

**Regional & Sub-Regional Input for UNFF8: IMFN**

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**Format**

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## **IMFN Background**

The International Model Forest Network (IMFN) was announced by Canada at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Since then, the Network has become a valuable policy instrument for delivery of sustainable development at a landscape-level through both domestic and international strategies, and maintains a strong emphasis on sustainable forest management (SFM), research and innovation.

Model forests are large defined geographic areas (often regional and/or watershed in scale) with broad-based partnerships between multiple stakeholders that work together to identify and concretely address challenges to achieving sustainable forest resource management. The breadth of these partnerships allows for the creation of multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary teams with considerable latitude for innovation and experimentation.

The International Model Forest Network links these individual sites in a global learning network that currently comprises 50 sites in more than 20 countries around the world. As it has grown and expanded, new opportunities have emerged for using the network to link and leverage knowledge in order to accelerate innovation towards effective implementation of sustainable forest management. Over the years the network and network members have registered many important impacts in areas such as governance and conflict mitigation, sustainable economic development, conservation and protection, science and research, and policy innovation.

## **SECTION I: Substantive Matters of the Forum**

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### **1. Forests and Climate Change**

Applied research and testing mechanisms are needed to better anticipate and understand climate change impacts on forests and to help communities develop adaptation approaches. The IMFN is well positioned to be that mechanism. The Network offers a series of landscape-level sites that are transnational and global, as well as being dedicated to knowledge generation and sharing. Two examples are presented here:

#### *j) IMFN Circumboreal Initiative*

For the past three years the IMFN has led on the development of a Circumboreal Initiative, which aims to provide collaborative opportunities for countries in the boreal biome to assist forest-dependent communities in assessing their climate change vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity, as well as to improve the sustainability of forest land-use and to conserve biodiversity. The focus of activities undertaken through this initiative will be international in scope but strongly supported by national forestry agendas.

The following aspects of the Circumboreal Initiative will develop experience of cross-cutting issues such as:

- Capacity-building:
  1. Linking the applied research capacity of institutions and countries within the Circumboreal Network to provide communities, managers and policy-makers with timely, credible and relevant information.
  2. Sharing strategies for monitoring and research to improve the efficiency of responses to climate change; and to accelerate learning across jurisdictions.
- Information-sharing:
  1. Using the capacity of local sites and partners within the circumboreal network to efficiently transfer knowledge directly to the audiences that need it most.
  2. Providing common frameworks, definitions, measures and data to support efficient, consistent and credible international reporting.

- Awareness-raising:
  1. A network of demonstration sites with developed dissemination tools will increase overall understanding among the public and other non-professionals.
  2. If successful, the circumboreal model of transnational collaboration can be applied to other parts of the IMFN.

#### *ii) Carbon Budget Model*

The Carbon Budget Model<sup>1</sup> (CBM) is a computer model used to track and predict the amount of carbon stored in managed forests. It can also assess the impact of forest operations on carbon stocks, allowing forest managers to evaluate alternative management options. The CBM was tested over three years in Canadian Model Forests across the country with credible results. While the model contains ecological parameters set for Canada, it can be modified for application in other countries. The CBM will help Canada meet international reporting requirements of the Kyoto Protocol and could potentially assist other countries in meeting their international environmental reporting obligations. Technology transfer and information-sharing with regards to the CBM can be facilitated through the Canadian Model Forest Network's membership in the IMFN.

## **2. Reversing Forest Cover Loss, Preventing Forest Degradation & Desertification**

Through the promotion of inclusive landscape-level approaches to forest management, model forests strive to ensure that ecological processes are maintained, valued and not disrupted or degraded by other activities taking place within it. Below are two examples of ecologically restorative projects implemented in Model Forests with degraded forest areas:

#### *i) Formosa Model Forest, Argentina*

Formosa Model Forest is located in one of the poorest and most isolated regions of Argentina. Prolonged overharvesting of the red quebracho tree (*Schinopsis lorentzii*) for tannin, cattle grazing, fuelwood and agricultural use have left the soil compacted and degraded. Local indigenous Toba peoples, who live by hunting and gathering on this land, have been greatly affected. The Model Forest responded by enclosing a 250 ha area of native woodland where livestock have been effectively fenced-out. Projects implemented within this area include the recovery of soil capacity through the growth of native grasses and reforestation efforts, and the establishment of a tree nursery of more economically viable species to enhance woodland diversity. Such capacity-building projects are aimed at improving the socio-economic situation of the Toba while simultaneously addressing forest degradation.

#### *ii) Ulot Watershed Model Forest, Philippines*

The Ulot Watershed Model Forest partnership, located on Samar Island in the Philippines, decided to reduce local reliance on unsustainable timber extraction by planting pili (*Canarium ovatum*) saplings. The pili is a high-value tree with multiple uses: its fruit is edible and nutritious while the shell is made into handicrafts or charcoal briquettes, and the tree's resin is used to manufacture plastics, inks, perfumes and varnish. In 2004 and 2005 the Model Forest planted pili seedlings in over 100 hectares of degraded forest land, thereby reversing forest loss. Local stakeholders were also trained in land preparation, pest and disease control and intercropping. With its capacity-building function, the Model Forest provided opportunities for reversing forest loss and improving economic values of resources available to the local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> A joint project between the Canadian Model Forest Network (CMFN) and Natural Resources Canada—Canadian Forest Service (NRCan-CFS)

### 3. Forests and Biodiversity Conservation Including Protected Areas

Most model forests contain significant conservation areas within or around them; areas such as National Parks, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Forests, Ramsar sites and recreational parks. Through broad-based Model Forest partnerships - park managers, forest industry groups, indigenous peoples, private land owners, and others work together to understand that actions taken outside of conservation areas can have significant impacts inside of them, and vice versa. The following two examples illustrate collaborative approaches to biodiversity conservation:

#### *i) Reventazón Model Forest, Costa Rica*

The Turriabla Volcano National Park is a protected area and a partner in the Reventazón Model Forest in Costa Rica. Through the cooperation of park managers and local communities, the Model Forest developed a participative management plan to address unequal tourism opportunities by diversifying local incomes in the region. Another initiative the Model Forest is involved with is a biological corridor connecting protected areas inside its boundaries. The ecotourism and biological corridor projects were facilitated by stakeholder networks generated by the Reventazón Model Forest partnership base and its links to the IMFN. A focus on shared and inter-institutional participation complements conservation efforts, and strengthens the connection between and among protected areas.

While the application of an ecosystem approach in a region with minimal resources remains a challenge, by involving and consulting the communities in and around the Model Forest, participation and support is increasing. The integrated work being done by partners is a new approach to conservation and will help disseminate results more easily, both within and beyond the Model Forest itself.

#### *ii) Kodagu Model Forest, India*

A large proportion of the Kodagu Model Forest land base is covered by protected areas: the 410,400 ha area encompasses a national park, three wildlife sanctuaries, a biosphere reserve and a network of about 1200 sacred groves. Sacred groves are forest fragments separated by agricultural land and are ancient places of worship for the people of Kodagu. Many have become degraded following years of intensive land use in and around the groves. Through the local College of Forestry, the Model Forest enabled the involvement of diverse stakeholders (including the State Forest Department and representatives of local communities) in overseeing sacred grove management and restoration. The inclusion of local communities as stakeholders has led to an increased understanding of roles and responsibilities with regards to sustainable forest management at the community level.

This effective policy shift - local communities that previously had only worship rights are now actively involved in sacred grove management - is slowly helping to revitalize a unique and ancient community practice through an adaptive conservation approach. This initiative has been recognized by the biodiversity strategy and action plan prepared by the Indian state and central governments. Through this program, issues related to legal ownership, sharing of benefits and joint forest management have been clarified and formalized.

#### 4. Means of Implementation for Sustainable Forest Management

##### *The Model Forest Approach*

Model forests themselves are seen to be an effective means of implementation for sustainable forest management (SFM): A model forest is a defined geographic area, but equally importantly, it is a neutral forum where diverse stakeholders interact with each other and plan for the management of their natural resources in a landscape where forests are an important feature. The model forest approach to SFM is based on six flexible yet fundamental principles. Because no two model forests are identical, there are six fundamental principles that form the basis for collaboration and networking. A model forest is:

1. An inclusive and dynamic **partnership**
2. A commitment to **sustainable forest management**
3. A **landscape** large enough to represent an area's diverse forest uses and values
4. A **governance structure** that is representative, participative, transparent and accountable
5. Scope: a **program of activities** reflective of partner needs and values
6. A commitment to **knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and networking**, from the local to the international levels

The model forest concept is based on a view that long-term, broad-based partnerships are the key to SFM and these partnerships take time to demonstrate their full worth. Therefore, SFM must be understood as a process, not a project. Further, the model forest partnership itself defines what sustainability means in each particular context, then together develops and carries out a strategic plan to work toward its realization. Model forests demonstrate that SFM must be locally driven to succeed. In addition, particularly in developing countries, SFM must provide tangible economic and social dividends.

Ongoing challenges being addressed by the Network currently include the promotion of the complex model forest concept from local to international levels, and improved networking and knowledge sharing globally.

#### **SECTION II: Characteristics of Regional and Sub-Regional Cooperation and Partnerships**

The IMFN is comprised of several regional model forest initiatives, each of which has established its own priority areas of collaboration developed through extensive consultation with their membership. Below three regional examples are presented. Also presented is a description of the recently concluded IMFN Global Forum (2008) as an example of how the IMFN actively encourages multi-stakeholder dialogues and participation across the entire International Network.

##### *1. Canadian Model Forest Network (CMFN)*

CMFN is a network of 14 model forest sites across Canada. As a network, the CMFN collectively works to raise the profile of model forests in Canada, and coordinates relevant national initiatives such as SFM criteria development. For example, with assistance from their partners, Canadian Model Forests developed a suite of local level indicators to help assess their progress toward SFM. To share their knowledge and experiences with others, the CMFN produced a Users' Guide to local-level indicators, released in 2000. The guide's information has been shared across Canada and has also formed the basis for model forest workshops in Asia and Latin America. The CMFN recently identified eight new priority areas of action: indigenous youth, ecological goods and services, non-timber forest products, carbon accounting, bioenergy, socio-economic indicators, the Circumboreal Network and international collaboration.

## *2. Ibero-American Model Forest Network (IAMFN)*

IAMFN is a voluntary partnership among 21 Model Forest sites in 11 member countries from Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. The IAMFN supports the strengthening of sites in the regional network based on the development of projects related to model forest strategic objectives through two funds: a capacity building fund and a seed fund. The IAMFN is currently undertaking two major strategic initiatives: 1) Establishing an Ibero-American Landscapes Management Network; and 2) Biodiversity restoration and community development through analogue forestry.

## *3. Regional Model Forest Network (RMFN) - Asia*

RMFN-Asia involves 6 countries - China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, and Thailand - and is currently working on a strategic plan that will incorporate expertise, experiences, issues and aspirations from the Model Forests within the region. Two priority areas of common action have been identified: ecological goods and services, and integrated landscape management. The strategic plan also intends to provide a regional basis for further Model Forest development and the scope to establish links to national and regional forest policy processes and initiatives.

### *IMFN Global Forum 2008*

Global Fora provide an opportunity for IMFN members to identify ways to support and enhance the contributions model forests are making to the sustainable management of natural resources and forested landscapes from local to international levels. The 2008 IMFN Global Forum provided an opportunity to network and learn amongst members, and to demonstrate tangible on-the-ground results and planned achievements. Participants noted that model forests have been registering significant impacts in areas ranging from forest certification to fire management to poverty alleviation, policy influence and education.

Significant outcomes from the event included: 1) The identification of four key IMFN strategic initiatives including community sustainability, adaptation to climate change, knowledge-sharing and environmental services; 2) Significant progress in documenting and understanding the contributions and impacts model forests are having locally, nationally and internationally; and 3) Greater understanding of the IMFN contribution to global efforts in making progress towards sustainability and the specific value that model forests can fulfil relative to other like-minded initiatives.

### *Looking to the Future*

The International Model Forest Network has considerable scope and opportunity for continued growth and innovation in the use of this model approach. Opportunities for collaboration, in particular with CPF organizations<sup>2</sup>, which already exist throughout the network at local and regional levels, also provide an important means for accelerating learning and innovation in a two-way exchange that will add value to our collective global efforts to achieve dynamic working models of sustainable forest management.

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<sup>2</sup> CPF Member involvement currently includes: CBD, CIFOR, FAO, GEF, ITTO, IUCN and UNDP