

Forests and Governance

Improving the way we make decisions

Forests are used – and misused – by a remarkably diverse array of different interests. They range from logging companies to hunter-gatherers, from government forestry departments to conservation groups, from swidden cultivators to fuelwood collectors. Some wield great influence and power; others have little or none at all. At present, the decision-making agenda in most countries is dominated by state agencies, private companies, donor organisations and conservation bodies. All too often, the people who live in the forests have the least influence.

Research conducted under CIFOR's Forests and Governance programme promotes good forest governance. Good governance means that decisions are made in a manner that is just and fair to all stakeholders; that the decision-making processes are transparent; and that decision-makers are held to account. The research seeks to enhance the capacity of forest-dependent communities and excluded groups to participate in the decision-making process. It promotes greater social and environmental corporate responsibility in the forest sector. And it supports the strengthening and transformation of national and local government policies so that they promote more effective and equitable forest management.

The news from Africa is often bleak, but workshops organised by CIFOR and its partners in Mali and Burkina Faso in 2005 on the theme of Nature, Wealth and Power suggest there is room for optimism too. Nature, Wealth and Power provides a new framework for evaluating rural development and progress towards reducing poverty. The

framework has caught the imagination of governments and development workers, and CIFOR will continue to use it in the future.

During recent years CIFOR has helped to raise awareness about the significance of violent conflict in forested areas. CIFOR's Director General wrote the key chapter on forests and conflict for FAO's *2005 State of the World's Forests* report and guest-edited a special edition on the subject for the *European Tropical Forest Research Network News*. These publications, and a workshop held in Brussels, suggest measures that governments could take to defuse conflict in forested areas.

CIFOR scientists continued to play a prominent role on discussions about Indonesia's timber industry. CIFOR collaborated on a report which suggests that if Indonesia is to establish a sustainable timber industry, and reduce illegal logging, it needs to dramatically increase its plantations and reduce processing capacity. An Occasional Paper on money-laundering and the timber business highlighted the important role that banks have to play in the battle against illegal logging.



Illegal logging is one of the most obvious manifestations of poor governance. Illegally harvested timber is loaded on to a truck in Jambi, Indonesia. (Photo by Carol J.P. Colfer)