



Improving Data on Socioeconomic Benefits from Forests: Developing Survey Instruments for National-Level Application

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Background: Contributions of forests and other environmental resources to household welfare could be large, as revealed by many case studies. Yet, systematically measurements at national scale remains incipient (FAO, 2014). Such data are needed to reliably demonstrate how these contributions link to higher-level policy targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

Rationale: Strengthening forest-related socioeconomic data collection at national level constitutes an immediate priority, considering the time needed for systematically compiling data and feeding them into policy-decisions. This need led to the development of a sourcebook and survey instruments (Photo 1) by FAO, CIFOR, IFRI and the World Bank's LSMS and PROFOR to support national statistical offices and forestry administration agencies in collecting nationally-representative data on benefits from forests and other environmental resources. Users can customize the instruments as needed.

Process : The process, spanning three years, had two phases: taking stock of experiences in phase 1, and developing a sourcebook and Forestry Modules (hereafter: modules) in phase 2. Three field-tests in Indonesia, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania improved the modules. The draft sourcebook and modules were released in the 2015 World Forestry Congress. The final version is to be released in October, 2016.

Outputs: We designed two types of modules: separate and integrated. Separate modules comprise standard and extended household and community modules. Integrated modules comprise questions to be added to existing Living Standard Measurement Study surveys. The sourcebook offers thematic guidance on implementing the modules, with themes ranging from forest and wildlands-based incomes to their governance.

Expected impacts: Integrating the forest-related aspects in upcoming national surveys, including the Living Standard Measurement Study of the World Bank and in National Forest Monitoring exercise (e.g. ongoing in Bangladesh) will strengthen the evidence base on the contributions of forests and wild products to household welfare and livelihoods (Photos 2 and 3). This might contribute to designing realistic policies and investment strategies to sustain the benefits.

Key challenges: Integrating many forest-related issues was challenging, as many are context-specific. Coverage of all forest products in the modules has also been difficult; the modules focus on Most Important Products in many instances. Considering the general nature of many LSMS-type surveys, a recall period of 12 months is set; this could pose a challenge due to the seasonal availability of many products, making their harvest hard for households to recall reliably. Definition of forest products has been challenging: e.g. wood from trees on farms are often counted as forest products. Globally agreed definitions may be locally inadequate (e.g. non-wood products). Boundaries are set in the modules to define the origin of products, but the analysts have space for customization. Due to limited coverage of the forest products and activities in globally-agreed approaches (e.g. Central Product Classification for products and International Standard Industrial Classification), strictly following those would not give meaningful results.

References:

FAO. 2014. *State of the World's Forests 2014. Enhancing the Socioeconomic Benefits from Forests*. Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome (available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3710e.pdf>).

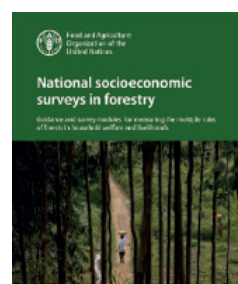


Photo 1. Cover page of the sourcebook



Photo 2. Fruits and vegetables from forests in Indonesia; Photo: Indah WB and Willy Daeli



Photo 3. Harvested wood in Nepal; Photo: Birendra Karna

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