

START/NAFCOM/CARPE Workshop on Land Use and Land Cover Change (LUCC) in West and Central Africa, Accra, Ghana -- 3-5 November 1997

A regional workshop to design and develop a regional research effort examining land use and cover change in West and Central Africa was sponsored by START, the Northern Africa START Committee (NAFCOM) of START and the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). Local supporters and organizers of the workshop included the Remote Sensing Applications Unit (RSAU) at the University of Ghana-Legon and the Pan-African Union for Science and Technology.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To review the state-of-science in regional land use and land cover change (LUCC) research and to identify issues and challenges for consideration at the workshop.
- To develop a LUCC-related research plan for Sub-Saharan West and Central Africa.
- To identify core groups of scientists to collaborate in the preparation and development of research proposal(s) for submission to various national, regional and international scientific research foundations.

A considerable amount of LUCC-related research activities have been undertaken or are currently under way in several West and Central African countries. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to share individual insights and experiences during plenary sessions, and to discuss scientific, technological, public policy challenges, and institutional capabilities during working group deliberations. A brief but comprehensive compilation of LUCC-related country level information was obtained from the presentations from institutions and individual scientists working in the West and Central Africa region.

It was recognized at the workshop that there are distinct differences in the issues affecting land use/land cover change between West Africa and Central Africa. Given that a large number of the participants were from Central Africa, a significant fraction of the attention at the workshop was devoted to the Central Africa region. However, it was agreed that a regional meeting should be held during 1998 which specifically addresses the land use/land cover change issues relevant to the humid and semi-arid regions of West Africa.

The workshop participants agreed upon the need for a concerted collaborative regional effort on land use/land cover change and its consequences in Central Africa. They proposed that such an effort be framed in the context of relevant regional issues including poverty alleviation, improved food/energy/water resource security, protection of biodiversity, environmental and resource management, and maximization of economic opportunities. The participants agreed to form a regional network to implement this effort. They further agreed that:

- The regional network should be multi-disciplinary in nature and provide a forum for collaboration in the region. The network should seek to identify “best management practices” and facilitate capacity building. The process of developing the network is

to be open and inclusive. The proposed regional network organization should include both regional and non-regional partners. All active interested and potential partners should be welcome to participate in the network. The individuals/organizations at the workshop should be the interim network partners.

- Immediate activities of the network should include:
 - * Validation and evaluation by regional scientists of the utility of remotely sensed data including newly available regional data from Landsat, AVHRR and JERS.
 - * Development of a regional catalogue and meta-database inventory of available data as a basis for initial assessments as well as future scenario development.
 - * Training workshops to develop regional capacity.
 - * Exchange specialists to enhance regional capacity.

- A follow-up workshop should be held next year which includes a broader scope of partners. An interim organization should meet once a year, but be in (as far as possible) frequent electronic communication. A set of immediate action steps should be identified for the interim organization.

- To give visibility to the new network, presentations on the network should be made at the March 1998 LUCC-GCTE Open Science Conference in Barcelona and at IGBP's SAC V Meeting in September 1998.

Following the workshop, a proposal to the European Commission's ENRICH Programme was prepared with support from START. The proposal's main objective is to improve the understanding of the forest ecosystems of the Congo Basin and to identify the driving forces of land use and cover change. A related proposal for the Central Africa region is being prepared by CARPE participants for submission to the US Agency for International Development.

A list server (LUCANetwork@dis.start.org) has been established at the International START Secretariat which includes the addresses of the interim partners in the Land Use and Cover Change Monitoring Network (LUCC MNet) for Central Africa. Anyone wishing additional information on the Network should contact the International START Secretariat at 2000 Florida Avenue, NW - Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009 - USA, Phone: (+1-202) 462-2213, Fax: (+1-202) 457-5859, E-mail: START@dis.start.org.