

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

What can be done? The solutions are not simple. One important factor is co-operation. There is no point one group conserving the forest, while it is destroyed from the other side by another.

All the people who rely on the forest, who need the forest to live, must come together and decide. If rights are shared fairly, different groups of forest users may be able to negotiate the uses of their forest for long-term sustainable benefits - fuel wood, long term soil production, long term fruit and building materials, social and cultural benefits. Long term forest equals long term benefit!

Forest reserves, National Parks and Protected Areas are ways to care for our forests. Community forests are another approach. A study in Togo found that most of the country's remaining forest is in sacred forest sites.

- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of managing forests?
- Which do you think can work best in your country?

### the political tree

The colonisers and missionaries who came to Africa hundreds of years ago wrote that they could never get real authority in the lands they wished to dominate. When a big local issue came up, they complained, everyone would gather to discuss it in a council, under a tree. Under the palaver tree, issues are freely debated and important decisions concerning the community are made. People may speak for themselves or they may choose to be represented by a griot (a poet, storyteller and traditional singer) or other spokesperson. The elders try to reach a consensus. In some places, women actively take part in the decision-making. In others, they settle for advising their menfolk outside the assemblies.

Nelson Mandela spoke of how he was influenced by these traditional systems of decision-making. In Mali, the palaver system has been worked into official government ways of doing things.

