

# Non-Timber Forest Products

## improving forest conservation and livelihoods



### What are Non-Timber Forest Products?

People around the world depend on forests for a diverse range of products and services. Apart from timber, these products include: food, fodder, materials for crafts, building materials, medicines and rituals. The ecological services include (micro and macro) climate control, soil stabilisation, and watershed protection.

The term 'Non-Timber Forest Products' (NTFPs) is applied to all the biological materials, other than timber, extracted from forests for human use. They include foods (edible plant products, forest fruits, honey, etc), medicines, spices, essential oils, resins, gums, latexes, dyes, ornamental plants, wildlife, fuel wood and raw materials, notably rattan, bamboo, small-wood and fibres. Forest communities around the world rely on these products to sustain their livelihoods and traditions. Promoting the development of NTFPs can improve livelihoods of communities in forest areas and also encourage the conservation of forests and their precious natural resources.

It is estimated that 75% of the population of developing countries (1.4 billion people) live in rural areas (IFAD, 2011) Many of those people rely on NTFPs for their primary health care and nutritional needs. Working with communities to devise ways to optimally use and manage NTFP resources supports basic livelihoods and can also provide a strong incentive for involvement in forest conservation.

While many forest dwellers are highly dependent on NTFPs, there are still many barriers that inhibit these resources being used to best effect. Poor harvesting practices, combined with logging and forest conversion, critically threaten NTFP stocks in remaining forests. Other barriers include: poor

security of tenure (or access), a lack of processing skills and limited market access. Some NGOs are working with communities to address these issues, advocating laws and policies that are supportive of community-based forest management, NTFP-based livelihood development and help, develop the skills needed to process NTFPs and access markets. One such NGO network is the NTFP Exchange Programme, based in Manila, the Philippines.

### The NTFP Exchange Programme

NTFP-Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) is a collaborative network of NGOs and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in South and Southeast Asia. They work with forest-based communities to strengthen their capacity in the sustainable management of natural resources. Over the years, the NTFP-EP has grown into a dynamic network, with over 40 partner organisations and major contacts in India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Their goal is to empower forest-based communities to make use of, and manage, forest resources in a sustainable manner. To this end, the NTFP-EP catalyses and supports activities that build-up and strengthen the capacity of their partner organisations working with forest-dependent communities, particularly indigenous peoples. They work together with communities in developing and implementing initiatives to meet local needs, while respecting the integrity of cultural traditions. The NTFP-EP strengthens the capacity of CSOs and NGOs in the field of:

- Forest management and sustainable harvesting.
- Security of tenure / access and the recognition and enforcement of user rights.
- Livelihood security through improving subsistence uses of NTFPs.
- Increased income from value addition and marketing

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(domestically and internationally).

- Strengthening the negotiation position of forest-dependent communities vis-à-vis traders, policy makers and other external agents on issues that affect their environment and livelihoods.

The NTFP-EP works on three levels. Locally, they provide technical backstopping, access to financial resources and linkages. Nationally, they provide inputs to strategy discussions (including the lessons learnt - locally and regionally), disseminate product information, support the establishment of local initiatives and network to promote the NTFP agenda. On the regional level they contribute to strengthening the network of people and organisations with similar concerns and interests through promoting regional meetings, exchange visits and providing information. (See [www.ntfp.org](http://www.ntfp.org) for more details).

### The benefits of NTFP development

#### NTFP development is community-based and participatory

It is essential that local communities are actively involved with NTFPs, as they are closest to the forest and are knowledgeable about it. As such, they can routinely monitor the condition of the forest and its resources. As their livelihoods are largely based on the forest, they can be expected to be committed to preserving the forest and its NTFP resources.

#### NTFP development provides local communities with a variety of marketable products

Marketed NTFP products include bamboo crafts in Cambodia, raffia weaving in Tanzania, paper making in Nepal, all activities that generate income for local communities. In Kalimantan (Indonesia) local communities and NGOs have developed an approach to "save the forest through bees". A regional honey network collectively promotes the sustainable harvesting of hives, conserving the forest on which the bees depend, better quality standards in post-harvest handling of the products and successful marketing.



Similarly, in the Philippines, handicraft enterprises have been jointly established by CBOs and NGOs. They have crafts centres where harvesters can bring the raw and semi-processed materials. The centres act as a meeting point for harvesters and weavers, and are involved in product development, design, assembly, finishing and marketing. They also provide training, marketing and strategy development services for producer groups. This has led to an array of handicrafts from indigenous and rural communities being marketed throughout the country, even reaching high-end markets in Europe and the USA and receiving press attention alongside Gucci, Prada and Hermes (see [www.cmcrafts.org](http://www.cmcrafts.org)).

### Both ENDS supports the development of NTFPs

- We support the NTFP-EP network and are a member of its board
- We promote NTFPs among policy makers, agronomists, communities and NGOs
- We co-operate with Cordaid in promoting and sharing-knowledge about NTFPs

### What Both ENDS can offer

Both ENDS can facilitate:

- In exchanging expertise, experiences and approaches;
- In developing strategies to improve NTFP production, processing and marketing;
- Setting up workshops on enterprise development, harvesting practices and marketing in co-operation with our partner organisations;
- Connecting you with the NTFP-EP to discuss ideas and strategies;
- Fund raising for projects and exchange visits;
- Assisting in setting up networks in your own region;
- Facilitating trainings in lobbying and advocacy for tenure rights and land-use planning.

### For more information on NTFPs

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Other organisations:

NTFP-Exchange Programme : [www.ntfp.org](http://www.ntfp.org)

