

Findings

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Good Practice
Infobrief



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Ghana

High Forest Biodiversity Conservation Project

The GEF-supported High Forest Biodiversity Conservation Project intended to increase the ecological security of globally significant biological resources, especially within threatened tropical moist forest ecosystems. The project aimed to establish effective systems for the protection of 30 globally significant biodiversity areas (GSBAs) in all tropical forest biomes in Ghana in four regions within the High Forest Zone – namely, Ashanti, Eastern, Central and Western regions. The project focused on communities living at the periphery of these GSBAs.

Specific objectives were to:

- Protect a significant portion of forest biodiversity by implementing an ecosystem approach to management within the high forest zone that involves strengthening management of national parks and taking selected high-biodiversity forest reserves out of production;
- Improve knowledge of the distribution and status of rare, threatened, and endemic species through targeted surveys to better focus conservation measures;
- Enhance biodiversity protection within multiple-use production forests by excluding critical habitats from logging;
- Ensure sustainability and preserve genetic diversity of non-timber forest species that are collected by rural populations for medicinal and consumptive uses, through improved data collection, monitoring, harvest regulation, and sustainable management within forest reserves and/or at currently deforested areas at the forest margins.

Impact

The project was successful in achieving its objectives. With the inception of the project, forest conditions within the GSBAs located in the four regions within the High Forest Zone have improved as a consequence of the sustainable management regimes and enforcement of forest protection and resource conservation rules and regulations. The identification of 30 forest reserves and their exclusion from timber harvesting on the merit of their high significance as biodiversity-rich areas has led to (a) improved forest regeneration; (b) reduced illegal tree felling and group hunting; (c) significant reduction in the drying up of water bodies.

Specific achievements include:

- Biodiversity management is now fully integrated into the core business planning of the Forestry Commission.
- Awareness on the importance, willingness and need to protect forest by community members has been high as they now appreciate and recognize a link between forest health and their own livelihoods.
- Biodiversity issues have been incorporated into national processes, including the current Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS-II).
- Communities, traditional leaders and district assemblies are now involved in natural resource management, monitoring, and coordination of environmental protection activities at the district and community levels
- Through the livelihood support program the project might have contributed toward establishing positive relationship between economic development and natural resource conservation within the rural economies. This has made environmental quality a key element in supporting rural economic and social development in the forest regions.
- A sense of project ownership, as a result of massive sensitization measures, campaigns, joint programs and collaborative approaches to project activities, has been created.

Lessons learned

Some lessons learned include:

- The level of government commitment to the project must be determined during preparation and appraisal. This helps to decide the appropriate type of project design and implementation arrangements.
- Effective project implementation is boosted by decentralizing operations to lower administrative levels and marking clear responsibilities for disbursement and reporting lines.
- Collaboration, cooperation and a good mix of technical staff among the Bank, the government, and stakeholders during implementation make implementation more effective.
- Building a sense of ownership by communities through sensitization measures, campaigns, joint programs, and collaborative approaches to project activities is critical for project success.

This *Infobrief* was based on World Bank Implementation Completion Report No. 748, from which detailed information can be obtained.

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