



Editorial

Source: Mountain Research and Development, 29(4) : 297

Published By: International Mountain Society

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1659/mrd.2904>

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Dear Readers,

Most of the papers in this issue of Mountain Research and Development are concerned with forest cover, services, and use. The key significance of forests in mountain environments as a provider of products for human subsistence as well as of fodder, energy, marketable goods, and environmental services—the latter being typically common goods—is continuously underlined in international debates such as those voiced at the World Forestry Congress in Argentina in October 2009. Nevertheless, pressure on mountain forests in many parts of the world is increasing, frequently due to external forces such as high energy prices, which boost the demand for fuelwood, and climate change, which jeopardizes the multiple services of forests and people's livelihoods. A comprehensive understanding of forests and the patterns of forest governance and use can help to mitigate these negative trends. The articles in this issue serve to enhance this understanding and to reinforce a central focus of MRD: the importance of research for development.

The issue opens with a MountainDevelopment article by Kalyan Gauli and Michael Hauser: they explore propoor commercial management of nontimber forest products (NTFPs) in community forest user groups (CFUGs) in Nepal. The significance of NTFPs for the livelihoods of poor people has gained recognition in recent years, and efforts to promote commercial marketing have increased. However, the authors conclude, poor mountain dwellers will obtain greater commercial benefits from NTFPs only if external agencies focus more closely on these issues and if marginalized people are empowered to participate in CFUG executive committees.

In the MountainResearch section, Chandra Mohan Sharma, Sumeet Gairola, Sunil K. Ghildiyal, and Sarvesh Suyal examine forest use patterns in relation to socioeconomic status, focusing on the dependency of villagers on forests in four temperate villages situated in two forested sites in Garhwal Himalaya, India, where they found that extraction from the forest has resulted in ecological degradation. By contrast, Colibrí Sanfiorenzo-Barnhard, Luis García-Barrios, Elvia Meléndez-Ackerman, and Romeo Trujillo-Vásquez show that forest conservation can go hand in hand with well-managed pastoral use, thus preserving livelihoods despite the need for protection: they discuss local farmers' perceptions of pasturelands in the La Sepultura Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zone in Mexico and relate them to a study of forest regeneration in the region. Next, Rosy Ne Win, Suzuki Reiji, and Takeda Shinya look at forest cover change under selective logging in Myanmar—one of the few areas where natural teak forests still exist and an area that is under strong pressure from heavy timber felling. Ching-An Chiu, Po-Hsiung Lin, and King-Cherng Lu performed geographic information system-based tests for quality control of meteorological data and spatial interpolation of climate data in mountainous Taiwan, showing how important reliable climate data can be in producing climate layers in mountain environments, in order to assess impacts of climate change on the distribution and diversity of species. The recent disasters that hit the remote mountain areas of Taiwan have tragically reminded us of the need for quality data on rainfall patterns, which will hopefully contribute to a sound basis for better risk management.

Finally, Rolando Cèlleri and Jan Feyen examine the hydrology of tropical Andean ecosystems using data collected within the framework of a major research initiative by the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN). CONDESAN, an institutional member of the International Mountain Society (IMS), affiliated with MRD, has provided the MountainPlatform statement for this issue, a contribution that helps to highlight the importance of payment schemes for environmental services in mountains—a further example of the importance of research for development.

We trust that the contents of this issue will again reinforce the importance of forests in mountain ecosystems and remind policy-makers of the need to pursue initiatives that will protect mountain forests and help to develop and enhance the livelihoods of the mountain people who depend upon them.

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