

# Forests and Livelihoods

## Making forests work for the poor

Almost a quarter of a billion people live in or near tropical forests, and their well-being depends on them. Forests provide building materials, food, land on which to grow crops and many other things. Two billion people – a third of the world's population – use fuelwood and charcoal, most harvested in the forests. Two billion people rely on traditional medicines, many of which come from forests.

Forest-dependent people tend to be politically weak and economically marginalised, and they are among the poorest in the world. CIFOR's Forest and Livelihoods Programme seeks to bring about improvements in their livelihoods by helping governments, conservation organisations and development agencies work out how to handle the trade-offs between livelihood enhancement and forest conservation, and how to take advantage of synergies between the two, where they exist. The research also aims to help raise the living standards of forest-dwelling people by providing information about markets, by improving forest management, by creating viable partnerships between industry and local communities, and by enhancing poverty-reduction policies.

One of the highlights of the year was a restitution workshop at which CIFOR scientists shared the results of a three-year research project on health and indigenous people. A comparative study of forest-dwelling communities and their urbanised relatives provided important insights into the complex relationship between health and forests. The workshop, held in Malinau, East Kalimantan, helped establish new links

of communication between Punan hunter-gatherers and government officials.

The Non-timber Forest Product (NTFP) Case Comparison project, described in previous years' annual reports, continued to spawn important publications. New editions of *Riches of the Forest* were published for Mexico and Indonesia, and *Carving out a Future* drew heavily on the research of scientists involved in the Case Comparison project. This book provided the most detailed description to date of the remarkable richness of the woodcarving trade. It assesses the impact the trade has on resource sustainability and livelihoods, and suggests how policy-makers and consumers could act as a force for the good.



Children in West Africa selling shea fruits, harvested from the tree *Vitellaria paradoxa*. (Photo by Daniel Tiveau)