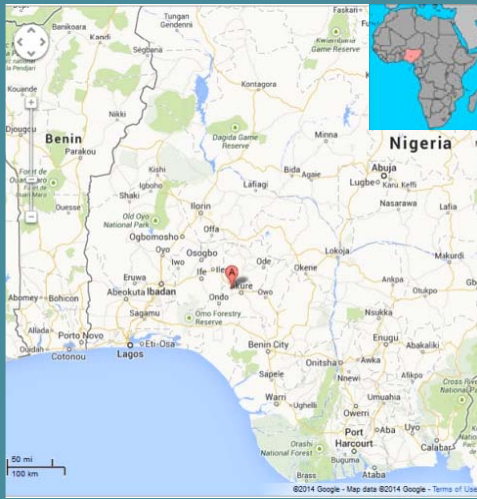# ITTO-IUFRO-FORNESSA PROJECT

Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Services from Forests (REDDES)

Pilot Site in Nigeria

"Collaborative participation to fight forest degradation and defor-estation in the Akure Forest Reserve (AFR), Nigeria"

- Area: 6 992 ha

- Altitude: 279 m

- Slope: < 5 %

- Average annual rainfall: about 4000 mm

- Average annual temperature: 27 °C

- Climate: Lowland tropical rainforest with distinct wet & dry seasons

Context

With support from the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), IUFRO-SPDC and FORNESSA have embarked on a new project addressing the **challenges of deforestation and forest degradation** in Africa. The project aims at generating scientific information on specific pilot areas in Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, and disseminating this information to policy makers and forest practitioners at the national and regional levels.

To this end, national expert groups composed of scientists from various fields have been in the process of conducting comprehensive scientific assessments in the pilot areas. The whole range of aspects such as natural resources-related, socio-economic situations and institutional environments that have impacts on natural resources use have been covered.

Based on these independent assessments and analyses, specific strategies and actions for reducing deforestation and forest degradation have been formulated for each pilot area.

Pilot Site

The pilot site in Nigeria is located in the Akure Forest Reserve (AFR) and has an area of 6 992 ha. The site is classified as high forest and hosts diversified hard wood timber producing species such as Strombosia pustulata, Celtis mildbreadi, Myrianthus arborea, or Khaya senegalensis and Triplochiton scleroxylon. The entire area is classified as a reserve and no signs of industrial exploitation have been found but some level of encroachment has been reported. In the AFR, two of the major stakeholders, Aponmu community

Involvement of local leaders

Participatory decision-making

Agroforestry systems

REDDES

Degraded forest

and Owena community, have been in existence for about 200 and 100 years, respectively. Their main occupation is farming. Ondo State's main revenue yielding crops are cocoa and oil palm. Ondo State is one of the main timber producing states in Nigeria. The availability of timber in large quantities has led to the establishment of several sawmill companies in the State, the largest of which is the Nigeria-Romania Wood Industry.

State of Landscape Degradation

In the Akure Forest Reserve, the main drivers of deforestation and landscape degradation are attributed to:

- poverty and unemployment;
- illegal logging;
- lack of awareness and education;
- population growth;
- non-inclusion of chiefs in forest management decision-making processes;
- corruption among forest guards;
- hunting and bush burning;
- unsustainable agricultural practices such as shifting cultivation; and
- unsustainable extraction of non-timber forest products.

REDDES Strategies

While similar problems can be identified among the pilot areas site-specific solutions have to be developed in order to be effective.
In Nigeria, the strategies proposed and agreed upon by all stakeholders are the following:

1. Creation of **awareness** among the communities to promote forest management.
2. Allocation of land for **agro-forestry** to facilitate participation of farmers.
3. Promoting and facilitating communal forestry.
4. Provision of **farming inputs** to the farmers as well as supplying them with tree seedlings.
5. Serious consideration of **youth empowerment** by the government.
6. Empowering the community and traditional rulers to **protect the forest.**

Stakeholder consultations

Conclusion

The success of this project is largely due to the strategy of integrating forest stakeholders and policy makers at a common forum. Indeed, the lack of involvement of forest communities has been identified as a strong factor of forest degradation.

By now, those strategies and proposed activities are left to policy-makers. They have the mission to implement them on their respective local level. As a start, it is recommended to **allocate land for agro-forestry** and **establish communal nurseries** for the production of planting material for agroforestry and forest rehabilitation activities.

« *Involving local communities in forest management processes.* »

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