



WORKSHOP REPORT

Pre-project workshop on FireFight
Kumasi, Ghana

Sponsored by

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

Organized by

IUCN – The World Conservation Union

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Forest fires

Each year fire burns between 6 and 14 million hectares of forest, about half of this in the tropics. The resulting amount of forest loss and degradation is of the same order of magnitude as that caused by destructive logging and conversion to agriculture. Fires thus have the potential to significantly affect the capacity of forests in the tropics to provide goods and services including tropical timber on a sustainable basis. This is having a major impact not only on timber industries but also on rural communities whose livelihoods depend on the forests.

Harmful forest fires can no longer be considered solely the product of a long dry season, human carelessness, or smallholder land preparation. Along with this, the inability of Fire and Forest Departments to limit the spread, and minimize the damage, of forest fires has challenged the assumption that effective fire control requires only early warning and adequate fire-fighting equipment and human resources. Many organizations have now concluded that if harmful forest fires are to be contained then the fire-related behavior of a whole range of stakeholders must be addressed and that attention has to be focused on policy reform and the removal of perverse economic incentives that encourage stakeholders to use fire irresponsibly.

1.2 FireFight initiative

A joint WWF-IUCN communication and advocacy initiative, FireFight has been ongoing in South-East Asia since three years and has been successful in identifying policies and practical measures that can help prevent uncontrolled forest fires.

IUCN and WWF have recently secured additional funding for a pre-project under the FireFight initiative. The pre-project will lay the groundwork for expansion and development of the FireFight approach into Latin America and West Africa, and for further work in South-East Asia. The FireFight Initiative aims to help practitioners and policy makers in targeted ITTO member countries secure the policy reforms and practical actions necessary to prevent and control harmful fires, and mitigate their negative impact on human societies and forest ecosystems. The pre-project aims to develop a series of complete project proposal documents actively supported by ITTO member countries in the three regions covered.

Inputs for the complete project proposal documents will be developed through a series of workshops in the three regions for representatives of governments and other stakeholders. In addition to developing these inputs, the pre-project workshops also aim to increase interest in forest fires issues, initiate collaboration and to share knowledge as well as build common understanding.

1.3 Workshop in Kumasi

The West African pre-project workshop was held in 22-23 May 2003 in Kumasi, Ghana. The meeting gathered some thirty participants (Appendix 1) from Ghana, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire to address the prevailing causes of fires in Ghana, to find suggestions to improve the situation, and to share experiences on forest fires in the sub-region.

2 WORKSHOP

2.1 Aim, objectives and expected outputs

The workshop aimed on increasing interest in forest fire management and building common understanding of fire management problems. Two objectives, namely sharing knowledge on fire management practices and strengthening collaboration between different stakeholders, were set prior to the workshop. The following expected outputs were to be reached during the two-days meeting:

- 1) Creating a national forest fire knowledge map for Ghana.
- 2) Gathering elements for an ITTO project proposal.
- 3) Acting as a starting point for forest fires network the sub-region.

2.2 Procedure

The workshop consisted of presentations, plenary discussions as well as group works. At the very beginning, the participants' expectations (Appendix 2) were written down and read aloud in order to point out the most emerging fire problems in Ghana and in the sub-region according to participants' point of view. Prior to the workshop a review of forest fire management strategies and practices in Ghana was conducted and distributed among the participants to act as a starting point and baseline document for discussions.

2.2.1 Presentations

A total of eight presentations were held as following:

Name	Organisation	Presentation
Jean-Marc Garreau	IUCN/BRAO	Introduction to the Workshop
Peter Moore	Project FireFight South-East Asia	Introduction to project FireFight and experiences from South-East Asia
Mrs. Lucy Amissah	Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG)	Results of the ITTO –funded “Forest Fire Management in Ghana” -project
Mr Oheneba Agyeman	Resource Management Support Centre (RMSC)	Presentation of the “Wildfire Management in the Transition Zone” - project
Kwesi Orgle	Ministry of Lands & Forestry, Ghana	A review of forest fire management strategies and practices in Ghana
Mr. Peter Wright & Mrs. Tina Byring	Projet Gestion des feux en milieu rural, Burkina Faso	Bushfires – experiences from Burkina Faso
Mr. Frank Jules Sezan	WWF/Côte d'Ivoire	Situation of bushfires in Ivory Coast
Peter Moore	Project FireFight South-East Asia	Communication and information sharing on forest fires – building a network in West Africa

2.2.2 Group works

The participants were divided into working groups, firstly, to discuss about:

- Successful fire management activities.

After this the participants went on defining:

- Gaps in current strategies.

The next step was to brainstorm on:

- Important issues to be addressed to meet the forest fire challenge in Ghana.

Finally, the list of needed actions was organized into:

- Priorities for future projects.

The results of the group works can be found in Appendix 3. A validated conclusion that was acquired after presenting the group work results and following discussions is presented in the following chapter.

More information of the workshop as well as material presented and distributed during it can be found from the following web-page:
<http://www.iucn.org/brao/eng/programmes/forets/firefight/ghanaworkshop.htm>

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 On project proposal

Workshop participants were together able to identify the gaps in the current practices at the beginning of a project identification process by combining a review of forest fire management strategies and practices in Ghana (prepared prior to the workshop and distributed among the participants) with their own knowledge and experience. A framework for the proposed project was concluded as presented in the following.

Goals

Two goals were suggested:

1. To improve socio-economic welfare of Ghanaians through a sustainable integrated wildfire management.
2. To improve rural livelihoods through reducing forest fires in Ghana.

Project Objectives and Issues

The pre-project workshop outlined a number of issues and objectives, which need to be addressed by the forest fire management project. These were presented in three main themes as:

Community Objectives

1. To develop sustainable methods (including alternative livelihoods) for motivating local communities to enhance fire management.
2. To revisit certain traditional fire management practices that emphasizes prescribed approaches.
3. To identify interest of communities in preserving vegetation for future generations.
4. Support local communities to develop sustainable fire use practices and control methods.
5. Evaluate successful fire management practices including traditional practices.
6. Create a service linked to the communities to provide lacking technical means for complete control of fire.
7. To develop and implement guidelines for integrated community land management to reduce incidence of wildfire.

Policy/Legislation

1. To evaluate and identify durable policies that can be implemented in the management of natural resources.
2. Communication of these results for policy formulation.
3. To review existing policies on forest fire management.
4. To review existing national and local policies on forest fire management where application has been successful.
5. To institutionalize mechanisms for development and establishment of local level legislation.

Collaboration/Networking

1. To identify and institutionalize the roles of National Fire Service and other collaborating organizations in rural fire management.
2. To develop a network to co-ordinate interagency and community collaboration to fight fire.
3. To institute a mechanism for effective stakeholder collaboration to manage wildfires.

Miscellaneous

1. To provide comprehensive and reliable data on fire hazards in Ghana.

Comments on Objectives and Issues

The participants made the following comments on these objectives:

- The first statement in the community objectives forms a solid basis for all the community objectives; the other elements reflect more possible activities to fulfill this first objective.
- The miscellaneous objective is more a means to support the other objectives, rather than an objective in itself.

3.2 On forest fires networking in the sub-region

The need for exchanging experiences and sharing lessons-learnt between Ghana and its neighboring countries –especially Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso- was pointed out to be important. Yet, these activities are constrained by the lack of financial means to bring together the different actors in their respective countries. On the other hand, information sharing with the help of e-mails and Internet was seen as one possibility but at the same time the weak connections in terms of information technology were admitted as a constraint.

3.3 Next steps

One of the workshop purposes was to acquire inputs for the development of a complete project proposal document. The workshop provided essential material for the first phase of the project development. During the workshop a reference group¹ consisting of six workshop participants was formed and appointed with a task of reviewing and commenting the project proposal. The reference group will meet at the end of July 2003 to work on the project proposal that IUCN is currently developing with a following schedule:

- Problem definition, by the end of June 2003.
- Logical framework, by the end of July 2003.
- First draft version, by the end of August 2003.

The final project proposal will be submitted for the consideration of the Expert Panel for Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals prior to the thirty-fifth session of the International Tropical Timber Council, which will meet in November 2003.

¹ The reference group members are: Dr. Dominic Blay, FORIG (acts as a contact person); Dr. Kwesi Orgle, Ministry of Lands and Forestry; Mr. Oheneba Agyeman, RMSC; Mrs. Lucy Amisah, FORIG; Dr. S.K. Kufogbe, University of Ghana – Legon; Dr. Joe Cobbinah, FORIG.

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APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANTS' EXPECTATIONS

The expectations the participants had of the workshop are summarized below:

- That it would consolidate the findings of earlier initiatives on fire management.
- It will identify gaps in the current knowledge and in the existing policy framework.
- It will identify clear objectives for a substantive proposal.
- An understanding will be developed of the need for an inter-agency approach to solve the fire problem.
- Will gain an increased awareness and understanding of forest fire management issues.
- Identification of the possibilities for similar efforts in the Cote d'Ivoire.
- After the workshop the message should reach the communities as to why they should protect forests from fire, and thus be educated on fire fighting and better positioned to control fire.
- Partnership and collaborative networking will be developed to ensure that those with the necessary technical information are informed of the current information and knowledge on forest fires.
- An output will be the development a feasible step-by-step programme with a timeframe.
- What exactly is already known in relation to forest fires, what still needs to be researched and gaps in current activities will be identified, and ideas for tackling them will be developed.
- It should help develop collaborative research work on forest fires in Ghana.
- It will develop a clear mandate for stakeholder institutions involved with fire management, where currently overlaps in responsibilities exist.
- Policy needs to evolve, and this evolution should be driven from the local level.
- Need to develop a focus on the stakeholders at the regional level, as this is where inter-agency teamwork is most essential.

APPENDIX 3: GROUP WORK RESULTS

Successful areas and approaches in managing and tackling of forest fires:

- In some locations the punitive measures put in place have worked.
- Incentives packages have also contributed to the success of fire management, especially when the incentives are invested within the community.
- The Ghana National Fire Service, in collaboration with Fire Volunteers and District Assemblies, has worked effectively in awareness creation and control of wildfires in some districts. Example, Sunyani District:
 - District Assembly by-laws have been created
 - Incentives, such as, Wellington boots, cutlass and cash, have been used.
 - Research reports by various organizations and institutions have created the awareness that forest fire/wildfire exist (at a local, district, regional and national level).
 - Awareness creation, local people are well aware of causes and effects of forest fire. NGO's have been successful in raising awareness, e.g. Green Earth, GTZ, Friends of Rivers and Water Bodies.
 - Green firebreaks have prevented spread of fires and in some cases stopped it.
 - Volunteer Fire Fighters concept worked well, encouraged by the training being offered to them, and have been successful in most communities/localities.
 - There has been success with regard to wildfires where technical agents have worked in collaboration with volunteers and communities in resource management (e.g. Burkina Faso).

Gaps in current strategies:

- A lack of Inter-agency working and little stakeholder participation.
- Policy and legislation needs to be reviewed; the existing fire related policies and laws are ineffective and are poorly enforced, and there needs to be more coordination between them.
- An example of policy and legislation failure has been the District Assemblies not using royalties from timber extraction for forest conservation and protection.
- Need to find alternatives to the use of fire in agriculture - reflected in a current lack of alternative methods of farming to the traditional slash and burn, for people to adopt; animal husbandry and rural industry e.g. Palm wine processing, honey collecting.
- Lack of statistics relating to the incidence of forest fires and their impacts.
- Questions were raised over the long-term sustainability of current community incentives used in forest fire management. Presently, in most areas if people do not get incentives, they are not motivated.
- Gap analysis in the community.
- The non-involvement of traditional authorities in forest fire management. They are currently not adequately recognized nor considered within the remit of fire management. What role could they play?
- Research into communities' involvement in successful fire prevention. In depth investigation of what has worked and what would provide a better understanding of successful approaches to fire prevention.
- Communication between stakeholders should be considered as a means of improving the current lack of inter-agency working and stakeholder participation.
- Incentives; most District Assemblies do not give incentives to fire volunteers in their districts.

- There is a lack of community support for the fire volunteers working within their locality. If communities were more aware of the work fire squads do, they may be more inclined to support and collaborate with them.
- A lack of incentives to trainers in Ghana National Fire Service.
- Education on forest fire is needed on a sustainable basis throughout Ghana.
- Legislation regarding the proper use of fire in the country is lacking.
- Forest fire monitoring and damage assessment.
- Lack of collaboration among institutions involved in fire management in the country.
- Perception of the Ghana National Fire Service is quite negative among the population within Ghana.

Important Issues to address in future activities:

The following issues were identified as important and need to be urgently addressed:

- Need for education at all levels, on forest fires.
- Lack of incentives for people to get involved with fire management.
- A need for legislation for the proper use of fire.
- Identification of the links between fire management and natural resource management.
- Collaboration among institution dealing with fire management.
- Coordination of networking and collaboration is required.
- Coordination and standardization between the various law and organizations.
- Stakeholder participation needs to be increased and the role of GNFS needs to be recognized.

Priorities for future projects:

The following points were raised for consideration during project development:

- The need to ensure that we identify potential stakeholders, which are relevant to the preparation and the implementation of the proposal. It is also important to contact these people and to ensure that they are properly involved within the projects formulation and implementation.
- Need to ensure that other extension services, e.g. Agriculture, are contacted and involved with the project.
- It could be more effective to have traditional authorities rather than District Assemblies as key actors in fire management.
- The stakeholders need to decide whether we want to tackle all the issues identified or if we want to concentrate on one of the issues.
- For the moment it is not obvious which agencies could be responsible for the project. The need to wait until the project has a better form to define the responsible agencies was identified.
- That IUCN will provide the groundwork for the project formulation. In parallel, a Ghanaian Reference Group will be created to work on the drafting in collaboration with IUCN and other interest counties participating in the meeting.