

Forests and Livelihoods



Women in Sumbawa, Indonesia, collecting teak seeds during the dry season. (Ani Adiwinata Nawir)



Forests provide far more than timber: harvesting mushrooms in Zambia (Manyewu Mutamba); children tapping rubber in Bélem, Brazil (Douglas Sheil); selling fuelwood in India (Brian Belcher).

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Making forests work for the poor

Almost a quarter of a billion people live in or near tropical forests, and they depend on them for building materials, food, land on which to grow crops and many other things. CIFOR's Forests and Livelihoods Programme aims to bring about improvements in their welfare by helping governments, development agencies and conservationists work out how to handle the trade-offs between livelihood enhancement and forest conservation. The programme also seeks to help raise the living standards of forest-dwelling communities by providing information about markets and by improving forest management.

If local governments – or for that matter, any other authorities – are to tackle poverty successfully, they need to know who the poor are, why they are poor and where they live. A major CIFOR project, 'Making local government more responsive to the poor', devised tools and a methodology to do this, focusing on two districts in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, and three municipalities in Bolivia. An Occasional Paper explains how the methodology was derived. The researchers also produced practical manuals to help local governments measure and assess poverty.

Another Occasional Paper published in 2007 explores the links between forests and poverty in a range of developing countries. The researchers suggest four policy options to alleviate forest poverty. These include transferring tenure from governments to communities, improving market access, promoting community forestry and providing communities with payments for environmental services. *Forests and Poverty* helped to inform the World Bank's policy research report on the subject.

The decisions you make – whether you're a farmer, a teacher or a policy-maker – must be guided by the way you see the future. One way this decision-making can be made explicit is by feeding information into a model. The first story in this section describes the results of participatory modelling exercises conducted by CIFOR in the Congo Basin, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Vietnam. These exercises have helped researchers, conservationists and local policy-makers create a vision of the future. CIFOR's experience suggests these modelling exercises can help to reconcile the competing interests of different groups.