

**Assessment and quality issues relating to the design and implementation of NFP**

During the IPF/IFF process, National Forest Programmes (NFPs) were identified as a primary vehicle for the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action at national level. The central role of NFPs in implementation was further emphasized in the report of the Six Country Initiative titled *Practitioner's Guide to the implementation of the IPF Proposals for Action* which recommends that NFPs should be the main vehicle for the implementation of *all* of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action (see page 7 and 9ff of the Six Country Initiative report).

In accordance with the IPF/IFF proposals for action, NFPs are supposed to constitute a cross sectoral, holistic, and participatory framework for the elaboration of forest policies and the co-ordination of forest related activities at the national level.

The first FAO assessment of NFPs implementation carried out in 1999 revealed that in many countries NFPs are still at the early stage of development. It is therefore too soon to properly evaluate the quality of NFPs implementation and their impact on the ground. Early indications suggest that in some countries such as Malawi and Tanzania, NFPs are succeeding in fostering a new intersectoral and participatory approach to forest policy planning and management. Nevertheless the 1999 FAO assessment highlights that in many countries the development of NFPs still lacks adequate levels of public participation. In the Secretary General's paper on NFPs prepared for UNFF2, difficulties in achieving public participation are also stressed (E/CN.18/2002/4).

There are also worrying signs that in some cases NFPs are finding it difficult to adopt a truly cross-sectoral approach. The Secretary General's paper and grass-root reports suggest that NFPs currently under development or implementation consist in business as usual forestry sector programmes aimed primarily at fostering economic growth on the basis of timber and forests products supply to the forestry industry. The principle rationale underlying such NFPs is that expanded areas of plantations will ensure enhanced supply of timber and relieve the pressure on natural forests. In other cases, it seems that NFPs are not being developed as an entirely new approach. For example, the Secretary General's paper reports that some National Forest Programmes are being developed on the basis of Tropical Forest Action Plans (TFAPs). NGOs are concerned that such repackaged TFAPs may fail to learn from the past and simply deliver a timber centric top down sectoral plan under a different name.

*Recommendations:*

To ensure high quality implementation of NFPs, the international arrangement on forests should work with governments to:

- ❑ Give priority to the implementation of IPF proposal for action 17f which encourages countries: "to elaborate systems, including private and community forest management systems, for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating national forest programmes that identify and involve, where appropriate, a broad participation of indigenous people(s), forest dwellers, forest owners and local communities...";
- ❑ Integrate the findings of such participatory monitoring and evaluation into the voluntary monitoring and reporting process of the UNFF in order to exchange lessons learned, rectify any problems and repeat models of effective implementation;
- ❑ Prioritise the design and implementation of NFP components dealing with the underlying causes of deforestation;
- ❑ Foster the participation of indigenous peoples, forest dependent communities and NGOs in NFP-related processes and initiatives such as PROFOR and the FAO NFP Implementation Facility.

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