



**GHANA**

## **STUDENT PLATFORM**

The current education system at universities in Ghana mainly involves information transfer from lecturer to student. There is often little room for project work, practical fieldwork and two-way communication. However, current working environments ask for fresh graduates with a broad horizon: international working experience, practical know-how and familiarity with other disciplines. Students want to obtain these skills and knowledge, but do not know where to start.

Capacity building is an important focus in TBI-Ghana's programme. In order to contribute to filling a gap in current education system, TBI-Ghana has set up a Student Platform. The Student Platform facilitates student research related to sustainable forest management and sustainable development. The Student Platform aims at:

- applied and multidisciplinary research;
- local capacity building;
- cooperation between local and international students and institutions; and
- bridging science and society with relevant information.

The Student Platform gives students the opportunity to get practical field work experience and they will acquire a lot of important skills that today's society requires. Through collaborating with people from different disciplines and cultures the students will learn more about what they can contribute from their own background to a big project, and students will learn from other disciplines, methods and customs.

In the forestry sector information supply and demand often fail to connect. Demand for information is often not clearly defined or does not reach the information suppliers. On the other side, information gathering is not always based on demand, but also on curiosity, availability of funds and technical possibilities. TBI-Ghana serves as an intermediary to ensure that research is demand-driven and to ensure application and uptake of research results. The projects within the student platform will focus on applied research. TBI-Ghana will transform relevant findings into tailor-made information and disseminate to relevant target groups.

The Student Platform also aims to facilitate contacts and cooperation between local and international students and institutions. Many different organisations are active in the Ghanaian forestry sector: NGO's, governmental organisations, universities and research institutes. Each of the organisations has its own interest and expertise. Information sharing and coordinating activities is crucial to maximise the positive impact of operations the different organisations carried out. The Student Platform aims to ensure the coordination and optimise information use.

In order to achieve the aims, the following activities are to be undertaken within the Student Platform:

1. Facilitate interdisciplinary and intercultural student groups
2. Facilitate individual student research
3. Assist in finding relevant study programmes
4. Transform research results into tailor-made information



**GHANA**

## **1. FACILITATE INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERCULTURAL STUDENT GROUPS**

### **Introduction**

The interdisciplinary and intercultural student groups is a collaborative project with TBI-Ghana, University of Amsterdam and the Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. Groups of 8 students from different backgrounds work for 14 weeks on a topic on sustainable development. These 14 weeks involve a number of trainings on interdisciplinary group work, conflict resolution, participatory research methods, report writing and presentation skills etc. Furthermore, each group has a facilitator who facilitates the group work, practical arrangements and the research. Supervisors are available who guide the group on content.

Sustainable development involves a holistic approach towards development with focus on long-term effects and solutions. This means seeking for ways to improve the life of people, together with those people, in a way that is economically, ecologically and socially sustainable. It means:

- Future-oriented: one aims at possible solutions for not only the present, but also for the long term;
- Encompassing ecological aspects of sustainable development: one aims to contribute to the improvement of the ecological environment or to decrease ecological damage to the environment on the short and long run;
- Encompassing economic aspects of sustainable development: the research aims at improving the living conditions of people;
- Encompassing social aspects of sustainable development: one aims at social development: improvement of social structures and development (gender equality, democracy) and avoiding developments that are socially undesirable.

It means those working in the field of sustainable development seek opportunities of improvement within all fields named above, rather than in *one* of the fields transferring negative side-effects to other sectors, other places or other generations. Cross-cultural co-operation and participation of people are thereby an essential aspect.

### **Learning objectives**

The interdisciplinary and intercultural student groups have specific learning objectives:

- Gaining skills in the recognition of different values and interests involved with sustainability issues and to develop a personal opinion with regard to these interests and values.
- Gaining co-operation skills in a multidisciplinary group, to join knowledge and opinions with the knowledge and opinions of other students from other disciplines.
- Gaining skills in working together with students from different cultural backgrounds, to join knowledge and opinions with the knowledge and opinions of other students from other cultural backgrounds.
- Gaining skills in the use and production of knowledge and skills from various sources and levels in society.
- Gaining skills in the design, performance and presentation of a research project concerning actual problem and opportunities in society, and to show how research results can be efficiently used to solve the problem derived from reality.
- Gaining skills in completing a project within a given amount of time.
- Personal objectives: what does the student personally intend to learn during this project.

### **Implementation**

The interdisciplinary and intercultural student groups will have to start at a time the curricula allows. It is likely to run initial projects in the university holidays. The project in 2003 ran from 14 July until 17 October. The 2004 project may run about the same period. For each project, the following stages are scheduled:

#### *Stage 1. Preparation (first week of the project)*

First of all, the group must get to know each other, the supervisors and researchers. On the other hand, the group must reach consensus with regard to the thematic knowledge of the general theme. They also have to learn how to use specific skills.



*Stage 2. Formulation and writing of the research proposal (second and third week)*

At this stage, the group members should reach consensus to which problems within the general theme should be focused on. At the end of this stage, the group must have written a complete proposal. For the outline of the proposal, the outline for the common research proposal may be taken as a guideline.

*Stage 3. Performing the research (weeks 4-12)*

The team performs the research according to the planning outlined in the research proposal. At the end of this stage a draft of the final report must be ready.

*Stage 4. Evaluation and presentation (week 13)*

The team writes an evaluative report about working in the interdisciplinary group. The team presents the outcomes of the research after which a discussion about the results will take place with representatives of the target population, researchers, fellow students and other interested people.

*Stage 5. Finalising (week 14)*

The team uses the comments of the supervisor and other important parties to finalise the report.

*Stage 6. Follow-up*

The supervisors make sure that the research result can be used in the best way by internal or external parties concerned.

**Costs**

The costs for the students involved in this project are: accommodation, transport, meals, visa, insurance and medical costs. A rough estimate gives us €1,000 per student for 3 months, excluding the airplane ticket.

TBI-Ghana will cover these costs for the Ghanaian students; the international students are expected to finance their own costs.

**How to apply?**

In order to take part in the interdisciplinary and intercultural student groups the students need to send in a letter of motivation and a CV. In the selection procedure the committee aims for a good combination of different disciplines. An interview may be part of the selection procedure.

For application or more information contact: Ms Anneke Wieman

Tropenbos International-Ghana (TBI-Ghana)

P.O. Box UP 982, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana

Tel: + 233 (0)51 60310

Fax: + 233 (0)51 60310

Mobile: + 233 (0)24 742920

e-mail: [anneke@wieman.nl](mailto:anneke@wieman.nl)

Dutch students can contact:

Ms Roos Wemmenhove

University of Amsterdam

Expertise Centre for Sustainable Development (ECDO)

Nieuwe Achtergracht 166

1018 WV Amsterdam

Tel: +31 (0) 20 525 6268

Fax: +31 (0) 20 625 8843

e-mail: [wemmenhove@science.uva.nl](mailto:wemmenhove@science.uva.nl)



GHANA

## 2. FACILITATE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT RESEARCH

TBI-Ghana invites Ghanaian and international students to do their field work as part of their MSc or BSc in the TBI-Ghana research site at the Goaso Forest District. TBI-Ghana has done an extensive survey in this area and can therefore provide information to shape a research and link it with current demands for information. The Student Platform can assist in practical arrangements like accommodation and transport against payments which should cover the costs. TBI-Ghana also has a lot of experience in the forestry sector in Ghana and can therefore direct students to resource persons, relevant workshops and libraries.

The individual student research projects are expected to be part of a bigger research project. The individual student research projects can start at any time and it is up to the individual student how much time (s)he may take for the research. The student is expected to have a supervisor from the student's own university.

For Ghanaian students, TBI-Ghana also provides some small grants to cover field work costs. The deadline to apply for a small grant is July each year.

In 2003-2004 TBI-Ghana has selected the following BSc projects for support:

- A survey for bare-headed Rockfowl *Picathartes gymnocephalus* in Ayum, Subim, and Bonsam Bepo Forest Reserves, Ghana
- The effect of seasonal change (wet and dry seasons) on seed bank at Bobiri forest reserve
- The effect of decomposing Albizia species leaf litter on soil nutrient status.
- Maintenance of boundary lines as a means of forest protection in Ghana: a case study of two forest reserves in the Goaso Forest District
- The susceptibility of the pre-pole size plants of *Mansonia altissima* A. Chev. (sterculiaceae) to defoliation in selected forest reserves in Goaso forest district and characterization of the defoliation patterns
- Partnership in natural resource management for sustainability
- Development of *Khaya* species (African Mahogany) against *Hypsipyla robusta* attack

### How to apply?

The only selection criteria to benefit from this opportunity is that the research should take place in TBI-Ghana's research site: the Goaso Forest District and the research is related to sustainable forest management, preferably with a connection to the themes: multipurpose forest use; effective stakeholder collaboration; or effective planning, policy formulation and implementation.

For more information contact: Mr. K.S. Nketiah  
Tropenbos International -Ghana (TBI-Ghana)  
P.O. Box UP 982, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana  
Tel: + 233 (0)51 60310  
Fax: + 233 (0)51 60310  
Mobile: + 233 (0)20 8150148  
e-mail: tropenbos@idngh.com

## 3. ASSIST IN FINDING RELEVANT STUDY PROGRAMMES

The TBI-Ghana library provides an overview of relevant studies abroad, mainly in the Netherlands. Those students who want to do a relevant study abroad to increase their knowledge and broaden their horizon, they will find some useful information in TBI-Ghana's library. TBI-Ghana will also facilitate in the process of getting a fellowship for one of the Dutch study programmes.

Visit the TBI-Ghana library at: Tropenbos International -Ghana  
The office is located at the compound of the Forestry Research institute of Ghana (FORIG), Fumesua, some 15 kilometres from Kumasi on the Accra Road.



**GHANA**

#### **4. TRANSFORM RESEARCH RESULTS INTO TAILOR-MADE INFORMATION**

When talking about tailor-made information, it is important to present relevant information (and only relevant information) in a way that it is understandable for the receiver. To achieve this the following questions are important: For whom are the research findings important (which stakeholder)? Which part of the findings is important for each stakeholder? Which communication medium is appropriate? What language is appropriate? And what is the best timing. TBI-Ghana can assist in answering these questions and come up with appropriate forms of tailor-made information in order to increase the impact of the research.