

REPORT OF THE JOINT  
COMMONWEALTH FORESTRY ASSOCIATION -  
INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TREE ORGANIZATION –  
COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION WORKSHOP  
IN NIGERIA

6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2011

**“Hands across the Forest: strengthening the  
contribution of stakeholders to forestry development  
across West Africa”**

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September 2011



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## **I. Introduction**

### **Background**

In West Africa, land areas acquired by Government for forest conservation are designated as forest reserves. They are managed by appropriate Government agencies (usually the Forestry Department) on behalf of the public. In most cases, Government's right to manage these forest reserves implies an expropriation of forest-dwelling communities who are the traditional land owners, and whose livelihoods depend on the forests.

Many important decisions on the forests are taken by government officials without reference to the communities. The communities are even marginalized with respect to resource access. Even though the need for collaborative forest management and community-based natural resource management has been recognised in many West-African countries, the government has continued to exclusively manage the forest estates. Building a virile forestry sector requires active multi-stakeholder participation and contribution, hence, it is necessary to advocate for their involvement in forest management at all levels in Nigerian forestry sector. This involvement and engagement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) is critical for establishing a sustainable forestry management framework at the local and national level.

With support from the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) and the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Forestry Association (CFA) in collaboration with the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria organised a three-day workshop in Nigeria between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.

The workshop served as a platform for cohesive deliberations between different stakeholders in West-Africa including, representatives from various forestry associations in West Africa, academic scholars from Universities, forestry students, and NGOs.

### **Objectives**

The aim of the workshop is to strengthen the network of forestry associations in West Africa and facilitate their roles in promoting sustainable forest management in the region.

The workshop had the following objectives:

- facilitate a synergy of stakeholders who will set the agenda for networking among forestry associations, civil societies and community-based organisations;

- map out strategies for advocacy that can influence Government policies and foster the adoption of best practices in forest management across West Africa;
- recognise and promote the role of forestry students as the next generation of people who will be driving forward and delivering change in the future; and
- inaugurate Commonwealth Forestry Association Network, Nigeria.

## II. Participants

The workshop enlisted the participation of academic scholars from different universities, forestry students, and NGOs from Nigeria, Ghana, and Burkina Faso. Organizations represented include, the Forests and Forest Products Society (FFPS), Nigeria; Brong Ahafo Research and Education Centre, Ghana; Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); Forestry Associations of Nigeria (FAN); CarbonSink Development Initiatives Nigeria; Department of Forest Resources Management University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Department of Forestry and Wood Technology, Federal University of Technology Akure, Nigeria; Department of Forestry and Wildlife University of Agriculture Makurdi, Nigeria; Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN); International Forestry Students Association (IFSA); Federal Department of Forestry Abuja Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Environment, Abuja Nigeria; and ODEEN Consult, Nigeria.





### III. Overview of sessions

#### Opening Session

The opening session was held at the Theodore Idibiye Francis Auditorium, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. It was declared open by the Vice Chancellor of the University who was represented by the Dean of School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology of the University. This was followed by a welcoming address delivered by the Head of *Forestry and Wood Technology Department, FUTA*. In his address, the Head of Department expressed his gratitude on behalf of the University for the opportunity to co-organize the workshop with CFA. He highlighted the importance of the workshop to the department's goals of providing tools and skills that will enhance the establishment of strong forestry professional networks. Prior to the presentation of the keynote address, the Chairman of the Workshop Planning Committee, Professor S. O. Akindele gave an overview of the workshop. He explained the purpose of the workshop and emphasized on the goals the workshop was designed to meet, this was followed by the presentation of the goodwill message of the CFA Chair, Prof John Innes which was presented by the workshop coordinator Tolulope Daramola



The keynote address was presented by Simon Shomkegh, who described the importance of "*Enhancing the Capacity of NGOs and CBOs for Sustainable Forest Management Advocacy in West Africa*". He stressed the need for effective collaboration among NGOs and CBOs and their needs for stability in technical and operational capacities because this is critical for the success of *Sustainable Forest Management Advocacy in West Africa*. He further highlighted recommendations on how to realize the potentials of forests and sustainable forest management for a sustainable development.

### Workshop sub-themes

The workshop consisted of paper presentations, working group discussions, and field trips. These were structured to cover three main sub-themes which are: (i) Strategies for influencing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in West Africa; (ii) Promotion of the Role of Forestry Students as new generation leaders; and (iii) Promotion of Networking among Forestry Associations in West Africa.

The sub-themes provided a platform for exchanging ideas and information on the current state and future directions of SFM in West Africa.





## Field trip

Workshop participants embarked on a field trip to Queen's Plot within Akure Forest Reserve in Ondo State. The Queen's Plot is a Strict Nature Reserve located within a degraded forest reserve. This was held as an integral part of the workshop to further expose the participants to the state of forest reserves and the need for a strengthened network of forestry professionals that will promote and influence community-based forest management. The trip also served as a basis for objective discussions on the fate and challenges of forest management in a West-African context, while fostering a more informal networking and communication among participants.





#### IV. Paper presentation/ Working group discussions and presentations

After the opening ceremony, the technical sessions featuring paper presentations and discussions took place at the Conference Hall of the School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology within the University. Paper titles cut across major issues in relation to the theme of the workshop. Later in the afternoon, participants were divided into three thematic working groups as follows; WG 1: Strategies for influencing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in West Africa, WG 2: Promotion of the Role of Forestry Students as new generation leaders, WG 3: Promotion of Networking among Forestry Associations in West Africa.



## **WG 1: Strategies for influencing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in West Africa**

The Working Group on Strategies for influencing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in West Africa presented their recommendations and highlighted contribution of forests to achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Working Group recommendations focused on guidance for improved implementation of policies and tools to build capacity for Sustainable Forests Management. The group emphasized the need for enactment of Forestry Act and enunciation of Forest Policy in West Africa, and the need for protection of the remaining forest estate.

They further stressed the need for new regeneration of policies to be implemented, and the need for continuous and progressive dialogue among stakeholders. Some of the recommended action points include: approaching forest policy more holistically, improving inter-agency coordination and planning, intensifying the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Also they recommended the need for strengthening NGOs and lobbying policy makers, key governmental functionaries and community heads that can influence policy decisions. They concluded that all these will require a commitment to promote and enhance Community-Based Forest Management, forge new partnerships, and improve portfolio of International Funding.

## **WG 2: Promotion of the Role of Forestry Students as new generation leaders**

The Working Group on promotion of Role of Forestry Students as new generation leaders identified role of students and the youth as a crucial one in the future environmental sustainability. The group approached the topic with a focus on youths and not limited to forestry students alone.

They identified the role of young people as concerned, thoughtful citizens, capable of participating in, and changing their society, and that they have an important role to play in addressing and influencing contemporary issues across the globe. It was emphasized that youths constitute a population that have enthusiasm, imagination and abundant energy to undertake local actions, act as effective communicators in their communities and be involved in international arenas. Young people are expected to have special interest in maintaining a healthy environment because they would be the ones to inherit it.

The group recognized this crucial role of the youth and explained that it is important to create a constructive and informative avenue through which the youths can find out more about forestry, climate change, its causes, effects, and ways in which the effects can be reduced or adapted. Their recommendations include; the critical need for a sensitization that must be entrenched in academics to make students love forestry discipline, continuous career talk and rebranding.

They further highlighted that forestry and environmental education must be taken seriously to cover carbon training and mentoring, while forestry curriculum should be included in the secondary schools. Overall, the group ascribes high priority to the need for exposure of students to importance of environment, and to the need for an expansion of job opportunities for students after graduation.



### **WG 3: Promotion of Networking among Forestry Associations in West Africa**

The working group identified the importance of communication and networking as the most important need among scientist and researchers. Also, creating enabling conditions and capacity to expand access to information, communications and telecommunications technology and geospatial technology services are crucial. To strengthen the network of professionals, the group emphasised the identification of Associations with similar goals/objectives (at Regional, National, Local, *etc.*), information dissemination and sharing of news on opportunities, development of code of ethics to guide networking activities, development of partnership with governments within the sub-region, development of region-based synergy among associations , establishment of database and assignment of responsibilities to members, collaboration for project implementation, capacity building, and improved communication through the availability of internet services.



## V. Launching of CFA Network Nigeria

Part of the major objective of this workshop was to setup a strong network of CFA members in Nigeria that will promote CFA activities, members' registration and networking. The network was launched and coordinators were nominated and appointed.

## VI. Final Resolutions:

**In conclusion of the workshop, the following resolutions were made towards bolstering the position and roles of Forestry Associations in the forestry sector across West Africa.**

We are *convinced* that strategies for advocacy can influence Government Policy and law and thereafter foster the adoption of best practices in Forest Management in West African Countries; promotion of forestry students as the next generation of West Africans who will be driving forward and delivering change in the future; and promotion of Networking among Forestry Associations and allied Associations in West Africa.

We *appreciate* the bold initiatives taken by Forest and Forest Products Society (FFPS); Forestry Associations of Nigeria (FAN); Department of Forest Resources Management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Department of Forestry and Wood Technology, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria; Department of Forestry and Wildlife, University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria; Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN); Carbon Sink Development Initiatives; International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA)-Nigeria; Federal Department of Forestry, Abuja; Federal Ministry of Environment, Abuja, Nigeria; Brong Awaso Research and Education, Centre, Ghana; CIFOR; O'DEEN Consultants, on the vision to position forestry in West Africa as a very relevant profession in knowledge-based societies and in countries with emerging economy.

We *recognize* that our respective Governments are sincerely committed to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals that are aimed at increasing forest estate, forest resources, biodiversity; reducing de-reservation, deforestation; and enhancing the prospects for environmental sustainability.

We *uphold* these laudable goals and renew the commitment of the West African Scientific Community and in particular the forest scientists, researchers and scholars to support our countries in West Africa to meet these initiatives and more specifically those related to achieving environmental sustainability.

We *believe* that we have a very unique opportunity by bridging the dialogue between policy-makers, law makers and the West African scientists to provide the best of our ability reliable sources and authoritative data that could assist decision makers on the best practices that we have objectively and scientifically tested and documented.