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ECO

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Submissions to ECO:

NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to ECO via the following:

- 1) e-mail: barbarag@elciafrica.org
- 2) labelled 3.5 diskette or written document. Drop off in box marked "ECO submission" at ELCI display area in the corridor.

World Bank and Forests: Blind Eye to Destruction?

By Simone Lovera
Sobrevivencia/Friends of the Earth-Paraguay

Imagine you run an institution, which has to spend a substantial amount of money every year and you are constantly being criticized for the social and environmental destruction, that money causes. After many years of being bashed, you decide to develop an ambitious new policy to address the destruction of at least one important set of ecosystems, forests. Yet, 10 years later you discover your very own staff is massively ignoring your very own policy.

What do you do? Do you make sure your own staff implements your own policy or do you weaken the policy and turn back to the destruction of the old days?

These are the main question at stake in the ambitious World Bank Forest Sector Policy Implementation Review and Strategy, which is currently being implemented.

Of course, the World Bank itself would be the last institution on earth to properly analyze whether its economic policies contribute to its so-called number one objective. There is abundant proof of the opposite. The fact that forest destruction forms a major cause of poverty, especially amongst women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized people, has simply been ignored. Forget indigenous

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people and other forest-dependent people: forest conservation is a global luxury, local communities in developing countries cannot afford. Another fact, which is often ignored in this respect, is that many logging companies are as local to the forest they exploit as a penguin to a tropical forest.

Meanwhile, it is fascinating to see how large-scale plantations are defended with the argument that they would relieve

pressure from natural forests, while no words are spent whatsoever, on the question of how to address unsustainable consumption levels of timber products.

Logically, overproduction leads to lower prices and thus higher demand, which makes tree plantations part of an ever-increasing production and consumption.

But these successes for sustainability are no successes for the Bank, as no staff member can expect a positive career move from a project he or she was not able to implement due to the limitations of the 1991 Policy.

From this point of view the 1991 Policy has undoubtedly failed to boost the forestry department of the Bank, and it is understandable that people in the forestry department itself see their work as 10% of the Bank's portfolio, but 80% of the Bank's headaches. Or, as someone from the Environment Department once described, "one has to be an idealist to remain in a position where one constantly has to stop his or her colleagues from

as asking whether a hurricane can save Mozambique. Conservation oriented activities tend to be even less profitable monetary terms as the most important benefits of forests tend to be enjoyed by people who do not have the money to pay for them such as indigenous people and many other forest-dependent people. This is why the few conservation projects which seem to be economically successful, such as eco-tourism, tend only to provide

benefits to others who can pay for them.

Yet, the Bank can only direct its money to governments and ask politely for some participation of civil society.

The OED concludes that this participation can often be

summarized as "too little, too late", although it should be noted that some of the Bank procedures have facilitated NGO/IPO participation in government projects (e.g. natural resources management), which would otherwise have been entirely closed to them. But the World Bank obviously is not the most appropriate institution to provide grants to the small- and micro-scale community projects that have delivered the most promising results during the last decade.

So let us please not risk losing this natural wealth by opening up primary tropical moist forests for Bank-financed timber extraction again, as some Bank officials propose. Instead, let us expand the precautionary approach to other forests, and ensure that this "risk averse" approach is also applied to other sectoral policies, like agriculture, infrastructure and transportation.

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Farmer's Seed Bank Project Enhances Biodiversity

By Wandera Ojanji

It was an amazing display of seed (crop) diversity. The Seed Fair at the Unep lobby organized by ITDG, saw farmers display seeds that many had forgotten, many had never known, ever existed. It was by and large a case of farmers' success in agricultural biodiversity management, utilization and conservation.

But how have they managed to conserve such diversity in times when many species are disappearing, especially in a dryland ecosystem, like Tharaka in Eastern Kenya, where it is very fragile?

Through the assistance and training from ITDG, the farmers formed the Gakia Seed Conservation Group. Through collective effort and information sharing, the group has looked for seeds or crop varieties that used to do well in the area but have disappeared.

The success of the group has been overwhelming as evidenced at the exhibition. In 1997, when the group was formed, the group identified and collected 15 seed or crop varieties. Just three years down the line, they have collected over 40 varieties that had disappeared.

To ensure the sustainability of their project, they have formed a community seed bank from where farmers can easily access the various seed varieties. The group even distributes to non-members as a way of further diversification on various farms.

Because of the initiative, they now have about 50 varieties of sorghum and over 29 varieties of millet, growing in Tharaka.

Amina Njeru, who has been one of the group members and a beneficiary of the initiative now boasts of having, eight varieties of millet, seven varieties of cowpeas, four varieties of green grams,

among other crop varieties. She says her greatest achievement was the acquisition of *mugoi*, and *Mututwa*, millet varieties that had disappeared long time ago when she was still a child. *Mugoi* is very sweet while *Mututwa* is very good for beer making.

Even in her later 40's, and the bias towards modern foods or lifestyle fond memories of her favorite millet and the associated products still lingers on.

And she wasn't the only one with whom the Fair aroused fond memories of the past. The seed and vegetable varieties also touched the Kenyan Ambassador to Japan, Her Excellency Mary Odinga, on display.

She said, "I look with nostalgia to the past when I recall how I used to see granaries of my grandparents filled to capacity with all manner of healthy foods harvested from the same farm that today produces sickly harvest of beans and maize."

In fact, Amina Njeru, while acknowledging the contribution of biotechnology in agricultural diversity, says farmers' ignorance has played a big role in crop failures of some of the introduced varieties, her being one of the victims. However, they have vast knowledge on crop husbandry of their indigenous crops, something that has ensured no crop failures.

For instance, having been impressed by the performance of *Pioneer* and *Kagil* maize varieties, she adopted the varieties on her farm. However, unaware that the varieties can not be replanted, she went ahead and used the seed from the harvest for the next planting. It was disaster. She only managed to get very healthy leafy vegetation, but no grain.

She is indeed very grateful to ITDG for the education and training they are providing, saying that it has not only assisted them in diversification of agricultural crops but has also helped them attain some level of food

Announcements

- All delegates who have not received Nature Kenya/BirdLife International postcards on threatened birds of East Africa can obtain a set at the BirdLife international/Nature Kenya stand.
- The Farmers Seed Fair Sponsored by ITDG, ActionAid and other partners will be at the UNEP Lobby at 1 o'clock on 16th of May.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. Location to be announced at the ELCI display table, and in future editions of ECO.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Palm (or Jacaranda?) Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items
- Parallel conference:
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS, TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM, May 16-19, ICRAF, Lundgren Auditorium, co-covened by Environment Liaison Centre International and Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health.
- Lunchtime Workshop Wednesday May 17 1-3pm (room to be announcement). The Role of Strategic Planning in the Design of National Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing.
- Today- Tuesday May 16, 2000 2pm NGO Tent (Tent 1) Terminator and Traitor Technology Updates by Rural Advancement Foundation International.
- Upcoming topics of ECO, for which we invite articles, are:
Wednesday, May 17: Dryland Biodiversity
Thursday, May 18: Inland Water Biodiversity , Clearing House Mechanism
Friday, May 19: Agricultural biodiversity, Identification, monitoring and assessment
Monday, May 22: Alien species, Education and Public Awareness
Tuesday, May 23: Global Taxonomy Initiative, Impact Assessment
Wednesday, May 24: Biosafety and Biotechnology
Thursday, May 25: Summary statements from NGOs on the operations of the Convention

Bird Walks

Bird walks will be offered by Nature Kenya for COP attendees from 8:30-9:30 on Thursday, May 18 and on Tuesday and Thursday May 23 and 25 on UNEP campus. Meet at the main entrance to the UNEP building, in front of the business centre.

Saturday Morning, May 20, Special Bird Walk for CBD COP delegates and resident Nairobi birders. Meet at National Museum car park at 9:00.

Wednesday Bird Walk: Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

Pot Luck Outing, May 21: Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, i.e., 21 May. Bring a picnic lunch (most hotels can provide if asked), binoculars, field guides, etc. and meet

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