

POINT FOR
ACTION

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- Make safety nets not poverty traps
- Support tree planting outside forests
- Cut the regulatory burden on the poor and make regulation affordable
- Reduce unfair obligations in forest management

A photograph of a smiling man carrying a large basket of oranges on his head. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The man is looking towards the camera with a friendly expression. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Reducing
vulnerability



REDUCING VULNERABILITY

Make safety nets not poverty traps

In situations of persistent poverty, forest products can help people cope with hard times. For the very poor, access to forest resources provides a vital buffer – absorbing agricultural risk and reducing vulnerability. The very poor have less access to market opportunities or participatory forestry initiatives. They need, above all, measures that protect their access to resources in the face of privatization and trade liberalization, measures that do not lock them into forest dependence.

Support tree planting outside forests

Planting trees in and around agricultural lands can provide a significant opportunity for the poor to satisfy subsistence needs and earn additional income. The magnitude and effects of India's farm forestry programme provide ample evidence of the importance of tree planting for poverty alleviation.

Cut the regulatory burden on the poor and make regulation affordable

The regulations that govern poor people's use of forests are excessive and often inconsistent – for example, imposing timber felling bans on community forests but not on commercial forests. Access of the poor to forest resources is over-regulated while the more powerful interests can defy control, which undermines the rule and legitimacy of law. When the poor have enough say in defining regulations, they will usually adapt these regulations effectively and support their enforcement.

Regulation vastly exceeds government capacity for enforcement – US\$5 billion per year is lost worldwide by governments unable to collect taxes from forest concessions, and a further US\$10 billion is lost from illegal cutting of forests.

REGULATIONS BENEFIT LIVELIHOODS AND FORESTS WHEN POOR PEOPLE HAVE RIGHTS AND CONTROL

In the Niger, where rural fuelwood markets were established, villagers gained control of fuelwood harvesting and trading through a set of regulations developed with their involvement. These provide a fairer balance of rights, responsibilities and revenues to poor people and the government, and extra revenues to both through higher prices.

Regulations need to focus more on curbing the excesses of the powerful than on limiting use by the poor.

Reduce unfair obligations in forest management

The demand for overly detailed forest management plans creates barriers for communities trying to acquire commercial rights to forest areas. States

should simplify planning and monitoring requirements for small-scale forest managers.

As shown in countries such as the Gambia, effective planning, utilization, and monitoring can be based on clear guidelines and do not require elaborate management plans.

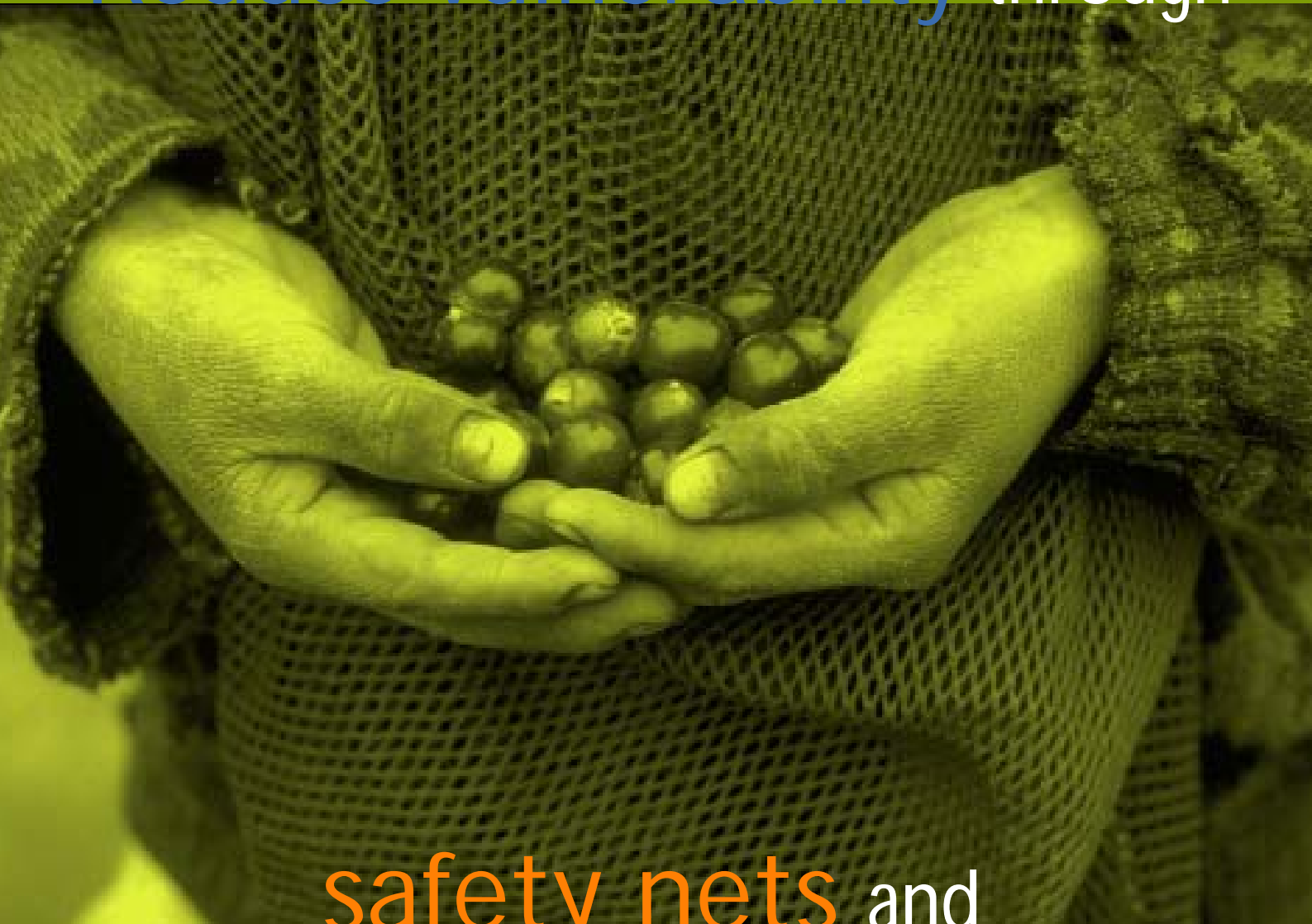
THE CHALLENGE TO MAKING FORESTRY PROFITS LEGAL AND EQUITABLE

At the East Asia Ministerial Conference on Forest Law and Governance in September 2001 an unprecedented international commitment was made to combat illegal logging and other forest crimes. At the same conference it was said that in Indonesia alone, an estimated US\$600 million per year in royalties, reforestation funds and export tax payments does not reach the government. This represents four times the total government expenditure in the forestry sector, and about three-quarters of the annual budget for education.

WATER, FORESTS AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Global consumption of fresh water doubles every 20 years - twice the rate of population growth. Forest watersheds influence the local water cycle and improve water quality, but poor rural people's needs are increasingly challenged by external water demands. In India, many villages have active collectives to manage watersheds and negotiate with downstream users.

Reduce vulnerability through



safety nets and
political empowerment.