

## Editorial

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“*Why should forest communities enter into management agreements concerning forests that they have lived in and managed for centuries?*” asks Sena in his article on the Mau forest in Kenya in this volume. The question points to the very heart of the theme this issue of *Indigenous Affairs* deals with, namely conflicting interests over forests and their resources. Many of the world’s indigenous peoples live in and around forests, and practice lifestyles that are closely linked to these forests in terms of subsistence, cash income, medicinal, cultural and spiritual values, etc. They are highly dependent on their forest homes for their survival. On a global basis, it is estimated that 60 million indigenous people are almost wholly dependent on forest resources for their livelihood. Many of these people find their livelihood, their cultural integrity and, in some cases, even their survival as peoples threatened as their forest homes are encroached upon by logging companies and other businesses seeking to make a profit from the forests’ resources.

IWGIA has, during 2006, become increasingly involved in discussions on sustainable logging. IWGIA is member of an advisory group to the Danish Industrialisation Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) in relation to a loan it has granted to the logging company *Congolaise Industrielle des Bois* (CIB), now owned by the big Danish timber company Dalhoff Larsen & Horneman A/S. As one of the first logging companies in Central Africa, CIB recently obtained Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for some parts of its large concession in the Republic of Congo. For more information on this, please see the article by Jerome Lewis and John Nelson. The IFU advisory group visited the CIB concession in November 2006 and there was broad agreement that the CIB is doing pioneering work on sustainable logging that could be of inspiration to other logging companies in the region and elsewhere. IWGIA is also a member of an advisory group to the Danish Ministry of Environment, which is revising the Danish guidelines for public procurement of tropical timber. Together with other likeminded NGOs, IWGIA is seeking to ensure that the guidelines will recommend the highest possible standards for sustainable timber, and that only timber coming from forests managed sustainably, in line with the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, will be accepted. For more information on this process, please see the article by Sille Stidsen.

With this issue of *Indigenous Affairs*, we wish to contribute to an analysis of the complex interplay between the policies and laws governing forest management, logging companies’ operations and the effects of their logging, the market these companies supply and, above all, the international standards that in one way or another define frameworks within which companies and governments are supposed to manage the world’s forests.

### **Threats to indigenous peoples’ livelihoods**

Almost all the articles bear witness to the suffering that logging and forest loss causes to indigenous forest-dwelling communities. In the Congo Basin in Central Africa, logging and the illegal bushmeat trade that normally comes with commercial logging pose a serious threat to indigenous forest communities, yet there are few serious attempts to conduct sustainable logging that seeks to protect the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples. In their article, Lewis and Nelson give an overview of the critical situation in the Congo Basin.

Mulvagh describes in her article how the Pygmies’ survival as peoples is being threatened in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by a Forest Code that prioritises commercial use and conservation over community needs. The forest gives them access to a secure means of subsistence and medical plants, and it is crucial to practicing their customs. Without

urgent action, the lands, territories and resources of indigenous peoples in DRC will continue to be irreversibly degraded, depriving the affected peoples of the source of their physical, cultural, economic and spiritual sustenance, and threatening their very existence. Likewise, from Gabon we hear how logging concessions are being delineated and allocated without any consultation of the forest-dwelling Pygmy communities, whose traditional mobile lifestyle as hunter-gatherers is not recognized or protected by Gabonese law (Knight's article). As described by Sena, the situation is also serious in Kenya where the traditional livelihoods of the Ogiek hunter-gatherers of the Mau forest is under threat from a forest law that does not recognize their rights to their lands, and from massive and uncontrolled logging.

Large parts of Asia's tropical forests have already disappeared due to aggressive, unsustainable and uncontrolled logging and much forest land has been transformed into commercial plantations. In Indonesia, there have been attempts to decentralise forest management, allowing local administration instead of national authorities to take charge of granting logging concessions. Unfortunately, the results have at best been mixed. Even though the logging companies had to sign contracts with the local forest communities, this did not result in genuine community participation and control but rather in limited economic compensation/revenue sharing with no long lasting impact. After three years of decentralization, the Indonesian government has decided to recentralize forest management, arguing that there was too much abuse and uncontrolled logging.

### **Innovative approaches**

Some of the articles in this issue of *Indigenous Affairs* offer, however, insights into recent successful efforts to promote indigenous peoples' right to control their forest resources, or at least minimize the negative effects of logging on their lands and territories.

Lewis and Nelson's article shows how a logging company in Northern Congo are using innovative methods to involve the forest-dwelling Pygmy communities in mapping the forest resources before planning which trees to cut, where to construct the logging roads, etc. In this way, they ensure that sites with a special cultural or spiritual value, or areas specifically important for their hunting practices, are protected.

In British Columbia in Canada, a programme integrating traditional (indigenous) and scientific approaches to forest management has been established. In their article, Fondahl, Leon and Grainger describe this programme, which is a joint initiative between the indigenous Tl'Azt'en Nation and the University of Northern British Columbia. A key aspect of the programme has been the identification of indigenous criteria, indicators and values for sustainable forest management, which are used in forestry planning and environmental monitoring. Important here is the fact that these specific criteria emphasize social and cultural values as well as economic and ecological outcomes.

In the Finnish Sápmi, the Sámi reindeer herders have had some success recently in their struggle for recognition and protection of their right to practice their traditional livelihood activity. Lawrence and Raitio analyse the dispute between reindeer herders and the state's forestry industry, which dates back to the 1950s. The conflicting interests are clear in that the old forests of Northern Finland are typically both valuable winter grazing areas for the Sámi, who regard them as part of their traditional territory, and rich in timber. Since 2002, the authors argue, the joint campaigning of the political Sámi organizations, individual reindeer herding cooperatives and environmental organizations has resulted in serious challenges to the state forestry operations in the area as well as to Finnish politics in relation to Sámi rights.

### **Key players in the protection of indigenous forest peoples**

Protecting indigenous forest-dwelling communities from destructive logging is a complex problem, with many actors involved. Firstly, governments are responsible for developing and implementing laws that comply with existing international human rights standards, and provide special protection for indigenous peoples' rights.

At the same time, regulation of the international timber market is crucial since, ultimately, the fact that timber and wood products are much in demand on a world-wide basis is the driving force behind the over-exploitation of the world's forests. Timber consuming countries have a responsibility to develop policies that ban the import, sale and purchase of unsustainably logged timber (read more about such policy development in the last article in this volume).

Last but not least, timber companies have a serious job ahead of them in terms of increasing the production and promotion of sustainable timber. Existing certification schemes such as the internationally recognized and used FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certificate are key frameworks for ensuring sustainable logging, which also takes the rights of indigenous peoples seriously. There is no doubt that the production of sustainable timber is complicated and demanding and implies long-term strategic planning. As Lewis and Nelson's article shows, however, it *is* possible to develop innovative ways of ensuring the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous forest peoples and genuinely involve them in forest management, even in highly challenging environments such as the Congo Basin.

Communication between the companies and the people affected by their operations in the world's forests is fundamental, and peoples' organizations and NGOs have a crucial role to play in ensuring this. They must continue to communicate indigenous peoples' needs and demands to those responsible for forest management planning (governments and businesses), since these needs are often invisible or incomprehensible to them. As described in a number of articles in this volume (Lewis and Nelson, Fondahl, Leon and Grainger, Lawrence and Raitio), mapping of traditional land use for subsistence, cultural and spiritual practices is central to this. Monitoring logging companies' actual behaviour in the forest and documenting the impacts of their operations is another important task. And, last but not least, finding powerful ways of using this documentation to put pressure on those responsible for the destructive exploitation of forest resources is crucial. National and international campaigning, the filing of complaints with national and international human rights bodies, are some of the methods described in the articles in this volume.

Huge and fast profits and widespread corruption are major factors behind unsustainable or illegal logging. However, ultimately, sustainable logging should be in the interest of the states where logging takes place as it ensures the regeneration of the forests and thereby of vital economic national assets. A huge task lies ahead to sensitize the world's consumers as to the meaning and importance of sustainable timber and thereby increase the demand for it. This task will involve common efforts and, possibly, new alliances between responsible and progressive timber companies, governments and environmental and human rights NGOs.