



Rainforest, Indonesia. Photo: Manuel Boissière



Forests and Environment

Promoting wise use

Tropical forests supply us with timber, food, fuel and fibre. They also provide a range of environmental services. For example, they soak up the greenhouse gases which cause global warming, recycle nutrients and stabilise soils. Lose the forests, and we lose far more than the trees. CIFOR's Environmental Services and Sustainable Use of Forest Programme aims to improve the way we use forests, and provide the knowledge needed to ensure that forests deliver a range of goods and services. The programme works at many levels, from the local to the global, from the village farm to the city boardroom. Beneficiaries range from governments and development agencies to corporations and small farmers.

Vast areas of degraded land are to be found across the tropics. Indonesia alone, for example, has almost 100 million hectares of degraded land, and year by year this figure increases. One of CIFOR's largest research programmes has looked at forest rehabilitation efforts in Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Brazil and Peru. The results were published in six country reports in 2006. This significant body of work provides governments, NGOs and others with clear guidelines about how they should proceed in future, and how to avoid the mistakes of the past.

CIFOR scientists continued to work on issues related to forests and climate change. A CIFOR submission to the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on how to reduce emissions from deforestation proved highly influential. Meanwhile, CIFOR's multi-country research on tropical forests and climate-change adaptation continued to make good progress.

All too often, it's outsiders, rather than forest-dwelling communities, who decide what's good for the communities and their forests. And all too often, development projects fail to take into account local needs and sensibilities. Using techniques developed in Kalimantan, CIFOR scientists and their partners conducted multidisciplinary landscape assessments in Vietnam and the Philippines. These exercises provided important information about local perceptions of biodiversity, and it is hoped that they will help to influence the way forests are used in these areas in the future.

2006 also saw the launch of the Biodiversity Platform, a joint programme devised by CIFOR and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). This recognises that balancing human demands with the need to preserve the environment is one of the major challenges facing us today. Over the next three years, scientists will explore the relationship between biodiversity and the way people make a living in settled landscapes in five countries, and look at the sort of incentives which could promote conservation and sustainable land-use outside protected areas.



Conducting a soil survey after a peatlands fire, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo: Andi Erman

Participatory mapping in Kay village, Papua, Indonesia. Photo: Douglas Sheil