

## Fact Sheet 2

### SDC Activities in the Domain of Forestry

## The Forest as Foundation of Life

Among the natural resources, the forest plays a crucial role. While representing in itself a multifunctional ecosystem characteristic of rural countryside, it not only makes a vital contribution to the preservation of the climate, to the protection against natural hazards, to tourism, etc., but also – in its function as element of the rural production system - plays a huge role in the reduction of poverty. The forest operates as a veritable environmental habitat in providing mankind with products such as wood for heat and for housing, drinking water, feeding grounds for wildlife, fruits, game, humus, and medicinal plants, to name only a few. For populations living in the countries of the South and East, the forest is vested with utmost importance, especially for the poorest segments of the population. Over 1.6 billion individuals throughout the world (FAO, 2001) living in extreme poverty heavily depend on the forest and on its resources to cover the basic needs of daily existence. For these people, the forest takes on a meaning equivalent to workplace, source of sustenance for man and beast, raw material for production and construction, source of energy, refuge for spiritual renewal, protection from natural disasters, and a capital reserve for the proverbial rainy day.

The SDC supports the ongoing international process aimed at making the sustainable use of forests subject to binding regulations. In this process, the already internationally recognized instrument known as the National Forest Programme is of paramount significance. It represents a political action programme targeted and calculated to sustainably regulating the economic, ecological, and social demands being placed on the forest. Switzerland (SAEFL and SDC) supports the formulation of such Forest Programmes while underscoring how essential it is that local and regional governments and communities be integrated into a participative process right from the very start.

With respect to internationally rooted programmes and studies, the SDC supports decentralized exploitation of natural resources and access to them by the local population. For example:

- **Forest Programme (PROFOR)** sponsored by the World Bank in partnership with various state development institutions. The overall goal of PROFOR consists in enhancing forests' contribution to poverty reduction, sustainable development and protection of environmental values and services. One of the four main themes of PROFOR is to foster the decentralized use of forest and tree resources.
- **Research Project with CIFOR (Center for International Forestry Research in Indonesia)**. The purpose of the project is to ensure that local capacity to plan and implement locally relevant and viable forest landscape management is strengthened. The project will improve livelihoods of the forest dependent poor and enhance sustainable management of forests.

## **SDC-supported projects to foster decentralized use of Forest Resources:**

### **Community Forestry Project in Nepal**

*The project's goal is that forestry, largely through strengthened Community Forestry, contributes sustainably to the equitable improvement of livelihoods. Nepal's National Forest Policy and Forest Law gives local people, organised in Forest User Groups (FUGs), the legal right to manage and utilise areas of State forest, handed over to them as Community Forests. This legislation has evolved over time as a result of field experience and policy dialogue, to which the project actively contributes. The project has demonstrated that FUGs may become major local stakeholders and even a counterpart in negotiation processes for the Government. By the end of 2003, more than 750 FUGs had been formed in the project area, giving access to some 80,000 households to the products of over 50,000 ha of forest*

### **Various Programs in Bolivia**

*SDC's programs in Bolivia have been supporting NRM activities at the local level, strengthening the decentralization process started in '94 by the Government. The PROBONA project has helped local communities to identify ecologically sound income-generating opportunities. Another project, ATICA (Agua Tierra Campesina), helps to strengthen farmers organizations and local authorities (capacity building at municipal level), and supports farmers project activities in NRM through an entirely demand-driven approach.*

*A new forestry law (Ley Forestal) and the relatively successfully functioning National Forestry Service have allowed forestry enterprises, municipal governments, farmers communities and indigenous associations to define their respective roles in the management of forestry resources, to debate about rights defense and to create a platform of discussion between the different actors.*

### **Natural Resource Management Programme in Pakistan**

*SDC activities promote sustainable and low-input production of forest and farming products such as medicinal plants.*

*Working in collaboration with local organizations gives direct support to the population and helps advance the process of decentralization. Village Development and Joint Forest Management Committees can serve as good examples of democratic bodies for other communities. The activities also contribute towards institutional diversification of the Forest Department in NWFP (Non-wood forest products) such as mushrooms, nuts, leaves, game, etc..*