has a number of distinct dimensions:

- in large part thanks to the guidance of the ALG, the project made a deliberate decision to focus primarily on CBOs and their capacities to play a role in and

benefit from forest management. This was a conscious decision that appears to have been motivated by two considerations: (a) that it is at the level of communities and civil society that change can happen most rapidly and where an investment in capacity-building can yield the most returns, and (b) that the best ways to change policy are firstly to create a demand from the “bottom”, and secondly to change actual practice, with the new practice in turn provoking the need for the right policy conditions;

- the focus on CBOs and on capacity-building activities also reflects the view, prominent within CANARI, that policy reform is above all a bottom-up process that begins with new awareness and changes in practice, and that it is only when these new practices are entrenched and generally accepted that formal policy is able to consolidate change and make it more permanent and widespread;
- the experience in this project has also confirmed an observation that could possibly be made in many other sectors, namely that one of the most radical changes that is needed in the sphere of policy is simply the implementation of existing policy measures and the pursuit of agreed policy objectives and targets. By focusing on community organisations, the project has helped to give voice to these organisations on the ground and to create a stronger demand for participatory approaches or, to quote a forest officer interviewed in this survey, “it has turned communities into advocates, and that’s crucial”. In this sense, the policy objectives that the project had originally spelled out may have been ambitious, when the most immediate need was simply to ensure that existing policies were respected;
- it also seems that, in addition to the deliberations of the ALG, other project activities did not steer it towards specific policy work. For example, participants in the exchange visits indicate that policy issues did not surface much in the discussions, except when institutional arrangements and management agreements were considered (or when they raised the need for changes in the behaviour and priorities of some agencies, as in cases where community groups emphasised the need for more presence of and support from the forestry administration). In some instances, however, workshops helped to highlight some of the policy issues, especially when the implementation and success of a particular project would depend on a policy decision, such as the facilitation of access to land. But the main feature of most of the activities is that they focused on concrete actions and solutions at local level, in accordance with the expressed needs of project participants;
- it is likely that the objective of integrating forest policy in national sustainable development strategies was too broad and too vague, and it may have been a wise decision not to disperse the efforts and to concentrate the impacts on the capacity of the various actors and on their relationships, while exploring some new dimensions of the relationship between forests, livelihoods, poverty reduction and business;
- all this having been said, it remains true that formal policy work is useful and needed. It is the poverty reduction strategy papers and similar documents that guide investments by governments and their development partners. It is only

thanks to adequate legislation that community groups can organise themselves and secure their rights. It is when a government agency has an explicit policy of consultation, participation and shared governance that civil society groups and individuals can challenge them when the policy's provisions are breached. Formal policy formulation and reform work therefore has its place in processes such as those generated by this project;

- while the project did not specifically implement many activities aimed at formal policy, it linked with, supported and triggered important national processes, at least in Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago.

In summary, it is understood and understandable that this project has not had direct impacts on formal policy, and this is not something that is in itself problematic, as long as CANARI, FAO and their partners are able to use the capital produced in this project to design and implement a next phase that aims, *inter alia*, at this policy integration.

Impacts on forest and livelihoods

While it is always difficult to assess and attribute impacts on the ground, in terms of forest management and livelihoods, there is some evidence that the project has resulted in positive changes. Participants in the ALP in St. Vincent, for example, indicate that there have been tangible environmental benefits to their actions. Community groups in Trinidad cite several direct employment benefits. A systematic assessment of these impacts would certainly reveal significant outcomes, but with the well-known difficulty of attributing the change to a specific intervention.

One of the ways in which this project has broadened its impacts is through linkages with national initiatives in which CANARI was and is otherwise involved, including:

- a national forest policy process in Trinidad and Tobago, initiated in 2007;
- a recently-launched national forest policy process in Dominica;
- a participatory planning exercise for the Aripo Savannas in Trinidad;
- the Montserrat Centre Hills planning and management project;
- the use of the ALP in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as the model for the design of a larger project implemented in four communities, with funding from the regional project Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management (IWCAM) and with a local NGO, Projects Promotions, as the implementing agency.

Impacts on CANARI and FAO

Beyond the activities that were implemented, the project has had an overall positive impact on CANARI as a regional institution. The main reason for this, and this is not something that is unique to this project, is that while the LoAs identified very specific tasks and actions, these were designed as a contribution to CANARI larger vision and objectives. It was also extremely beneficial that CANARI was able to secure complementary funding for the EC, and this made even easier to adopt a larger programmatic approach. Indeed, it can be assumed that the existence of a strong Forests and Livelihoods programme within CANARI's overall programme comes as a direct result of this project, of the synergies that it created with another funding sources

and with several national and local processes, and of the flexibility and quality of support provided by the FAO. The objectives of that CANARI programme are stated as:

To identify, analyse, promote, and build capacity at the regional, national and local levels for institutional arrangements and management of forest resources which ensure the sustainable use of forest resources and optimise the socio-economic contribution of forest resources to the rural poor of the insular Caribbean.

Because of the geographic scope of the project and the range of participants and partners involved, this project has also been very beneficial to CANARI – and to a lesser extent to FAO – in terms of visibility, collaboration and relationships in several countries and at many levels. CANARI, a regional civil society organisation, has built stronger linkages with forestry administrations in all the participating countries and in Jamaica, and it has helped in establishing or enhancing links with many CBOs. The project linkages mentioned above have also allowed CANARI to leverage additional funding thanks to the support from the NFPF.

Impact on forestry administrations

Because an option available to the NFPF would have been to support seven distinct national projects, instead of one regional project implemented through CANARI, it is meaningful to identify the impact that this project has had on these agencies (even if it impossible to guess what the impact would have been if the first option had been chosen). The impacts on these organisations include:

- forestry officers participating and hosting in the ALG and in the regional conference;
- countries and their forestry administrations hosting and participating in workshops and exchange visits;
- implementation of the ALPs, with the participation of the respective forestry administrations;
- new and enhanced linkages between forestry administrations and CBOs;
- higher visibility of forestry work at national level.

Considering the efficient manner in which the project has been implemented (see below), it seems that it was a wise choice for the NFPF to support this regional project, although several forestry administrations would undoubtedly have preferred an arrangement that would have placed financial resources at their immediate disposal.

Assessment of efficiency and effectiveness

This section is concerned with the extent to which activities have been executed as planned and have produced the desired outputs, as well as the extent to which they have been implemented with the optimal use of financial, human and technical resources and in a timely fashion, looking also at the suitability of project management arrangements.

The project has been generally effective and efficient, but with the caveat mentioned in the preceding section with respect to the lack of activities destined to achieve the original policy objectives. This suggests that the project may have been too ambitious (most

projects are), since all its resources were used efficiently towards project objectives. Yet, the project was able to archive substantial results, especially when one considers the level of funding received. In effect, NFPF resources roughly equivalent to those normally allocated to a national one-country project have impacted significantly on seven countries.

In its management of the project, CANARI was able to negotiate and handle potentially difficult challenges. It is for example important to note that, as a result of staff changes, the project has had five different coordinators over the time frame of the three LoAs, but this does not seem to have impacted negatively on project delivery. This is undoubtedly an indicator of the adequacy of CANARI's internal management systems and of their capacity to handle such stress, and it is these systems that have served the project well.

One of the features of project management has also been its flexibility. In a sense, this is reflected in the focus on CBOs that was discussed above; thanks in part to an analysis that government agencies are resistant to change, the ALG advised the project to take this focus, and both CANARI and FAO made such a shift in emphasis possible. Much of this flexibility can be attributed to the very constructive approach taken by the FAO, with a direct involvement in the project, a good understanding of issues and needs, and a willingness to adjust project management arrangements to enhance efficiency and impact.

The project has used – and has helped to develop and refine – very appropriate and effective methodologies. These methodologies (action learning group, study tours and exchange visits, mentoring) have been developed by CANARI over time, and this project has contributed very significantly to their refinement and use. One common characteristic of these methods is that they are based on the principles of action-learning and cultural change, derived from a good understanding of the reasons why people learn and how they do learn. They all recognise the value of demonstration and action as opposed to passive teaching. If there is one area where there appears to be a consensus among all the people associated with these activities, it is on the suitability of the methods used, and one community leader expresses it well: "I like it so much, that holistic approach that CANARI has".

Perhaps the most innovative and far-reaching methodology used by the project has been the ALG. Several ALG members indeed confirm that their involvement in the Group, and in other project activities, has had significant impacts on their own perceptions and capacities. Based on that experience, a number of points and issues can be noted (keeping in mind that the operations of the ALG were financed primarily under the EC-funded project):

- the initial selection of ALG members was adequate, but there was no system in place to ensure that people who had to leave the Group would be adequately replaced, and it seems that this has somewhat weakened the ALG over time;
- the criteria for selection of ALG members and the roles that they have to play must be spelled out very clearly and must be well understood by ALG members;
- for an organisation like CANARI, a group that helps to conceptualise and analyse is extremely useful, as a guide, an intellectual resource and a source of validation;
- several ALG members stress the usefulness of the Group in helping to clarify and sharpen concepts, because of the way the ALG worked (interaction between

- theory and practice) and because it included colleagues with expertise in a range of relevant disciplines;
- much of the value of an ALG indeed comes for the sharing of and interaction between experiences;
 - “being a member of the ALG is very motivating, because it makes members real partners”, says one ALG member, suggesting that an ALG is also a link, a bridge and an incentive to participate. “One good thing about the ALG”, says another member, “is that it brings people together as equals”;
 - “an ALG is much more than meetings and discussions”, says another member, pointing to the fact that one of the strengths of instrument is that it uses various sources of learning: discussions, presentations, informal exchanges among colleagues, field trips, collective analysis of case studies, etc.
 - this ALG has also been the main channel of communication with and involvement of regional organisations, with at least seven regional institutions represented;
 - the extent to which the work of the ALG has impacted on other colleagues in the various countries varies: in some countries, personnel of forestry departments indicate that they benefited from the ideas, information and experiences brought back by their colleagues participating in ALG meetings, while other countries relate the opposite experience, with ALG members sharing very little, if anything, on their return home;
 - this puts into question the assumption that because ALG members have been selected as ‘change agents’, they will automatically effect change on the basis of learning and capacity acquired through the ALG. Perhaps it would have been useful to develop a clear communication strategy from the beginning, with the roles of the ALG members well spelled out;
 - this ALG, for better or for worse, seems to have taken an unexpected role in project management, serving at times as an advisory body.

There are mixed views about the effectiveness of the Action Learning Projects. Project participants, CANARI staff and project reports all highlight the usefulness of these ALPs, their efficient implementation and the way they have helped to demonstrate the value of combining the provision of funding with the support of a mentor. These are indeed positive assessments, but this evaluation did not find much evidence of learning produced by these ALPs, in terms of approaches to participatory forest management and of linkages between forests and livelihoods (project personnel indicate that learning indeed focused more on the requirements for effective project management by a community organisation than on forest management *per se*).

Exchange visits are seen by participants as excellent ways to learn, for the benefit of both visitors and hosts. Several such visits were successfully organised. In the case of the visit to Jamaica in June 2010, which was regrettably affected by an airline strike that prevented the participation of four people, the hosts were the members of two Local Forest Management Committees (LFMC), who found the exercise useful to them, for a number of reasons: it validated their work and approaches in front of delegates from other Caribbean countries (someone describing the experience as “a source of community confidence and pride for the LFMC”), it allowed them to compare progress and lessons between two LFMCs that are at different stages in their development, and it introduced them to new opportunities and challenges (business approach, sustainability, need to make their operations more professional). The exchange visits are also an ideal way to cover technical aspects (e.g. nursery management) that are very relevant to the

needs of community organisations, but that are not as easily addressed in formal national workshops with participants from varied backgrounds.

The national workshops are all described as useful events for networking and learning. “Our national workshop has served as an instrument of networking among forest stakeholders in our country”, says one participant, and this is a view shared by several colleagues involved in the project. One of the benefits of focusing on CBOs and bringing them in contact with governmental agencies and other actors is that it allows them to express their needs and helps them to get assistance. “Some of these groups were crying out for assistance”, says a forest officer who participated in a national workshop, “but we were not really aware, I don’t know, maybe we were not really listening, but there is always so much to do, if community groups cannot come to us we won’t hear what they have to say”.

The absence of a clear distinction between trainee and trainer in CANARI’s activities makes training appropriate and effective. The project organised one ‘training of trainers’ workshop in Trinidad (August 2007); as one participant indicates in a written note to this evaluation, it “facilitated the formation of meaningful long lasting cultural and organisational networking that has impacted on many levels (till today), and the type of training we got there influenced the approach used in planning, designing and implementation of direct work of my organisation”. It is in this workshop that participants were asked to volunteer to co-facilitate workshops in their respective countries, a practice that has been described as very beneficial (see following section). But it is not only through the specific ‘training of trainers’ workshop that CANARI has built capacity for training. In at least one instance, a forestry officer who has participated in the project and has benefited from its training has been asked by his institution to conduct training in participatory management for other staff. And several participants highlight the benefit of interactive, participatory training: “at one point you are a participant, at one point you are a facilitator”, says someone who has taken part in several CANARI activities, “that is empowerment!”

There is a consensus that the regional conference held in May 2010 was a useful and stimulating event, particularly because of the quality of exchanges among all participants, and more specifically among CBOs. “It’s help that leaves us on our feet and not on our knees”, said one of the CBO representatives, who also felt that more time could have been devoted to presenting and discussing the experience and perspectives of CBOs. Other positive feedback on the conference includes the richness of programme, the fact a number of people (not project staff) served as chairs and rapporteurs, the quality of participation, and the excellent logistical arrangements. Some of the concerns and possible improvements noted by participants: were:

- time management issues, as some presentations were too long;
- too many concurrent break-out sessions;
- need for more and better facilitation in some cases;
- small overlaps in time and topics;
- no evaluation at the end.

Another positive observation that can be made about most of the activities described above is that CANARI makes very good use of field visits, as integral parts of the training. Too often in training workshops, the field trip is a mere instrument to illustrate

issues and give participants a little break in the middle of a busy week. With CANARI, the field trip is a structured activity that contributes fully to the mutual learning process.

The project may have somewhat suffered from the absence of a communication strategy and of activities specifically aimed at extracting, documenting and disseminating lessons and other products. In some ways, this deficiency was compensated by the communication activities planned under the complementary EC-funded project, but even that would not have been sufficient. This is a weakness that is very common in development projects, in part because funding agencies are often not keen to support communications work, and in part because the volume and quality of investment needed for good communication is too often underestimated.

One of the very positive characteristics of this project is that it has been extremely well documented. Indeed, it began with policy “snapshots” that provide some sort of baseline. While it has not been the purpose of this evaluation exercise to assess the progress of individual countries and of the region as a whole towards participatory forest management and towards closer linkages between forest management, livelihoods and poverty reduction, it is clear that this project has established a baseline that can be used, at a later stage, to measure change. With all the other reports and documents, there is a wealth of materials that will prove very useful in the future, and that should remain accessible.

While it was managed as a regional programme with activities in a number of countries, the project was able to adapt its activities and approaches to the needs, conditions and capacities of each country. This was particularly important in this case, when one considers the differences that exist between countries like Barbados and Dominica, but the project negotiated these differences well.

The project has used a range of mutually-reinforcing interventions in support of community-based organisations, and project stakeholders feel that this has been very effective. In the words of a senior forest manager in the region, “they have a good strategy, they support the CBOs through training, exchange visits, support in project management and links with other development stakeholders, and at the same time they build the capacity of forestry departments to work with and support these CBOs. That’s the right strategy.” Or, in the words of someone who was involved in the facilitation of some of the project activities, “using a diversity of approaches at the same time is a very good way to effect change”.

The project was able, in most of its activities, to take issues of equity into account, particularly as it relates to gender balance and to the participation of young people. In Dominica, for example, the Youth Development Division participated in the national training workshops and the project helped to build links between that Division, the Environmental Coordinating Unit and the Forestry Division. Gender criteria were used in the selection of participants in activities, and gender issues were specifically addressed in some of the training activities.

Arrangements for project management, including procurement and financial management, have been generally effective, efficient and adequate. Individuals and institutions that had a contractual relationship with CANARI under this project indicate that there have been no significant delays or hurdles, and that contracting and disbursements all happened on a timely basis. There were however cases where

arrangements for activities were made late, and with changes in dates of activities. This seems to have been the case mainly towards the end of project periods, when some of the planned activities had to be organised quickly to meet project deadlines. It does not however appear that these changes and delays have been detrimental to the project.

One of the positive and beneficial approaches of the project has been the devolution of responsibility for the management of specific activities to local partners. All participants in the activities (training workshops and exchange visits) welcomed this, describing this as empowering (“our LFMC was not just hosting the visitors, we organised the whole thing”), while it is clear that it has also been an efficient way from the perspective of project management (time, finance and human resources) on CANARI’s part. Such collaboration has also been very beneficial in the case of the training workshops, “they asked me to be a co-facilitator”, says a forest officer who assisted in one of these workshops, “and it was very good for me ... and it’s always good to have local knowledge for recruitment, to make sure that we have the right mix of people attending a workshop”. This collaboration between project personnel and local counterparts in co-facilitation of workshops indeed allowed CANARI to provide useful coaching.

One of the issues mentioned by some interviewees is the need to sustain the dialogue and maintain communication between activities. “We had a fantastic workshop, and I went to the regional conference, these were very good, but between the two things, I did not really hear from CANARI, and I would have liked to stay in touch”, says a forest officer.

An evaluation of a regional project in the Caribbean cannot ignore the issues coming from the very significant increases in the cost of regional travel. Moving around the region has become expensive and difficult, and this is something that must be taken into account, by implementing agencies when budgeting and considering alternative means of communication and networking, and by donors in ensuring that regional events are properly resourced.

Sustainability

This brief section looks at project sustainability, i.e. the extent to which the outcomes and outputs have been, and are likely to remain, sustained beyond the time frame of the project and its various activities, as well as the requirements for future activities that can help build such sustainability.

In many respects, the sustainability of the processes initiated by this project relies on the integration of the approaches, skills, systems and policies within the relevant organisations. Evidence gathered for this evaluation suggests that the project has indeed impacted positively on many organisations, but there are no data available to measure such impact. Indeed it would be useful, in a subsequent phase of work, to select a small number of target organisations and do a qualitative and quantitative assessment of progress made towards PFM and the integration of livelihoods and poverty concerns. Criteria used could include changes in the job descriptions of forest officers, introduction of in-house training programmes, adoption of formal co-management agreements or changes in budget allocations.

One of the factors that will allow some of the activities and processes to continue and flourish is the fact that the theme of forests and livelihoods is now at the core of one of

the four programmes of CANARI. Of course, the continued implementation of this programme will require funding, but the fact that this is an established programme area guarantees that CANARI will continue to seek support and will implement activities whenever possible.

Main lessons and challenges

Making change happen on several fronts

Promoting participatory forest management and building meaningful linkages between forests, poverty reduction and livelihoods in the Caribbean is by no means an easy task. It needs a simultaneous response to four very significant challenges:

- *“the battle for participatory forest management is not inside the forest”,* says one ALG member. It is on agro-forestry, in green house development and nursery management, in awareness, in creating markets for forest-based goods and services, in public policy related to land use, agriculture and livestock, tourism, community development and governance. This not a new lesson, but it is one that the project has very usefully highlighted, confirming the complexity of participatory forest management, and the fact the management of forests, if approached from an integrated human development perspective, is the management of (real, potential and perceived) conflicts and diverse expectations;
- *“we need to look more at the resource itself”,* says an ALG member. In addressing this complexity, this project – as indeed many of the organisations involved in participatory natural resource management in this and other regions of the world – has not paid much direct attention to core forestry issues and forest management processes and instruments. This is a difficult challenge, because what is needed to make PFM happen is indeed shared governance, empowerment and partnerships, but it also nurseries, plantations, sustainable harvesting techniques, species identification, wildlife management or non-timber forest product extraction and transformation. These are technical aspects that need to be put back in the mix of participatory forest management;
- *“we have not reached the point where we are making livelihoods happen”,* says one project participant, while another notes that *“the potential for livelihoods has not yet been realised”*: indeed, this is not surprising, and it would be naïve and unfair to believe that the activities implemented by this project could be sufficient to introduce the concept and practice of sustainable livelihoods in forest management and to explore the business aspects business potential and requirements. This is a completely new domain for the Caribbean, and it is something that will require much time and investment to move from ideas and pilot experiments to a real integration of forests into the social and economic development frameworks of these countries, and from a situation where people, households and communities who are dependent on forest resources were perceived as marginal (and very often as a threat to the integrity of the forest) to a new paradigm where forests are seen as assets for households and communities who can maintain and develop sustainable livelihoods based, in part, on forest resources;

- *while the language of participation in natural resource management is now accepted and used by a wide range of actors, conditions for the promotion and adoption of participatory approaches are perhaps less favourable now than they were ten or twenty years ago, and there is therefore a need for continued advocacy and capacity-building.* One of the project participants expresses this well when he says that: "... for me, working on this project brought me back to the 80s, you know, because the participatory model is dying, the NGOs are weaker than ever, the communities are not getting any support from anybody, but thanks to this project we were able to bring back some of that vision of integrated and participatory management". Indeed, there are many factors than militate against genuine partnerships and community empowerment, including the growth of poverty in many countries, the adoption of the dominant neo-liberal policies and practices by most political actors, the weakening of state agencies (and consequently of their ability to support partners), and the unavailability of funding and other forms of support to civil society organisations, especially at the local, community level. Participation – and especially participatory forest management – does not happen magically thanks to a change in discourse, it requires resources, skills, new governance arrangements, changes in attitudes and perceptions, and rules that secure the rights of the weaker stakeholders. In this context, the kind of work implemented in this project needs to be continued and expanded.

Who and what should change?

"Capacity-building is still very much needed at the community level, this is not something that can just happen in a few years", says a forest officer who has extensive experience working with community organisations. Sustained efforts are needed, not only to build awareness and skills through training activities, but also to provide on-going institutional support. Several respondents in this evaluation, for example, indicated how impressed they were with the experience of the LFMCS in Jamaica, but they are well aware of the time and effort needed to bring such community organisations to a level where they can perform effectively

Forest administrations have evolved rapidly in the past few years, but in many instances the change has been more rhetorical than practical. "We are talking about it [PFM], but we don't really have anything to show for it", says a forest officer, while another government employee involved in natural resource management says that "we don't have co-management yet, the livelihoods work is not yet integrated, all that is coming, we know it's critical, but we're not there yet". The bottleneck, this officer says, is "the lack of political will, we need to educate decision-makers, otherwise we don't get the support and the budgets".

One important challenge remains to effect real policy change, and to ensure that policy-makers are aware and supportive of forest management as an instrument of social and economic development. How can this be done? "We need to learn the elevator speech, we know the politicians, we see them in the corridors and at meetings, we need to find the way to get the message across to them". Yet, respondents in this evaluation stress that one specific constraint in advocacy and capacity-building work in support of participatory forest management is the fact that the elected politicians and senior civil servants who handle the forestry portfolio change frequently, and there is therefore a need to "constantly repeat the same message", as a forester puts it, "because there is so

much turnover in government". In this regard, one specific recommendation made by an interviewee is for CANARI to establish more formal linkages with regional organisations – especially CARICOM and OECS – and use their meetings – including Ministerial meetings – to convey messages. There is also a need and an opportunity for advocacy work with the secretariats of these regional bodies as well as other regional organisations, in order to give forestry a higher profile.

How does change happen?

An advocacy and capacity-building organisation such as CANARI cannot guarantee the delivery of change in practice and policy, but there are methods and tactics that can be used to enhance the chance of impact and change. The challenge is to translate awareness and skills into practice, and to move from a community of ideas and vision to a community of practitioners. CANARI's approach assumes that there is a logical sequence of change that moves from awareness to skill, from skill to practice and from practice to policy. At each step in this logic, advocacy and capacity-building organisations like CANARI need to confront and remove, whenever possible, the core obstacles to change. In some cases, it is the organisational culture that is the point of greatest resistance. In other instances, it can be the very advocates of participatory forest management who are the obstacles to change, because they monopolise the discourse but do not change their practice. In other cases, the obstacles are outside the forestry administration, in its policy and institutional environment, and in the resources allocated to it.

All observations made in this evaluation confirm the appropriateness of CANARI's approach that focuses on 'change agents'. It is people who make change happen, and change typically starts from one person, one action, one idea, one crisis, one opportunity. But the change agent is not necessarily the leader of the organisation – although it can surely be, as demonstrated by several cases in the region – and not necessarily the one who speaks loudly about the need for change. Change often happens from the margin, from the bottom up, thanks to individuals who do not have vested interests in the status quo and are willing to challenge norms. With its experience in this and other projects, especially with the ALGs, CANARI would be able to develop useful criteria for identifying change agents in natural resource management organisations (e.g. ability to listen and communicate, willingness to share, interest in new ideas, individual position not threatened by change).

An organisation involved in research and advocacy needs to be careful that it does not cut itself from the people it aims to serve. CANARI continuously seeks to improve the understanding and the discourse of participatory forest management, exploring new concepts and linkages, as has been done successfully in this project when focusing on the relationship between forests, livelihoods, business and poverty reduction. This is useful, but it presents the danger that the language and discourse can become "too esoteric, too theoretical", as suggested by one respondent in this survey. Indeed, this evaluation suggests that there is a still widespread need for organisations in the region to work on the basics, to put into practice the fundamental requirements of participation and shared governance, beginning with adequate consultation of stakeholders. The challenge for CANARI is therefore to be able to keep the balance, to remain 'cutting-edge' in its exploration of issues of equity, livelihood security and empowerment in natural resource management while remaining relevant and useful to actors who have not yet embraced these concepts.

Recommendations for further work

On the basis of the achievements made and lessons learned, it is hoped that CANARI and FAO will be able to maintain their current collaboration. A number of recommendations are therefore offered, as guidance in the design of a possible next phase of collaborative work between the two organisations, but also as general observations that may prove useful in CANARI's overall strategic planning and programming process.

Strategies and approaches

Consolidate the capital accumulated and successes obtained through this project and the complementary EC-funded project: there is a challenge inherent in this recommendation, because it is based on the assessment that all the activities supported by this project over the past four years are useful and relevant, and it is of course not possible nor desirable for CANARI, FAO and their partners to continue the same activities over a long period of time. A next phase of work should therefore identify the ways in which some of these processes can be made more sustainable and autonomous. Can the ALG transform itself into a permanent discussion and mutual learning group supported primarily by electronic communication? Could some of the most progressive forestry administrations formalise internal training activities, and perhaps even offer them to other countries? Can other organisations involved in providing technical assistance and small grant funding in the region embrace the concept of mentoring, and could a next phase of work support them in doing so? A systematic look at such opportunities could provide an initial framework for an exciting process building on the gains of the project.

Pursue training activities, covering the same range of topics. "We can't assume that because we've had one workshop with three forest officers participating, that our department has been trained! It takes much more than that. Every officer needs to get the basics of participatory management, every officer needs to be exposed to these livelihoods issues", says a forest officer who has been involved in the project. Or, in the words of another officer, "people are starting to say that we need a different approach, however the capacity to push in that direction is limited, now is the time to capitalise". This is challenging, because it is difficult for an organisation like CANARI to raise funding for recurrent activities, but the inescapable reality is that much more time is needed to ensure that the majority of actors in forest management have become aware of the value of the approaches advocated by this project and have acquired the skills they need to put these approaches into practice. This also suggest that it would be valuable to invest more in the training of trainers; as expressed by a dynamic NGO leader, we need to "build the capacity of the 'bottom-up' people to do the training themselves".

Highlight successes and reward those who make change happen. "You see, we need to raise the value of the people who are at the forefront of this work", says a forest officer who feels somewhat isolated within his organisation. "CANARI identifies the doers and brings them in the forefront", says the leader of a CBO, "I don't know if CANARI sees it that way, but CANARI has been quite supportive and vocal, they have endorsed what we do, and that helped us a lot". This evaluation indeed confirms that the type of relationship

developed with CANARI and FAO is a very important form of validation for those who are working on the ground. Future projects and their communications strategies should include more activities aimed at highlighting and promoting such work, not only in the form of case studies that are read by fellow professionals, but through media coverage, award schemes, public acknowledgement of success and endorsements.

Develop and implement a strategy for CBO engagement and capacity-building.

CANARI's approach to supporting and strengthening CBOs is already strategic, but the lessons and experiences gained in this project can provide useful guidance to future work in this regard. A future strategy would: identify the issues and topics to be addressed and researched (e.g. what are the factors and requirements that can help build strong and sustainable CBOs?); link CBOs and their partners to funding sources; engage and mobilise new sources of technical, financial and policy support such as the social funds; strengthen links between CBOs, forestry administrations and other NGOs; involve CBOs in policy and advocacy processes; and sustain the training and capacity-building activities mentioned above. Within CANARI's overall strategy and work programme, this observation may suggest a need for stronger synergies between activities in forests and livelihoods on the one hand and the programme on governance and civil society on the other.

Encourage and sustain regional networking among CBOs involved in PFM. One important achievement of the project is that it has created or enhanced direct, horizontal linkages between a number of organisations involved in participatory forest management at the local level, and it would be extremely useful to sustain this regional networking process. But this is easier said than done, especially when one considers the costs and other obstacles to regional travel and the resource constraints faced by the organisations. If at all possible, funding should be sought to organise more exchange visits, engage community leaders as resource people in various training activities, and facilitate the circulation of information.

Expand the community of actors and engage other stakeholders. This would imply strategies and actions in several directions:

- “I know many good community organisations that are not involved in forestry, they don't see the link between forests and livelihoods, we need to show it to them”, says one of the community organisers who has been directly involved in this project. This suggests a possible strategy for future work – a strategy that CANARI already employs in several domains – with the building of links with community-based and other civil society actors that are involved in livelihoods and community development, and to explore with them the possibility of integrating a forest and natural resource management dimension into their work;
- for a variety of reasons, most of the donor agencies involved in the Caribbean do not presently invest in the forestry sector, perhaps in part because they do not consider the linkages between forest management and their core agendas (including climate change and poverty). Future work should target these actors in order to build this awareness and generate support;
- increased support is also badly needed at the higher policy level. One project participant captures this well when he says that “people like me are convinced, but we need to ensure that this [forests and livelihoods] approach is on the agenda of the forestry departments, and that won't happen without blessings from above”;

- the private sector, including land owners, also needs to be brought into the process: “we need get the private sector to understand and appreciate the benefits accrued from participatory forest management, and hopefully they will become advocates”, says a forest officer. This is true not only for the people and businesses that use forest products, but also, in several countries, with respect to the tourism sector, with forests and landscapes being part of the tourism attraction;
- in the realm of public policy, there is a similar need to widen the range of engagement, sharing lessons learned with other stakeholders less directly involved, broadening the reach to target important stakeholders (e.g. decision-makers in Ministries of Finance);
- there is also a need to engage the social policy sector (social funds, agencies involved in poverty reduction strategies). This was part of original project design, but, for reasons explained in this report, it did not happen as much as expected. This remains a need and an opportunity.

Make communications and advocacy central elements of future programmes. Using the many useful materials produced as part of this project and of the EC-funded activities, CANARI could pull out the main findings and products for the purpose of advocacy and communications (under the EC-funded project, messages have already been identified and compiled) This would provide the basis for a communications strategy and programme that could include a range of activities, including:

- building the capacity of foresters to advocate and influence, by providing them with skills in communications and advocacy (in addition to communication products);
- designing activities specifically targeting decision-makers (using opportunities of country visits by CANARI and FAO staff to seek meetings with senior policy makers, approaching CARICOM and OECS Secretariat to identify opportunities for presentations and communications);
- identifying a small number of countries where it would be possible and beneficial to work with economic and social development actors to formalise the integration of forestry issues and livelihoods approaches in poverty reduction and other national strategies and plans;
- encouraging all countries in the region, when conditions are met, to formulate an explicit statement of forest policy (vision, objectives, programmes and actions);

Continue the work on methodologies, as an action learning process in itself. The action learning approaches and methods tested and used by CANARI are innovative and useful, and this exploration work needs to continue. Among them, mentoring is a methodology that offers much promise, and that has not been sufficiently employed in the region. The experience from this project in this domain should therefore be documented, augmented with more experiments, and shared with other organisations. And there are many other interesting and important questions that this collaboration between CANARI, FAO and forest management stakeholders in region is already touching, and that are worth exploring more systematically. How can external funding best help CBOs and government agencies? What are the most critical factors to build sustainable NGOs and CBOs? How do networks function, and how can one sustain a network of CBOs in this region? What are the most effective ways to influence policy? What are the criteria and factors that make a change agent effective? How is the external environment (e.g. ideology, market forces, governance, climate change)

impacting on the viability of forest-based livelihoods and the feasibility of shared governance.

Scope and thematic focus

Make careful and strategic choices in the selection of priority focus areas. Perhaps the biggest challenge for CANARI and FAO at this time, in relation to this project, is to manage and build on the many achievements that have been realised. This challenge will also be experienced when selecting the issues and topics to be covered. In this regard, the following observations can be offered:

- the exploration of the potential of forests and forest products to support and enhance livelihoods is one area that should receive much attention. Equity issues, especially in relation to access and sharing of benefits (on the basis of gender, age, assets) should be considered. One concrete area that could be explored actively is the access to markets for NTFPs, particularly those that are beneficial to women and young people;
- with all the discourses (unfortunately rarely translated into meaningful action) on adaptation to climate change in the region, CANARI, FAO and their partners have much to offer, because they are putting into practice the concept of resilience and the vision of forests as resources available to communities and countries to cope with change and stress. The theme of climate change therefore offers many opportunities, not as a new and distinct issue, but as a dimension integrated into the forests and livelihoods approach;
- private forestry would be a new domain with a number of complex dimensions. Perhaps the point of entry for FAO and CANARI should be the business and livelihoods dimension, working with small farmers and land owner groupings in pilot projects aimed at exploring the place of trees and forests in their livelihood strategies;
- in spite of progress made in recent years, there is still need for much attention to be paid on institutional arrangements, and especially on instruments that formalise the allocation of rights and responsibilities among the participants in any forest co-management arrangement;
- lastly, and without expanding too much time and resources on formal policy processes, there is now a clear need and an important opportunity, at least in some countries, to make the policy environment more favourable and to formalise some of the gains made on the ground.

Reduce activities targeted at those islands that do not have significant forest resources, but without excluding them totally. There is no strong case for a programme on forest and livelihoods to invest too much in countries like Barbados, but there are very good reasons to keep institutions in such places involved in regional processes, aware of debates and new ideas, and able to tap into sources of support (e.g. technical assistance or small grant funding). This suggests that any future collaboration between CANARI and FAO under the NFPF would not need to have distinct activities for Barbados and St. Kitts, but it should keep these countries in the loop of regional activities and information dissemination.

Project implementation arrangements

Maintain and strengthen the current relationship between CANARI and the FAO. There are many positive elements in the current collaboration between these two agencies, including the flexibility of the FAO as a donor, as well as the experience and expertise that it brings to the project. Although the LOAs cover short periods of time, they are in effect the instruments of implementation of a longer term programme, with each agreement building on the achievements of the previous phase. This fruitful collaboration is a relationship that is based on a common vision of what is needed (forests that provide a range of environmental, social and economic goods and services and that are managed jointly by those who have a direct stake in these goods and services) and how it can be achieved (policy reform as a bottom-up process that requires changes in capacity and in practice at all levels). There are no reasons to change the current arrangement, and it is therefore hoped that it will be possible to continue the project and initiate new activities under the same conditions as those that have prevailed in the past four years.

Sustain the regional ALG. While there is no more funding specifically allocated to this ALG, it would be extremely useful to keep it functioning, and the following approaches could be considered to make this possible:

- on the basis of the experience gained in this project and the observations made in this report, review the composition and terms of reference of the ALG;
- maintain a minimum level of activity through electronic communication (e.g. blog on CANARI's website, news alerts to electronic mailing list, use of social networking sites);
- include ALG coordination and facilitation costs in CANARI's core programme and explore funding opportunities;
- devolve some functions to ALG members who have the willingness and capacity to assist (e.g. newsletter coordination, facilitation of discussion group);
- establish a support group in Trinidad that could meet periodically at CANARI offices, at little cost, and play a role in some of the ALG facilitation;
- explore the feasibility of establishing national ALGs, either specifically focused on forests and livelihoods, or more generally on participatory resource management and governance (CANARI has already secured funding for this type of work from the MacArthur Foundation, with a focus on the capacity of civil society, and this could provide a useful model to be applied to participatory forest management);
- sustain or establish links with global projects and institutions that may be in the position to provide some level of financial support to the core operations of the ALG (e.g. IIED).

Appendix: Outline for interviews of key informants

1. What is/has been your association with the project? What have been the main activities in which you have been involved?
2. Have these activities and their outputs been consistent with the overall goal of the project¹ and the attainment of its objectives²?
3. What has been achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
4. Were activities cost-efficient? Were the costs reasonable given the achievements?
5. Was the project implemented in the most efficient way? Were there delays, difficulties or obstacles in the activities that you were involved in? Why? Would you do anything differently?
6. What has happened as a result of the programme or project? What have been the impacts?
7. Who has been affected? Which institutions? How many people? What real difference has the activity made to these beneficiaries?
8. To what extent will the benefits of the project continue? What is needed to sustain the impacts and the activities?
9. Have issues of equity – including gender – been considered in the activities that you were involved in? How? With what result?
10. To what extent are the original objectives of the project (see footnote 2) still valid and relevant to the needs of your country and/or organisation?
11. To what extent has the project been able to create synergies with other CANARI activities that you are involved in or aware of? Has the project allowed you to enhance your collaboration with other institutions and programmes involved in forestry?
12. Has the project changed your awareness of and/or relationship with CANARI? With the FAO? In what way?
13. What are some of the new and emerging issues in participatory forest management for your country and for the region? If the project is continued for another phase, what should be its focus and priorities? How would you want to be involved?

¹ The goal is to support the improvement of the socioeconomic and environmental benefits that can be derived from forest management by analysing, promoting and building capacity for participatory planning and management of forest resources at the regional, national and local levels.

² The objectives of the project are to: (a) build the capacity of forest stakeholders for participatory policy analysis, policy formulation and forest management through effective training, technical assistance, and regional and cross-sectoral dialogue; (b) improve the institutional frameworks for participatory forest policy analysis, policy formulation and forest management, and the integration of forest policy in national sustainable development strategies, through the promotion and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices, technical assistance and training; and (c) develop and transfer methods for sustainable management of forest resources.