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## Series 4: Programme 6 (of 11) - 'Woodn't You Know?'

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### Report 6 (of 6): Revolution Trees - Cuba

#### Introduction

Deforestation has had serious negative impacts on biodiversity and productivity in the Cauto River Basin, Cuba, and repeated attempts to reforest the area have failed. Only when the administration of the province of Granma introduced a holistic approach, encompassing environmental, social and economic elements, did regeneration start to take hold.

Granma, an eastern province in Cuba, extends over approximately 8400 square kilometres and has a population of 830,000 people, of whom more than 670,000 live in rural areas. The province contains the second largest river, 'Rio Cauto', which is 140 km long and crosses three of the five oriental provinces forming the Cauto River Basin, the largest and most important water reserve in the country. The area had suffered major transformations detrimental to the environment: large forest areas were cut to make charcoal for cooking and develop agricultural and cattle lands. Much of the vegetation had dried up, indigenous fauna had disappeared, canyons were dangerously eroded and the river valley soil had become too saline to sustain agriculture production. During storms, the erosion of crevices and gullies from flash floods caused major landslides devastating the landscape and human settlements. Granma became a development priority for the Cuban government who needed to protect the water table, combat drought, halt erosion and curb the rate of migration from rural to urban areas.

Earlier reforestation efforts to restore the Basin did not yield the expected results. This could be attributed to:

- Heavy drought
- Inadequate site preparation
- Uncontrolled grazing due to lack of fencing
- Illegal logging
- Inadequate maintenance
- Inadequate financing
- Permanent absence of families linked to the area
- Insufficient community participation.

#### The Birth of Ecological Forest Farms

In 1997 conservationists from a local firm, Bayamo Forest Company, were assigned the urgent task of rescuing the Cauto River Basin. They began by dividing land into plots and assigning them to those interested in stable, well-paid work for a period of 30 years, bringing into life the concept of 'fincas forestales ecologicas' or 'ecological forest farms'. Families were put in charge of managing and reforesting areas of land between 12 and 25 hectares in size. To

reforest the area as quickly as possible, tree species that would adapt easily were planted first and forest seed banks were built up. Thereafter, families planted timber-yielding trees, fruit trees, medicinal plants and raised livestock. They could either consume the goods produced or sell them to provide a long-term income.

The Cuban government, with support from international programmes<sup>[1]</sup>, trains plantation workers in how to manage natural resources. They are given technical assistance, seedlings, fertilisers, tools, clothing and transportation. The soil department of Granma University provided technical support and the project was used as a thesis topic by university students.

Plantation workers are employees of Bayamo Forest Company (Empresa Forestal Integral), but manage the plantations as if they were the owners. To encourage families to stay permanently, comfortable houses were built, each equipped with fuel-efficient stoves, photovoltaic panels and a TV set.

Support for reforestation has been enforced at a national and local level. There are national targets to increase the amount of land covered by forests, supported by legislation that came into effect in 1998 which bans the felling of trees without the "direct authorisation from the Council of Ministers or its Executive Committee." Municipal authorities have included the forest farms in their management plan and allocated necessary financial resources, which has in turn strengthened the commitment of other co-operation partners and has been linked to the National Environmental Plan.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Cuban Women Federation carried out training workshops with local people to focus on gender relationships in regards to the forest farms. As a result of the training workshops, a proposal was presented to Granma's Provincial Assembly of Popular Powers, recommending that half the forestry farms should be assigned to women. An agreement was drawn up that ensured equity between men and women, which is currently being replicated in the ecological forest farms of the provinces of Guantanamo and Las Tunas. This has been pivotal in securing a high level of community participation.

#### Eight Steps to Include Women in Projects

1. Explore gender issues through two-way communication with rural women, recognising that the needs of women and men may not be the same and that the impact of projects on them may therefore be different.
2. Investigate customs, taboos and time constraints that women face: knowledge and common sense can go a long way to overcoming these constraints.
3. Promote the role that women do and can play in forestry activities at each level, and analyse the ways in which projects either include or exclude them.
4. Exchange information with individuals at every level, with local women on forestry activities, with practitioners on involving women in forestry, with policy makers on women's roles in forestry.
5. Support women's groups and encourage the formation of new ones that help women gain access to decision making and the political process, and strengthen women's support for one another.
6. Work together to provide access to land and trees recognising customary and traditional women's holdings, ensuring women are included where land is privatised, and seeking creative solutions for landless women.
7. Consult with women before introducing new technologies or species ensuring that women's needs have been considered, and the impact of new techniques or trees on women's lives have been evaluated.
8. Collaborate to make credit and income available to women either individually, or through women's groups.

Source: FAO [Field guide for project design and implementation on the women in community forestry](#)

## Securing the Future of the Forests

By involving the local community at every stage of reforestation plans and implementation, the long-term success will be assured by the families already established in the area. This method of reforestation is satisfying the basic needs of the local population, providing further opportunities to improve their quality of life and providing essential habitat to flora and fauna. The improved living conditions (housing, income, nutrition) within the area have reduced migration to urban areas. Approximately 1307 hectares, including 201 km of riverbanks, has been reforested. It is curbing soil erosion and acting as a barrier to landslides. In total, 55 farms have been created, providing 220 jobs, of which half are for women, with plans to create more forest farms in the future.

### Further Information

#### Hands On

Series 1:

[Forest of the Future - Mexico](#)

Series 3:

[Out of the Woods](#)

Series 4:

[Debt to Nature - Thailand;](#)

[Law of the Springs - Madagascar;](#)

[Outside the Box - Colombia](#)

### **Project Related**

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Account of the project by Third World Network Features

<http://listas.rcp.net.pe/pipermail/noticias/2002-May/001204.html>

### **Granma International**

[Article on Forest Farms](#)

**Radio Habana Cuba** features an [article on the forest farms](#)

### **United Nations Development Programme - The Equator Initiative**

<http://www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/>

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### **General**

**Food and Agricultural Organisation and Global network on integrated soil management**

<http://www.fao.org/ag/aql/aql/spush/topic2.htm#cuba>

Page devoted to salinity problem in Cuba

**The World Conservation Union** Is a union of governments, NGOs and scientists who aim "to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable."

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Press release of the creation of the Moheli Marine Park

[http://www.iucn.org/info\\_and\\_news/press/mohelinp.pdf](http://www.iucn.org/info_and_news/press/mohelinp.pdf)

**International Centre for Tropical Agriculture / Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT)**

[http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/about\\_ciat/mission.htm](http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/about_ciat/mission.htm)

Aims to reduce hunger and poverty in the tropics through collaborative research that improves agricultural productivity and natural resource management

**UK AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY COALITION** is an excellent resource on all aspects of agriculture biodiversity.

<http://www.ukabc.org/>

## **Books**

### **Community-based Forestry Management**

***Participatory techniques for community forestry: A field manual***

W.J. Jackson and A.W. Ingles

US\$18, IUCN, 1998, ISBN: 2-8317-0384-0

IUCN - World Conservation Union Books

Provides a wealth of practical tools and methods for field workers who work with local communities in developing collaborative management of forests. While the manual focuses on participatory techniques for community forests in Nepal, many of the techniques can be readily applied to other forms of collaborative natural resource management

**Participatory Approaches to Planning for Community Forestry**

Food and Agricultural Organisation FAO and Theo M.P. Oltheten

US\$32, FAO, 1995

***Collaborative management of forests for conservation and development***

J. Fisher

US\$12, WWF, 1995, ISBN: 2-8317-0277-1

IUCN - World Conservation Union Books

Explores various approaches to forest management, including community forestry and joint forest management as well as those concerned with protected areas. Covers key issues of theory and implementation and methodologies for implementation.

***Discovering technologists. Women and men's work at village level in***

### **East Africa**

Fernando, P. Appleton, H. Wijethilake, S., et al.

ITDG

ISBN 9966-931-11-2

This training manual, which forms part of a package, is a tool designed to increase the skills of field workers involved in the processes of technology development, working with women and men in local communities. It aims to improve the capability of men and women field workers to recognise and work with women's existing technical skills. These materials are a useful reference of methods and tools for developing more gender sensitive technology interventions

### **Stakeholder Incentives in Participatory Forest Management**

Michael Richards, Jonathan Davies and Gil Yaron

This manual provides practical methodological guidance for the economic analysis of stakeholder incentives in participatory forest management.

ISBN 1853395595, 2003 £19.95/US\$34.95

### **The community toolbox. The idea, methods and tools for participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation in community forestry**

D. Davis Case, T. Grove, C. Apter

US\$19, FAO, 2001, ISBN: 9252044159

This title can be bought from the FAO or EarthPrint

[Field guide for project design and implementation on the women in community forestry](#)

([www.fao.org/docrep/T8820E/T8820E00.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/T8820E/T8820E00.htm))

US\$8, FAO

### **Environmentally Sound Small-scale Forestry Projects**

Peter F. Folliot and John L. Thomas

A manual for community development workers in developing countries who are not technicians in the area of forestry, but who want some general guidelines for planning environmentally sound small-scale forestry projects.

120pp 1983 (VITA) £11.95

### **Forests of Hope: Stories of Regeneration**

Christian Kuchli

Forests of Hope presents positive stories from around the world of successful forestry conservation, showing how the lives of people and their communities have been integrated with preservation, use and enjoyment of forests.

Containing 150 colour photographs, this book explores conditions in 12 different countries, and shows that where social and institutional conflicts have been resolved, forests have been regenerated.

242pp ISBN 1 853835056 1997 (Earthscan) £19.99

### **The New Forester**

Berry van Gelder and Phil O'Keefe

This book will challenge foresters, and other rural development professionals, to build new landscapes which provide a range of biomass products to local users. The authors encourage professionals to work with, rather than against, local people.

128pp ISBN 1 853392324 Paperback 1995 (ITP) £9.95

### **Recent Approaches to Participatory Forest Resource Assessment**

Jane Carter

Using detailed case studies from around the world, this guide provides indepth discussion on the growing trend towards local people's participation in forest

resource assessment.  
322pp ISBN 0 850032326 Paperback 1996 (ODI) £14.95

***Trees, People and Power***

P. Utting

ISBN 1 85383162X Paperback (Earthscan) £14.95

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