

REFLECTIONS

Third Chainsaw Milling Project Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Meeting in Corriverton, Region 6

The eight-item questionnaire prepared for the second MSD was re-used by members of the Task Force, Project Management Team, and the two Tropenbos representatives to structure their 'reflections' on the third MSD meeting in Corriverton, Region 6, August 17th and 18th 2010.

August 20, 2010

The following persons participated in the Reflections meeting:

1. Mr Khalawan, Representative, Forest Products Association, Current Task Force Chairperson and Chairperson of the Region 6, MSD meeting
2. Ms Marieke Wit, Overall Coordinator, Tropenbos
3. Mr Sietze van Dijk, Tropenbos, Suriname
4. Mr Godfrey Marshall, Director, Forestry Training Centre Inc
5. Ms Vanessa Benn, Consultant, Iwokrama
6. Dr Raquel Thomas, Director of Resource Management & Training, Iwokrama
7. Mr Andrew Mendes, CMP Task Force
8. Mr Leroy Welcome, CMP Community Forest Advisor
9. Ms Irene Bacchus-Holder, CMP Task Force
10. Mr Charles Thom, CMP Task Force
11. Ms Bonita Harris, Facilitator, CMP

Ms Rohini Kerrett, CMP Coordinator, was absent due to a medical emergency. The questionnaire items served as a starting point for the reflections and the organizing principle of this report.

On achieving key aspects of the MSD meeting's objectives

Participants agreed that the meeting did **continue the stakeholder dialogue**, did **build consensus and capacity**, and did **provide useful information to guide stakeholder decision-making** on sustainable forest management.

The actual verdict on consensus building was *yes* and *no*. Yes, consensus building is ongoing and did take place. No, the work of consensus building is not yet complete. While consensus and capacity building will be key continuing objectives of the Project, there was a far greater level of acceptance of the fact that more effective techniques and technologies for converting logs to lumber play a key role in sustainable forest management. As in the earlier regional MSD meetings, the chainsaw operators themselves called for certification and more training. Other areas of consensus building included

growing agreement on the importance of forest inventorying, monitoring, quality, higher standards, grading, planning, research and dissemination of information, and improved marketing strategies and tactics; seeing GFC as a facilitating agency rather than principally as an enforcer; health and safety; and 'associating' for collective interventions, instead of seeking individual solutions. There were also many indications that participants saw the value of all stakeholders sitting down, speaking and listening from the heart and focusing on solutions instead of blaming and complaining. In fact, although there was a specific agenda item dedicated to 'group work on solutions,' stakeholder representatives proposed ideas on solutions even while addressing issues.

The call for 'leveling the playing field' continued to be made. While observing that this may be a welcome sign of consensus building, this is actually an 'equity' issue or as a Task Force member described it, an 'affirmative action' issue, because of the presence in the field of very large and very small players with very different advantages and constraints.

On the objective of 'providing more information,' it was felt that the information provided was helpful, that adequate time was allowed for discussion and reaching understanding on the issues. This resulted in a shift in attitudes and a productive meeting.

Some disappointment was expressed at the failure of the regulatory agencies to be more 'forthcoming' in responding with the necessary information to issues raised by stakeholder representatives. Although some of the stakeholders present were in possession of the relevant information, they were concerned about the appropriateness of their interventions because of the danger of seeming to undermine the authority of those officers who were present. (Note: Two of the regulatory agency representatives present were there in their capacity as Task Force members.) The presence at the regional MSD meetings of more senior officers from the Guyana Forestry Commission (nationally and regionally) and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs was deemed to be vital to the MSD process.

With respect to meeting the meeting's objectives on **sustainable forest and effective log-to-lumber practices**, there was a resounding 'yes.'

The CMP team was commended on its preparation and moderation of the process and for its increasing effectiveness in creating an enabling environment for consensus building.

Most participants were constructive and were looking for ways of reaching agreement. ... We need to compliment the Chairperson for his inclusivity and making people feel comfortable and in a position to 'buy into' the process.
[Godfrey Marshall, FTCL Director]

On whether the dialogue was genuine and the meeting participatory

The reflection meeting gave a ‘yes’ to the genuineness of the dialogue and a ‘very’ to its participatory quality. It was noted that although the GuySuCo, regional council and sawmillers’ representatives were not involved in the regional MSD preparatory work, they demonstrated a keen interest in the process and participated as concerned stakeholders. Even the GuySuCo General Manager (who made the corporation’s training facilities available to the Project without charge) took part in the introductory activity with good humor and later returned to observe the process and the proceedings.

On stakeholder representatives seeming to ‘own’ the process

Most felt that the participants did seem to ‘own’ the process. The main difference of opinion on this question had to do with the level of participation by the two chainsaw operators from the Mara Community Forest Association (CFA). Both of these representatives had arrived late at the meeting (one during Item 6 of the Day 1 agenda, and the other near the end of the first day) because of transport problems. A Task Force member regretted that efforts were not made to bring the Mara CFA representatives to Corriverton on the day before the meeting.

The meeting organizers explained that attempts were made facilitate an earlier arrival, but the representatives opted to make their own arrangements and to travel on the day of the meeting. These arrangements had broken down when their transport provider failed to show (alcohol-abuse related reasons). It was also noted that the representatives from Orealla/Siparuta had been mobilized, at an additional cost to the Project, to arrive in Corriverton the day before the start of the meeting.

These decisions by the CMP team had been taken as a direct consequence of observing the tiredness of participants at the second meeting who had travelled from Regions 9 and 6 to the Region 10 meeting in Linden. (Although these were not regional stakeholders, the CMP team facilitated their attendance at the Region 10 MSD meeting.) A query on accommodating members of the Orealla/Siparuta delegation at the Amerindian hostel, and not in hotels, was also raised and responded to at this point. The reflection meeting was informed that these participants had opted to keep their subsistence allowances and make their own arrangements, and this was agreed to by the CMP management.

The exchanges on these issues demonstrated how negative perceptions and attitudes can be shifted and grievances nipped in the bud with the simple and timely provision of relevant information.

I was a bit skeptical. I didn’t think that sawmillers would be willing to listen to an ordinary chainsaw operator like myself. ... Yesterday’s work was done in a good way. After understanding the chainsaw millers’ situation, after knowing the longer term effects on the environment and the socio-economic situation, we all came to understand that we have to have a goal in making chainsaw milling better. I feel something great was accomplished yesterday. “How” and “what” we did was well done.

(Joseph Peneux, Chainsaw Operator, Orealla, in his reflections on Day 1 of the meeting)

A Task Force member expressed disappointment with the poor representation of traditional sawmillers at the MSD meeting. It was disclosed that this was so despite efforts by the CMP team, GFC Region 6 officials, SFP holder Mr Doodnauth Narine and others to enlist their participation at a preparatory meeting organized for their benefit and at the regional MSD meeting. The Forest Products Association representative, very familiar with the sector, noted once again that traditional millers are an endangered species, that they are 'dying out,' that they themselves employ chainsaw operators and deal in chainsaw lumber, and that they are aware that many of the issues they raised in focus group meetings are now 'old issues.' In fact, one participant who attended specifically to represent the traditional millers, although he was not a sawmiller himself, re-stated issues that had already been raised, documented and 'put on the table' for resolution. Nonetheless, the dialogue at the 'traditional sawmillers table group' was reportedly good, the contributions of GuySuCo and other representatives very valuable, and the sawmillers' issues were given a fair hearing. In a review of that sector's issues, they amicably agreed to retract a contentious position taken earlier at focus group meetings "to ban all chainsaw lumbering for a period of 5 to 10 years to give the forest a rest."

On preparation for the two days and the best things about each day

While all felt that the preparation for the first day was praiseworthy, there were two 'somewhats' with regard to the adequacy of preparations for the second day of the MSD meeting. Holding the morning's presentation session at the Shafeeullah sawmill where business as usual continued made talking and hearing difficult; the FTCL Director was forced to make an oral instead of an illustrated power point presentation because the facilities did not allow this. There also seemed to be no toilet (there were, but this was not known to most participants) nor garbage disposal facilities (the CMP clean-up team were told it was okay to leave their bags of Styrofoam and plastic garbage to be thrown into the river. (Note: the team took its garbage away for proper disposal in the city.)

Best thing about Day 1: The good news that the Chainsaw Milling Project is to be extended to 2015, because for the Project to be extended at the mid-point told everyone that something good is happening ...

[Khalawan, Current Chairperson of Task Force and Chairperson of the MSD Region 6 meeting]

The best thing about Day 2: The practical demonstration session ...

[Everyone: Organizers and Participants]

... it removed any perception that the meeting is a talk shop.

[Vanessa Benn, Consultant, Iwokrama]

It definitely created a real impact on the Orealla people.

Two persons decided there and then to buy the milling attachment.

[Leroy Welcome, Community Forest Advisor]

The gradual acceptance that the chainsaw with a frame can make a big difference to our
lumber operations

[Charles Thom, representative of the Upper Berbice Forest Producers Association]

Some of the **best things about Day 1**: the moderator, the excellent choice of location, the opening session; the clear, precise and orderly presentation of results; the effort of stakeholder representatives to understand the problems and work on solutions; the good news that the Chainsaw Milling Project is to be extended to 2015 (the contract is still to be signed), because for the project to be extended at the mid-point told everyone that something good is happening, that it is well structured, and very participatory; the after-lunch role-reversal role playing energizer exercise; the participation of the two ladies who took up the challenge to presenters although they were very nervous; the additional information supplied by members of the Community Forest Association group when Mr. Peneux was presenting the group's findings; the group sessions (like therapy); the simplicity of the programme, everybody could get into it; the very good flow and exchanges of ideas; the level of participation, the role of Task Force members spreading out to help the process without dominating it.

All agreed that **the best thing about Day 2** was the practical logs to lumber demonstration and practice session. The stakeholder representatives also agreed. After that session ended much later than the scheduled 3.00 pm time at around 5 pm, participants eagerly advanced to the flip chart evaluation sheet to award 23 'A' grade marks; there were no marks in the B, C and 'reject' columns. Even personnel from the traditional sawmilling sector who came only for the second day were impressed. Some were overheard describing the chainsaw milling attachments: "This looks good!" and "This, I can buy!"

Recommendations

1. That there be an inventory of the issues and possible options (or ideas) for solutions which can be discussed at a later stage in order to assist the process to arrive at a consensus on solutions for the action plan.
2. That efforts be made to secure the presence of senior officials of regulatory agencies, including regional and/or divisional heads, at the regional MSD meetings to respond to questions and issues; this may mean assigning such personnel a specific role to play in the meeting.
3. That documents (handouts, handbooks, newsletters) be prepared in simple language:
 - to answer the issues raised or Q&As on frequently raised issues which should be submitted to the GFC head for approval prior to circulation;
 - on the advantages and disadvantages of the three sets of technology demonstrated, and basic cost factors and cost comparisons (by Mr Mendes) for the next MSD meeting;
 - to include some of what might seem to be small, but useful, things covered in Mr Mendes' presentation on managing chainsaw operations in a more businesslike manner, e.g., chainsaw millers saying to customer, "I'm sorry. I can't fill your order" as a way of maintaining quality, credibility and not over-extending operations.

4. That the CMP team ensures that all Task Force members are clear on the intended outcomes of the MSD process.
5. That chainsaw operators be encouraged to engage their children in getting training for keeping their books, and assisting with proper cost accounting;
 - that the simple Empretec course tailored for small businesses be considered;
 - that the CMP organized financial management training with Ituni women is sufficiently effective be continued.
6. That participation of stakeholders in the MSD process should not be viewed as a 'sacrifice' by participants, but as an opportunity for individuals and associations to play a direct role in shaping their personal , family, community and national livelihoods; and
 - That while effective facilitation of the process is a crucial responsibility of the CMP team, especially its facilitator, amusing participants with 'ice breakers' and keeping adults awake to attend to their business, is not.
7. That a stump be procured to facilitate a physical demonstration of directional felling with wedges.
8. That the entire safety presentation, including safety practices during practical demonstrations, be reviewed for the purpose of strengthening and making the occupational health and safety intervention more effective;
 - That a list of items for a safety kit be compiled and such a kit taken to future sessions in case of accidents.
9. That large garbage bags be taken to all MSD meeting sites for the proper disposal of waste accumulated;
10. That consideration be given to adding Kwakwani as a pilot community in view of the extension of Project to 2015.

Bonita Harris, Facilitator
September 3, 2010