Pathways out of poverty towards prosperity

The ways in which households make forests a part of their strategy for becoming less poor

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Understanding the role of forests

- The role that forests play in mitigating long term poverty and in helping people escape from poverty has proved to be a lot more complex than was at first thought.

- Timber values of forests were well recognised and it was understood that NTFPs were sold too. But meagre cash incomes from them led researchers to conclude that forests were not of much importance to livelihoods.

- The third output from forests – the contribution to subsistence - was hardly observed. Since ‘non-cash’ (consumption) value was not recorded in government statistics, it remained invisible, with its value set effectively at zero.
The contribution made by forest income

In fact it can be quite significant. Here, in a Sahelian-Sudanian area, villagers’ livelihood portfolios are put together from a mix of agricultural production + sales, wages, and inputs from the forest.

Cash income overall is just over a third of all income while subsistence income accounts for nearly two thirds of income.

Forest cash income is about a quarter of total cash income, but is well over a half of non-cash income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENGKODOGO IN BURKINA FASO</th>
<th>Cash income</th>
<th>Non-cash income</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average contribution of cash and non-cash income to total income</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average contribution of forest income to total income</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What dictates variations in forest dependence

1. REMOTENESS  The remoter the location, the smaller the cash income from wages and the fewer the farm crops sold. But the greater the consumption dependence on both farm and forest products.

2. GENDER  Women depend on forests more than men do in most locations (for fuelwood and food, but also to generate cash sums which may be kept for purposes chosen by them, and not put into the common household pot).

3. INCOME LEVEL  Very poor men depend on forests more than those with higher incomes, using them to generate cash (e.g. by charcoal-making) for specific purposes, where a wealthier men would be able to sell an animal.
Investigating pathways out of poverty

Rural people try to deal with poverty, using the diverse livelihood portfolio at their disposal including forests.

1. Some strategies are entirely self initiated
2. Some involve taking advantage of new external factors which offer improved opportunities for income generation (though they often build on earlier attempts under tougher circumstances)
3. Forests may play a direct income generating role or an indirect ‘support’ role
AGROFORESTRY In the Comoro Islands, a SIDS with a high population density. The population have invested massively in tree crops to replace dwindling natural forest: cloves and ylangylang for export, and breadfruit, jackfruit, mangoes and coconuts for subsistence.
Helping the next generation out of poverty

• In West Africa, women greatly increase their collection of non-timber forest products (bush mango – Irvingia gabonensis - are being prepared for market here), right before the start of each new school term, so that children’s school fees can be paid on time and their chances for a better future kept open.
Pathways out of poverty through migrant labouring

• It is becoming more common for one or more male members of the household to undertake seasonal or permanent migrant labouring.

• In the short run the depleted household is likely to rely more heavily on forest since labour shortages may limit what can be achieved on the farm. Forest products substitute for foregone agricultural products or income.

• But in the longer run if remittances start to flow, investments may be made in agricultural intensification, livestock, farm trees, and school fees for primary and secondary school.

• Usually at least part of the family remains in the rural area, at least for a generation.
Pathways out of poverty after war in Northern and Eastern Uganda

Forests helped with the transition from war to peace and prosperity in Uganda, in three vital ways.

1. Forests provided the materials for new homes, as families left IDP camps to go back to their villages and start again.

2. Forest fertility gave newly cleared and planted fields a boost.

3. Forests, along with agriculture, enabled households to rebuild their livestock assets - an essential store of investment wealth. Sales of fuelwood and charcoal made this possible.

They bridged the gap before employment and trading opportunities could resume in ravaged areas. It is calculated that forests have contributed the equivalent of over 750 million dollars a year to Uganda’s post-war reconstruction.
ENRICHING FALLOWS  In south-west Papua farmers are now enriching their forest fallows with high value trees such as nutmeg and durian. Larger faster boats (the only transport) have brought urban markets ‘closer’ to them just as better roads have done in many parts of the world.
Blocked pathways out of poverty

- In remote areas, forests may be in good condition, but the lives of people who live near them are tough. Prospects for diversifying the narrow set of local livelihood options are slim, and chronic multi-generational poverty the norm.

- Inhabitants try to increase their resilience, through NTFP sales and through sending children to school.

- This resilience is very easily jeopardised by outside organisations with logging or protected area interests, and much more imaginative attempts to help people in this situation are needed.
Blocked pathways out of poverty: the duties of responsible outsiders

1. **Understand local livelihoods** and their fragility, do not *increase* livelihood vulnerability through interventions which take no responsibility for local people.

2. **Promote resilience.** Retain forest access and try to enhance land-rights and forest rights. Jointly plan forest use.

3. **Abandon ‘alternative livelihoods’ ideas.** No income source will be found which is enough to substitute for the forest component of livelihoods.
Thank you!