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**THE JOHN G. BENE  
FELLOWSHIP IN  
SOCIAL FORESTRY:  
AWARDEE TRACER  
EXERCISE  
AND AWARDEE PROFILES**

Submitted to: The Director General,  
Corporate Affairs and  
Initiatives Division, IDRC

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for the Centre Training and  
Awards Unit, November 1st, 1994**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This summary is intended to inform readers of the overall intent, findings and recommendations of the tracer work conducted between May and September 1994.

### ***Overview***

The John G. Bene Fellowship in Social Forestry was established in 1987 through an endowment fund left for this purpose by the late John. G. Bene. The late Mr. Bene was a committed advocate for the protection and sustainable use of forests for people.

Mr. Bene had a distinguished career in the private sector of the Canadian forest industry as well as Canadian and International organizations. He was a special forestry advisor and later Director General of the special Advisors' Branch of CIDA, and a member of the Board of Governors of IDRC. Mr. Bene was also a founding member and first Chairman of the International Council for research in Agroforestry in Nairobi, an internationally respected institution now known as ICRAF.

The Fellowship has been administered by IDRC since 1987. During this time, 12 Canadian researchers have been supported by the endowment to help further their commitment to the underprivileged of the world through training and research on social forestry issues.

In the spring of 1994, a consultant was retained by the Corporate Affairs and Initiatives Division of IDRC to trace the past recipients of the Bene award and to profile their work. The exercise was intended to reconnect the Centre and past recipients of the award. This undertaking was also designed to provide information to the Centre training and Awards Unit (CTA) that would enable them to suggest an alumni activity for past awardees to coincide with IDRC's 25th anniversary.

### ***Findings***

The findings of this research have been summarized in a short report and analysis, as well as in written profiles of the twelve awardees. What follows are the conclusions and list of recommendations.

### ***Conclusions***

Generally, the John G. Bene Fellowship in social forestry seems to have effectively supported the research objectives of the twelve awardees contacted during this survey. These individuals, without exception, are continuing to work in forestry and international work whether that be through continued academic pursuits, volunteer work, or employment. There were no significant or problematic issues to report but rather, some suggestions for improvement based on the information collected.

### ***Recommendations;***

1) The survey revealed a weakness in terms of contact between awardees and IDRC. It is therefore recommended that steps be taken to ensure that an Awardee is linked to a specific program officer and with other functions and facilities at the Centre such as the Library, Regional offices, etc.

To support this recommendation, recipients of the John G. Bene Fellowship should be encouraged to come to IDRC soon after completing their research to give a presentation to interested staff and academics. This idea should be considered in conjunction with the Annual Awardee Presentation Week as outlined in the recommendations of the Young Canadian Researchers Award Study, 1994 (in progress).

2) In terms of publicizing the John G. Bene Fellowship, the study shows that most of the awardees first learned about the Fellowship through one of the Centres descriptive posters. This would seem to indicate that this method of publicizing the award has been effective. It is recommended that the CTA be sure to distribute this kind of publicity materials to the Institutions that submit Fellowship applications.

3) Given the consistently positive response to the idea, it is recommended that the CTA proceed with the planning of a John G. Bene Alumni Activity for 1995 provided that adequate financial and human resources can be identified for this purpose. The preferred event would be a small to medium sized social forestry conference at which awardees would be asked to give papers. Many expressed a desire to have the papers published in some format, and it is recommended that this idea be pursued as well.

# **JOHN G. BENE FELLOWSHIP IN SOCIAL FORESTRY: AWARDEE TRACER EXERCISE AND PROFILES - 1994**

## ***1.0 Introduction***

The John G. Bene Fellowship in Social Forestry was established in 1987 through an endowment fund left for this purpose by the late John. G. Bene. The late Mr. Bene was a committed advocate for the protection and sustainable use of forests for people.

Mr. Bene had a distinguished career in the private sector of the Canadian forest industry as well as Canadian and International organizations. He was a special forestry advisor and later Director General of the Special Advisors' Branch of CIDA, and a member of the Board of Governors of IDRC. Mr. Bene was also a founding member and first Chairman of the International Council for research in Agroforestry in Nairobi, an internationally respected institution now known as ICRAF.

The John G. Bene Fellowship has been administered by IDRC since 1987. During this time, 12 Canadian researchers have been supported by the endowment to help further their commitment to the underprivileged of the world through training and research on social forestry issues.

Award programs such as the John G. Bene Fellowship in Social Forestry have important impacts and lasting implications for the researchers who receive support. It is important for administrators and others concerned with the quality of such programs, to stay in touch with past recipients, hear about where they are and what they are doing, to learn from their experiences, and to try and recognize the contribution these individuals have made to the evolution and history of the Fellowship. This was the primary aim of this exercise.

To carry out this work, a consultant was retained in the spring of 1994 by the Corporate Affairs and Initiatives Division of IDRC to trace the past recipients of the Bene award and to profile their work. This undertaking was designed to re-connect the Centre with past awardees, and to provide basic information to the Centre training and Awards Unit (CTA). It was thought that this information might also enable the CTA to suggest an alumni activity which would highlight the significant contribution of Fellowship holders to social forestry, and which would coincide with IDRC's 25th anniversary celebrations.

## ***1.1 Findings***

The findings of this research have been summarized in a short report, as well as in written profiles of the twelve awardees. The report begins with a listing of the past awardees, where they are and a brief statement about their current activities. Following this is a discussion of the survey findings. Finally, Appendix A contains more detailed profiles of each awardee and Appendix B is a copy of the survey instrument used.

## **1.2 LIST OF THE PAST RECIPIENTS OF THE JOHN G. BENE FELLOWSHIP IN SOCIAL FORESTRY**

Alix Flavelle (1990)  
1040 Lakewood Dr.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V5L 4M2

Alix recently completed her Msc. in Forestry at the UBC. She continues to work in Indonesia and in the area of social forestry.

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Helen Hambly (1992)  
EARO - IDRC  
P.O. Box 62084  
Nairobi, Kenya

Helen is on a 9 month contract replacing a program officer on sabbatical. She is continuing to work on her Phd from York University in Toronto.

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Laura Johnson (1990)  
3907 Crestview Rd. S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2T 2L5

Laura is finishing her Msc. in Environmental design at the University of Calgary.

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Paul J. Martins (1987)  
Projecto RENARM/PBN  
C.A.T.I.E.  
7170 Turrialba,  
Costa Rica

Paul is currently the project leader for the Regional Centre for Research and Education in Tropical Agriculture and resource Management in Costa Rica.

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Deirdre McKay (1992)  
#203-4386 W. 10th Ave.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6R 2H7

Deirdre is currently working toward her Phd in Geography at the University of British Columbia.

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Mike Mullins (1992)  
C/O CUSO Office  
P.O. Box 3517  
Vientiane, Laos  
PDR

Mike is working on a Swedish funded Social Forestry project in Laos as a CUSO cooperant.

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Michael O'Flaherty (1992)  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 1A1

Michael is currently finishing his Phd at the University of Toronto.

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Michael Rewald (1988)  
CARE Ethiopia  
P.O. Box 4710  
Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia

Michael is currently working as the Program Manager for CARE Ethiopia.

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Christopher Roddan (1993)  
A14 Cardena Dr.  
Bowen Island, B.C.  
V0N 1G0

Christopher is now working for the B.C. Department of Forests.

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Stewart Sawin (1991)  
Box 147  
Delburne, Alberta  
T0M 0V0

Stewart is presently working for a private forestry company in B.C.

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Jacqueline Tracey (1990)  
CRES, Australian National University  
Box 4, Canberra  
ACT 2601  
Australia

Jacqueline is working on her Phd in Forestry in Australia.

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Nancy Kingsbury (1994)  
5213 St. Urbain  
Montreal Quebec  
H2T 2W8

Nancy is the current holder of the John G. Bene Fellowship. She is doing research in Venezuela toward her Phd.

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## **2.0 Objectives**

Finding Twelve recipients of an award that has been administered by the CTA only since 1987 sounds like a very straightforward task. In fact, we were completely successful in locating and communicating with all of the recipients, but because many are still involved in International work, it was not always easy to find these individuals.

The exercise was designed to gather three basic pieces of information from each respondent.

- 1) What kinds of activities have former awardees been involved in since receiving the award, and what are they presently doing?
- 2) What kind of contribution did the award itself make to the awardees' lives and careers?
- 3) What kind of activity would be appropriate to commemorate the endowment along with IDRC's anniversary?

## **2.1 The Survey**

The survey was envisaged as an informal tracer exercise designed to reconnect the Centre with past awardees and vice versa. The study took place between May and September of 1994. Two key research methods were utilized.

- A) A questionnaire was designed and sent to the twelve recipients (appendix 1).
- B) Telephone or face to face interviews were conducted with several former awardees to collect additional information.

All twelve former recipients of the John G. Bene award were located, and asked to complete the questionnaire. Field interviews were conducted with four of the twelve respondents to assist mainly in the writing of the awardee profiles.

## **2.2 Limitations**

As was mentioned previously, this exercise was meant to be an informal attempt at reconnecting with past recipients of the Bene Fellowship. The report represents a summary of the information collected with some suggestions and recommendations for improvement. Readers should keep in mind that the small number of past recipients of the Fellowship limits the extent to which one can draw definite conclusions about most aspects of the program.

### **3.0 Discussion**

Many of the survey questions allowed for open ended, qualitative responses. This data has been aggregated and presented in graphical form where possible; however, the description and discussion of the responses is best found in the text. The report will follow the order established in the survey questionnaire, and interrelationships between questions and responses will be explored where a link was observed.

#### **3.1 Awardee Activities Since Completing the Bene Fellowship**

(Discussion related to questions 1-3 of the survey).

Ten of the twelve respondents reported continued academic work since the end of the award, generally related to the completion of Master's or Phd study for which the award was granted. Ten recipients used their award for MA or Msc studies, while two people are now completing Phd's.

Eight of the twelve respondents reported continued research activities, including further research proposals, Phd proposals, and Phd related research. Similarly, nine respondents have held employment since the award including the following;

- Project manager with CARE Canada
- IDRC Intern
- Environment & Development Consultant and now a Program Officer with IDRC
- Freelance work with NGOs and Consulting firms
- Employed with a private forestry company in B.C.
- Field Officer with an Australian logging Association
- Teaching
- Economic impact assessment

Five of the twelve respondents undertook volunteer work, generally with development related NGOs. **Figure #1** summarizes awardee activities.

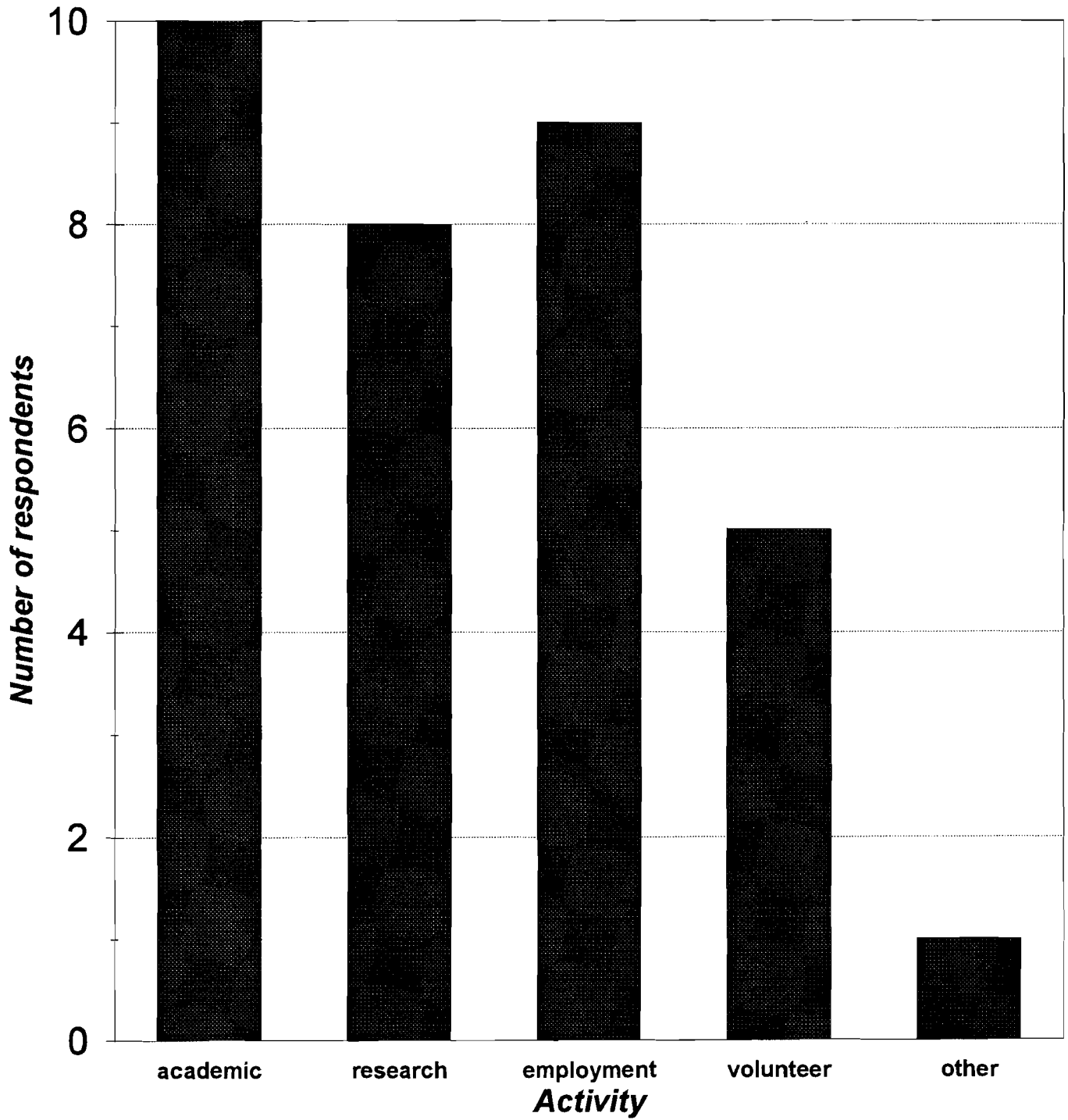
When asked whether any of these activities were related to international development, ten of twelve awardees responded positively. Clearly, whether through continued research, employment, volunteer work or studies, these past awardees continue to involve themselves in international development. Virtually the same response is true for continued involvement in social forestry where all ten respondents see themselves as having continued work in social forestry. Because of the wording of the question, however, respondents may have counted the completion of their degree as implicitly being a social forestry related activity.

#### **3.2 Maintaining Contact with Overseas Host and IDRC**

(Discussion relating to questions 4-5 of the survey).

The John G. Bene Fellowship in social forestry was established to assist students in furthering their expertise through research, but also to help facilitate the building of linkages between Canada and developing countries. It could also be said that, where such research

**Figure #1 Awardee Activities since  
the John G. Bene Award**



interests are similar, a relationship with IDRC might lead to further collaboration and continued capacity building. Two questions in the survey attempted to gauge the degree to which such linkages have been formed.

Firstly, ongoing contact or involvement with the awardees research country remains strong with nine of twelve indicating a continuing relationship. This ranges from very informal contact with friends and colleagues through letters, to on-going collaboration in projects. For example, one awardee stated that " I write friends and stay in touch with my academic hosts. I have sent them copies of my Bene-supported thesis."

With respect to contact between former awardees and IDRC, the connection was slightly weaker. Only six people reported that they maintained contact with the Centre, while six said they did not. One person captured the sentiment of those not in contact with the Centre saying, "I would really like to re-establish contact via newsletters, job\contract advertisements, and projects."

### ***3.3 Facilitating an Overseas Experience***

(Discussion relating to question 6 of the survey)

During the field interviews with four of the former awardees, the idea of an orientation or pre-research training for awardees was raised. It was thought that this would be helpful -- even essential -- for awardees travelling to a developing country for the first time. Question #6 from the survey revealed however, that only four of the twelve awardees had never been to a developing country prior to receiving this award. This is a significant percentage, but perhaps not significant enough to warrant a special orientation. This issue might be partially addressed by strengthening the linkage between award recipients and experienced researchers at IDRC.

### ***3.4 Rating the Effectiveness of the Fellowship***

(Discussion relating to questions 7-9 of the survey)

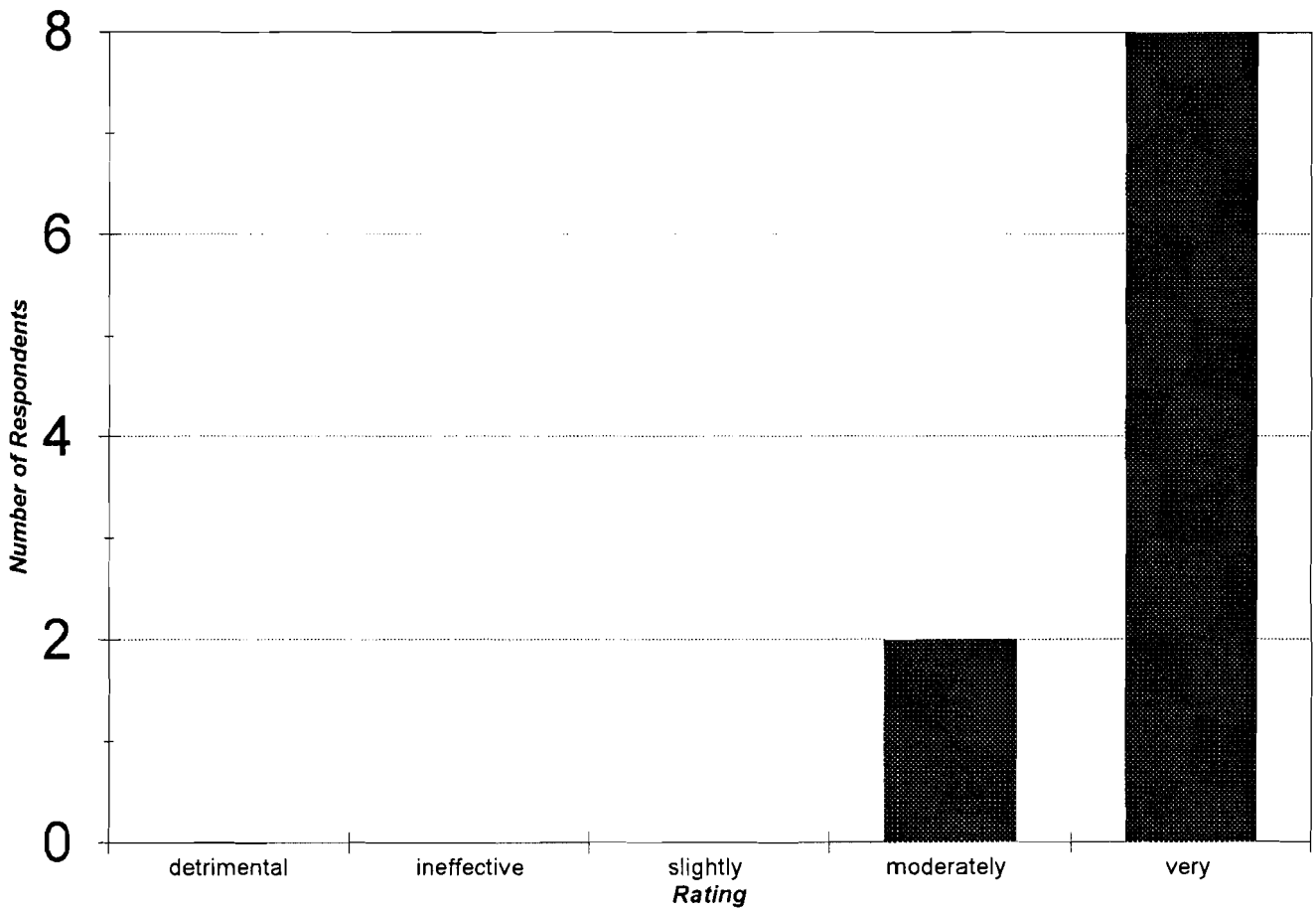
Questions seven, eight, and nine from the survey asks awardees to rate the effectiveness of the Bene Fellowship in strengthening three areas of the respondents life;

- \* Their commitment to social forestry?
- \* The strengthening of their professional\career development?
- \* The contribution to their academic development?

**Figure #2** shows the very positive feeling about the role the award played in strengthening a recipients commitment to social forestry research. Eight of ten rated the award as very effective, three rated it as moderately effective, and one declined to comment as she has not completed her research yet. To illustrate the general sentiment regarding the Fellowship, one respondent had the following comment;

*" The Bene Award allowed me to conceptualize Social Forestry within a development perspective and link forest management to broader social issues both in communities, and at the international level. This was an invaluable*

**Figure #2- Effectiveness of the Award  
in Strengthening Recipient Commitment**



*experience which encouraged me to pursue a career on the broader environment and development area, if not in Social Forestry per se."*

When asked about the contribution the Fellowship made to professional\career development, the responses were slightly less enthusiastic. Five of twelve indicated a moderate contribution, one a slight contribution, and the rest indicated a high contribution. It is likely that respondents obtained and utilized the Fellowship for academic reasons, and therefore find it a little difficult to directly relate this funding to professional or career development (see **figure #3**).

However, comments from respondents were quite consistent on this question and often indicated a significant contribution toward professional/career development. One person wrote: "apart from keeping me solvent through one year without income, I suppose the award does credit me with some achievement in the development and social forestry fields". Another person said, "experience of this nature was invaluable to my professional\career development."

**Figure #4** illustrates a stronger rating for the contribution the Fellowship makes toward a recipients academic development. Obviously, research funding would be rated highly in this regard as it assists a person in carrying out academic related research, and therefore contributes to the academic process. Many respondents commented on having improved their thesis because of doing field work. For example, one awardee stated that, "the John G. Bene Fellowship helped me complete my research in Thailand which led to the completion of my thesis. My work in Thailand was highly commended during my defense."

### ***3.5 Research Costs***

(Discussion related to question 10 of the survey)

Awardees were asked to state whether or not the Fellowship made a significant contribution toward their research costs. The Fellowship is relatively modest compared to some sources of research funding, so it was important for the CTA to know to what degree this award was meeting a researcher's financial requirements. Only one person said the size of the award was not sufficient, while the remaining eleven said it did make a significant contribution. Most respondents listed the types of expenses the award helped cover such as equipment, international travel, and incidentals. Several respondents said the award covered approximately one half of their total research costs.

### ***3.6 Publicizing the Fellowship***

(Discussion related to question 11 of the survey)

Another on-going issue for the CTA is to try and ensure that efforts at publicizing the Fellowship are effective. Awardees were asked to indicate how they learned about the John.G. Bene Fellowship. Interestingly, the majority, eight of twelve learned of the Fellowship from the poster, three from their Professor or department, and one from an IDRC staff person (**figure #5**). This information should indicate to CTA staff the importance of certain methods of publicity.







































