government programs to increase their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the rural poor.

The indicators and tools will be presented as a resource kit. Local governments and the organizations working with them are the intended users of this kit. The target audience for scientific papers, policy briefs and reports includes national government decision makers, advocacy groups, academics and international donors. The main beneficiaries of project outputs are the rural poor.

**Key Partners**

District governments of Kutai Barat and Malinau in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, Municipal governments of Bolpebra and El Sena in Pando, Bolivia. Institute of Forest Policy: Markets and Marketing, and the Institute for Ethnology, both at Freiburg University.

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Project Rationale

Many countries are decentralising decision-making power, resources and responsibilities to lower levels of government. As a result, local governments have greater opportunities to address problems of rural poverty. These governments could implement more effective poverty alleviation if local decision makers had better tools and strategies for prioritising actions and evaluating impacts.

This project aims to improve the impact of local government poverty alleviation policies and actions in tropical countries with significant numbers of forest-dependent rural poor. We will develop indicators to gauge poverty and the impacts government programs have on poverty. The project will also prepare tools that help local governments develop, implement and evaluate programs to improve the well-being of poor, forest-dependent people.

Methods

Phase I The research teams in Indonesia and Bolivia will identify the impacts of local government decisions on the well-being of the forest-dependent rural poor. The teams will begin by identifying indicators of poverty and human well-being. Through the use of focus groups, key informant interviews, informal surveys, and workshops the teams will create a baseline poverty profile for each site. Parallel to this, the teams will analyze stakeholders’ interests and capacities to address poverty and create a preliminary explanatory framework of local government’s role in poverty alleviation. This explanatory framework will be tested and further developed in the second phase.

Phase II The research team will work with local government in the study sites to adapt the framework and indicators as decision support and monitoring tools. Activities in this phase will: (1) Establish a working group of 4-8 individuals. (2) Identify how the draft explanatory framework and indicators might be used to guide local government decisions. (3) Design and implement small-scale trials of methods for using the framework and indicators. (4) Monitor and analyse trial results. (5) Refine methods and test again. The research teams will collect in-depth information to answer the central research question: How does decentralization affect the well-being of the forest-dependent rural poor?

Phase III The teams will synthesize their methods and findings to produce practical products for general use. Project outputs will be based on Phases I and II results, together with the outcomes of an experts meeting, comparative analysis with other sites to broaden the context and a general literature review.

Outputs

- Analysis of the role of local government in poverty alleviation
- Indicators of poverty from different stakeholders’ perspective
- An explanatory framework illuminating the processes driving local government’s policy decisions and their impacts on the well-being of the rural poor and the forest resources on which they depend
- General strategies for monitoring poverty, and, in response, adjusting local