
Two initiatives for Community-Based Forest Management

In 2002, a number of organizations and individuals working together to influence the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), created the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management, which was successful in influencing government delegates to “recognize and support indigenous and community based forest management systems to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable forest management.” (article 45h of the WSSD Report)

The overall goal of the Caucus is "to create political spaces to advance community based forest management at the local, national and global level", within a vision where "local communities and Indigenous Peoples assert their rights and assume their responsibilities to manage and use their forests. The stated mission of the Caucus is to advocate and promote "the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples to manage their forests and forest resources in ways that are socially just, ecologically sound, and economically viable. (see full Caucus description at <http://www.forestsandcommunities.org>)

In January 2004, a number of organizations concerned about forests and forest peoples' rights held a strategy meeting at the World Social Forum to discuss ways of moving forward on those issues. The result was the Mumbai Forest Initiative, a statement of principles aimed at creating a global movement based on a common approach to forest conservation and to the respect of forest peoples' rights. That approach is detailed in a set of 10 principles, the first of which states that "the people living in and using forests for their survival needs are the true managers and governors of these forests and enjoy inalienable rights over forests.", while the second principle underscores that "the protection and conservation of forests demand that these rights be ensured. (see Mumbai Forest Initiative at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/statements/Mumbai.html>)

These two recent processes are a ray of hope in a world where mainstream forestry continues empowering power and disempowering local communities. Regardless of their different origin and possible differences, they clearly share a common approach and aim at similar objectives. Welcome both!