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New global initiative helps countries harness bamboo and rattan – to bring people out of poverty and protect forests.

GABAR – a new planned \$100 million global initiative aims to unlock the potential of bamboo and rattan for rural communities – to create local economic growth, new income streams, regenerate degraded lands and forests.

WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS, DURBAN, SEPT 7, 2015. Bamboo and rattan are powerful ‘strategic forest resources’ that can bring jobs and income to millions of people in rural areas, create new income streams for communities and reverse land degradation and deforestation. But today progress toward this widespread growth is slow. It is caused by a lack of coordination between bamboo and rattan experts and agencies, technical knowledge that is difficult to access and the need for new evidence that countries can use to harness these resources to boost economic growth.

The new GABAR initiative, launched today at the World Forestry Congress, will help improve this situation. GABAR (for Global Assessment of Bamboo and Rattan) brings together some 41 bamboo and rattan resource countries, research partners, development agencies and technical specialists. It will provide rapid access to knowledge such as forest management practices, examples of bamboo and rattan value chains and business cases, studies and natural resource assessments, and input to policy issues. These are issues countries must address to create a favourable investment climate to develop these sectors.

The ability to tap the full economic and environmental potential of bamboo and rattan eludes many countries today, says Hans Friederich, Director General of INBAR, the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan. GABAR helps close this gap this by providing easy access to knowledge, practical tools and policy guidance for countries and development programmes.

“A wealth of information exists today on how to use bamboo and rattan for economic development. But it is difficult to find, and it resides in different research centers, organisations, government agencies, and with experts worldwide. At the same time there are areas where we need more research and hard evidence, such as: how much bamboo and rattan exists in the world and where is it located; what are the species, their agro-ecological characteristics, water and nutrient requirements and options for propagation and creation of new bamboo plantations,” he explains.

Speaking for INBAR Member States, representative of Jamaica, the INBAR Council Chair, Hon. Sharon Ffolkes Abrahams, Minister of State for Industry, Investment and Commerce of Jamaica, comments that GABAR will help bamboo and rattan resource countries be more productive. “GABAR provides them with new knowledge as well as ‘technology and policy packages’ to help strengthen their bamboo and rattan sectors. GABAR products and services will include research and synthesis activities, capacity building and the south-south exchange of technical expertise. It will also be a knowledge platform that provides information and data about bamboo and rattan that policy makers and development professionals can use to craft national strategies and actions plans.”

These plants offer dozens of new and innovative uses for income generation and improving environmental management. We need to better understand how to make the best use of them, says Friederich. “GABAR is the first global initiative of its kind that brings together practical solutions from around the world to help countries take practical steps to develop bamboo and rattan.”

GABAR – Global Assessment of Bamboo & Rattan

GABAR is a partnership between INBAR and its 41 Member States with a range of national and international partners. All interested organizations are welcome to join – as core partners, technical partners or to provide in-kind support or funding. The initiative is planned as a \$100 million programme. Current indicative contributing projects and earmarked funding total some \$25 million.

Contributing activities - current status

Current contributing and supporting partners:

- **China's** State Forestry Administration - national inventory and assessment.
- **Ethiopia's** Ministry of Agriculture – assessment of bamboo's potential for land restoration.
- **Madagascar** - bamboo for land restoration..
- **Indonesia's** Ministry of Environment and Forestry – national inventory.
- **Cameroon** - bamboo for land restoration option and renewable energy
- **Jamaica** - bamboo industry development, manufacture of bamboo charcoal for export.
- **Vietnam** - sustainable rattan management, regional assessment for bamboo development.
- **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** – works with INBAR on national assessments of bamboo for energy and livelihoods in 3 African countries; South-South exchanges with India.

GABAR products & services - key outputs

- **Comprehensive assessment of opportunities and challenges for bamboo and rattan** development in the Global South, especially Africa.
- **Policy/strategy recommendations** for effective management and use of bamboo and rattan.
- **Assessments of the potential of bamboo and rattan for climate change mitigation and adaptation.**
- **Land restoration** - recommendations for national and international priority actions.
- **Species and type inventory** - description of bamboo and rattan types, species and detailed characterization (physiological, ecological, practices, distribution maps).
- **Global network of field researchers and local experts**, coordinated by an INBAR network manager.
- **Information and knowledge sharing platform** for access to a wealth of resources on bamboo and rattan practices and policies.
- **Comprehensive maps** of bamboo and rattan distribution (global, regional, national).
- **Knowledge and tools** – reports, studies, useful packaged data.

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International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)

INBAR is a multilateral development organization of 41 Member States for the promotion of Bamboo and Rattan. INBAR plays a unique role in supporting its members to find and demonstrate innovative ways of using bamboo and rattan to protect environments and biodiversity, and alleviate poverty. INBAR connects a global network of partners from the government, private, and not-for-profit sectors to define and implement a global agenda for sustainable development with bamboo and rattan.

Global Assessment of Bamboo and Rattan

The Global Assessment of Bamboo and Rattan (GABAR) is a partnership of INBAR and its 41 member states, with a range of national and international partners. It calls on the knowledge of national bamboo and rattan institutes and experts worldwide. The initiative is planned as a 100 million USD programme which will deliver a full range support to countries, including the global assessment and inventory activities, knowledge sharing, capacity building and policy, and technical advice – much of this through facilitation of south-south cooperation and learning.

Bamboo & Rattan: a world of innovative uses for the green economy

The value chain for bamboo and rattan commodities and products starts in rural areas of the world's bamboo and rattan resource countries. Many goods for the world market are locally produced, creating income for communities.

Here are some examples of innovative economic activities:

Community enterprise - new sources of jobs and income in rural areas. A growing body of evidence and examples shows that bamboo brings new jobs and cash to poor rural and peri-urban communities. INBAR has facilitated the creation of many women-led enterprises in India that use bamboo to produce low-cost products that have a year-round market demand – including charcoal, matches, chopsticks, incense sticks, small household items, etc. Similar schemes are being piloted in Africa.

Value Chain: locally-created social enterprises use locally-sourced or planted bamboo to bring income to unemployed/underemployed and marginal populations, generating cash with low entry cost.

Encouraging local entrepreneurs and new industry. In Ethiopia, for example a growing number of local entrepreneurs are creating businesses to tap and expand the country's one million hectares of lowland and highland bamboo – creating jobs and generating income among rural communities and marginal economies. These entrepreneurs produce cellulose, charcoal, flooring, furniture and other consumer goods. An entrepreneur in the Western Province has harnessed bamboo to create 1000 jobs in a remote rural area with no previous large-scale economic activity.

Value Chain: local communities maintain forests in partnership with local industry, for products transformed locally and sold on the national market.

Rapid landscape restoration. Bamboo grows to maturity in 3-7 years. A growing number of cases show how it can rapidly restore severely degraded landscapes in poor rural areas, returning life and productivity to the soil, and income to local communities. A recently-documented case in Allahabad India, tells of the rebuilding of rural livelihoods where 80,000 hectares of degraded land were brought back into productivity using bamboo as a pioneer species.

Value Chain: Communities plant bamboo that rejuvenates land over five years, opening a range of new village-level economic activities – from farming of new crops, to fisheries and timber production.

Low-cost, climate-smart housing. In Latin America, affordable bamboo housing for low income communities is part of many local economies, with bamboo parts certified in national building codes. Practical bamboo house 'kits' are low-cost (\$5,000) and have many uses for improving livelihoods in natural disasters or refugee situations, where rapid building with affordable materials is needed. Bamboo resists shocks such as earthquakes, landslides and floods better than concrete - as the current material of choice for many low-cost dwellings.

Value chain: Locally sourced bamboo poles are transformed into housing kits for use by community organizations, disaster relief or government agencies.

Energy and biogas. Bamboo holds huge promise for reducing deforestation for firewood production. Much of Africa's deforestation is due to harvesting of wood for daily cooking. Bamboo plantations can be harvested and converted to charcoal for home use. A growing research area is the use of bamboo charcoal and chips to power small-scale electricity generators that can produce biogas for local electricity, powering villages and communities that receive poor services or are off the grid.

Value Chain: Local forests are harvested to provide bamboo for charcoal production; bamboo plantations are created to provide a local source of 'perennial' firewood; waste from bamboo factories is made into charcoal, creating profits from production waste.

Sustainable animal fodder. Agricultural research is developing new varieties of forage and crops, or commodities such as barley for animal feed. Bamboo serves these same markets in areas where it grows or can be cultivated. Unlike food crops that have a seasonal growing cycle, bamboo is a perennial plant that requires less maintenance very low inputs and provides a constant source of food for livestock.

Value Chain: communities harvest from managed forests, or local farmers plant bamboo for year round harvesting for livestock or selling a feed.

International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)

The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) is an inter-governmental organisation with 41 Member States. It plays a unique role in demonstrating innovative ways of using bamboo and rattan to improve rural livelihoods, protect environments, address climate change and facilitate fairer pro-poor trade. INBAR connects a global network of partners from government, private and NGO sectors to promote a global agenda for sustainable development using bamboo and rattan.

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