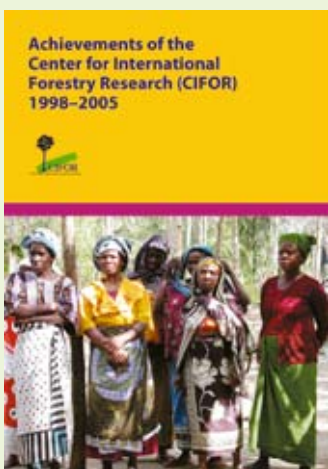


Translating Research into Action



When the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) announced that CIFOR would undergo an External Program and Management Review, beginning in late 2005, it seemed like a good time to reflect on what the organisation had achieved since the last review, some seven years earlier. 'We looked at everything we'd done during that period and in many ways we were surprised by how much we'd achieved,' recalls David Kaimowitz, CIFOR's Director General. The results of this self-assessment are described in *Achievements of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) 1998-2005*. Here are just a few of the highlights.

Much of CIFOR's work has focused on how forests can help to improve the livelihoods of the 240 million people, many among the poorest in the world, who live in forested regions in developing countries. CIFOR has raised awareness among policy-makers and opinion leaders about the importance of forests for rural livelihoods, and its research has improved understanding of the links between forests and poverty.

One of CIFOR's largest research programmes analysed the harvesting, use and sale of 61 non-timber forests products (NTFPs). This was a classic example of CIFOR acting as a 'centre without walls', with the project bringing together 60 scientists from 47 institutions in 27 countries. This and other research on NTFPs has provided information of real practical benefit to development agencies and local people. For example, over

four-fifths of the forest traders in Cameroon who CIFOR provided with data on markets prices said they had increased their incomes as a result.

The world's tropical forests have tangibly benefited from CIFOR's research too. For example, the Forest Stewardship Council used research on Criteria and Indicators (C&I) of sustainable forest management, conducted by CIFOR and its partners, in the design of its standards. These have been used to certify almost 6 million hectares of tropical forest, and this has undoubtedly improved the management of these forests.

Meanwhile, research in Indonesia has highlighted the way in which false assumptions about wood supply from plantations encouraged financial institutions to invest billions of dollars in pulp and paper mills that have been responsible for massive destruction of natural forests. The research also highlighted the fact that Indonesia's debt-restructuring programme would award a huge subsidy to financially risky businesses, and at the same time cause further forest loss. As a result of this research, the two largest pulp and paper mills have begun to improve their forest management practices, and some financial institutions have adopted more prudent lending policies.

At a very practical level, research by CIFOR and its partners has helped plantation companies as far afield as South Africa and China to improve soil management and increase their yields. Research into 'reduced



Guarayo boy in Bolivia reading the children's classic, *The Giving Tree* (Kristen Evans); primary forest in Gabon (Markku Kanninen); a young woman making plates out of sal leaves in India (Charlie Pye-Smith), Multidisciplinary Landscape Assessment survey in Vietnam (Douglas Sheil); a pulp and paper mill in China (Christian Cossalter); selling non-timber forest products in Cameroon (Michael Hailu). (clockwise, from top left)

impact logging' has been widely used to improve the harvesting practices in Indonesia and Brazil, and CIFOR's research on secondary forests has influenced the design of Peru's new forestry laws.

CIFOR is a relatively small research institute. It can't hope to influence the way forests are used by working in isolation. That's why it has sought to get its research used by the organisations and policy-making processes that largely define the global forestry agenda. It seems to have succeeded. Most policy document on forest-related subjects produced by organisations like the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Convention on Biodiversity cite CIFOR research.

CIFOR has adopted a range of strategies to influence policy-makers and opinion leaders. One of the ways it has done this is through POLEX, the Forestry Policy Experts Listserve. These succinct summaries of recent forest-related research, written by David Kaimowitz, are regularly sent to 17,000 individuals. Surveys have confirmed that these have made a significant contribution to forest policy dialogue. CIFOR also has one of the most active communications departments within the CGIAR, the number of media stories related to its research increasing from just a few in 2001 to over 500 by 2005.



Tropical forests provide food, building materials, medicines and much else for tens of millions of people. A Punan hunter-gatherer harvests sago palm, one of the many edible products found in the forests of East Kalimantan, Indonesia. (Photo by Edmond Dounias)