

Can Forests Reduce Poverty?

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People, Forests and Human Well-being
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Yes, Maybe, No!

Depends who you are talking
about

40 years of forestry in development

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1960s 'trickle-down' | Forestry for industrial development |
| 1970s 'basic needs' | Forestry for local community development (Westoby model), oil crisis, fuelwood crisis |
| 1980s 'participation' | Social forestry, community forestry |
| 1990s 'public sector reform' | Institutional reform, collaborative, participatory forestry |
| 2000+ 'MDGs & poverty' climate change | Good governance, illegality, poverty, decentralisation, livelihoods, forest crisis |

Jack Westoby FAO -1977, 1989

'Forestry is as much about people as it is about trees'.

BUT

'What has forestry done to improve the lot of the common man, of the peasant? Precious little.'

Why not?

We have assumed:

If forests are devolved to the local-level with community tenure and decision-making power and rights over use of forests, including commercialisation

– it will be pro-poor

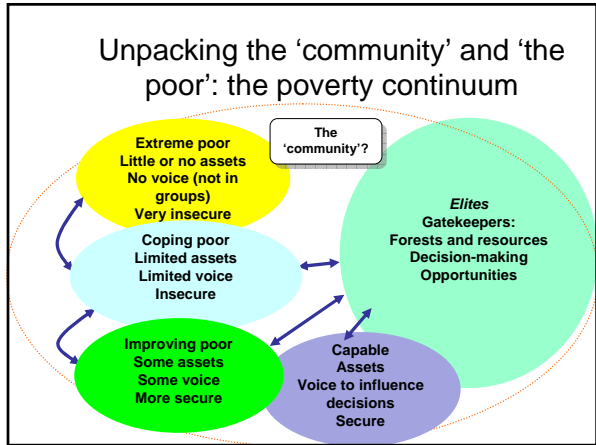
Better than some options but...

What's gone wrong?

We haven't understood poverty
 We don't understand who is poor and why
 We have started in the wrong place

- There are lots of reasons for poverty
- **Spatial poverty** (forest dependence argument)
 - remote rural areas
 - **Temporal poverty** (safety net argument)
 - seasonal & within life-cycle
 - **Structural poverty** (transformative argument)
 - social, economic and political exclusion
 - little or no voice (extreme poor, coping, improving, capable....)

Some people suffer all three levels of poverty



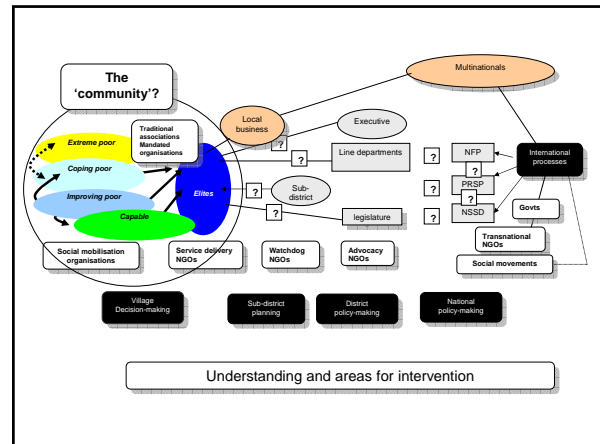
- Implications of the analysis
- **Poverty**
 - to be understood in a dynamic and differentiated way - different support needed for those moving out of poverty and those stuck or declining
 - Poor people and their vulnerabilities to be centre-stage and not the forests
 - **Formal and informal power relations**
 - Need to understand complexity of power relations affects people's capacity to obtain access to resources
 - Recognise high risks attached to the poor challenging these political spaces in person or through their proxies
 - **Limitations of forests and forestry**
 - Need for wider livelihood-based approaches linked to governance arrangements that promote structural transformation (local, national, international)

- Potential of forests for poverty reduction
- No 'one-size fits all' package
- **Politically differentiated** - determined by **political regime**
 - **Socially differentiated** approaches needed
 - **Spatially differentiated** – levels of remoteness, interconnectedness to markets, other employment opportunities
 - **Resource-base differentiated** - dependent on nature & quality of resource – forests, forest-agriculture mosaic, agriculture with trees
 - Not amenable to **single agency** solutions

- The Eight Areas of Understanding & Intervention
1. **Start with the poor** – understand their different demands (risks) and livelihoods, don't impose our understanding
 2. **Limitations of forests and forestry** – accept and understand where forests make a difference
 - For the capable poor and the well-off – yes
 - For people with some assets – maybe
 - For the extreme poor – rarely mainly no!
 3. **Livelihoods first** working **outside 'forestry sector'** leads to greater poverty reduction e.g. land policy & reform, employment, social protection

The Eight Areas of Understanding & Intervention

4. **Politics and power** to build active citizenship – role of local governance, participation doesn't necessarily mean benefits, role of elites
5. **Role of the state** – policy, regulatory functions, service delivery and relationships with civil and political society
6. **Changing role of forests and trees in livelihoods** migration, agricultural change
7. **Role of the market and enterprise** and potential for growth – links to the local level and poverty reduction effects
8. **Global geo-politics** and effects on local-level livelihoods - climate change, food prices



Foresters are agents of change
 – social and economic
 Westoby 1968