

Foreword

Forest Conservation and Economic Valuation

This issue of *Innovation*, a magazine of the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), is special in a number of respects. First, it is the first in the series to be dedicated to methodological and policy issues on how East Africa's forest ecosystems are valued. The region's forests are often undervalued in economic policies and practices. This creates disincentives for their conservation and sustainable use. Second, it is a product of the joint efforts of ACTS and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Eastern Africa Regional Office (EARO) to assist the three nation states—Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania—of the East African Community (EAC) to integrate forest biodiversity conservation and sustainable use imperatives in their national and regional policies and programmes.

Articles in this issue were prepared for and discussed at a regional workshop on economic valuation of forests in East Africa. This workshop, organized by IUCN-EARO under the dynamic intellectual leadership of Lucy Emerton, brought together leading environmental economists to explore research and practical ways of undertaking economic valuation of the forests. It gave the economists an opportunity to express their strong sense of the economic importance of biodiversity, and their concern that conventional economic valuation systems tend to put emphasis on timber production and ignore the multiple economic benefits that forest ecosystems generate. The workshop and this *Innovation* are among the many outputs of Lucy's consistent efforts to promote ecological economics in East Africa. We pay tribute to her for the great efforts. Lucy moves to South Asia where she will be implementing IUCN's environmental economics programme.

The workshop was financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as part of the project "Reducing Biodiversity Loss at Selected Sites in East Africa". Additional funding for the workshop was provided by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom. The GEF-UNDP-FAO regional project promotes sustainable resource conservation at several pairs of forest sites across the Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya borders. The philosophy behind forest conservation is to seek how to influence decision-making processes at local, district and national levels; and to build partnerships between these levels through cross-border interaction.

The locus of making many of the decisions affecting forests in East Africa is the village—where a farmer with an axe or hoe decides whether he/she should or should not cut down a tree for timber or poles, or clear patches of forest for cultivation. Specific policies that create incentives for conservation and sustainable use of forests should be formulated for and at the village level. While IUCN-EARO is implementing the economic valuation components of the regional project, ACTS focuses on public policy and institutional arrangements for forest biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

We wish to thank Lucy and the authors of articles in this *Innovation* for bringing issues on economic valuation of forests to the fore of public policy in East Africa. We are grateful to GEF, UNDP, FAO and DFID for the financial support to the project and the publication of this magazine.

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