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Title: What is the state of knowledge on how forest-based productive activities contribute to poverty alleviation?: A systematic map of evidence

Forests provide an essential resource that supports the livelihoods of millions of people across low & middle income/developing countries. Forests are thought to serve in three primary roles to support livelihoods: subsistence, safety nets, and pathways to prosperity. While we have a working understanding of how poor people depend on forests in individual sites and countries, much of this evidence is dispersed and not easily accessible. Thus, while the importance of forest ecosystems and resources to contribute to poverty alleviation has been increasingly emphasized in international policies, conservation and development initiatives and investments—the availability of evidence to support how forests can affect poverty outcomes is still unclear.

Systematic evidence maps use robust, structured approaches to identify all relevant research on a topic, and categories and present this research to illustrate what has been studied, where, using what methods and outcomes. This study used this approach to scope, identify and describe studies that measure the effect of forest-based activities on poverty outcomes at local and regional scales. Specifically we examine these activities within the PRIME framework and utilize them to understand the state of knowledge on forests as pathways to prosperity. We present a systematic map of the current base of knowledge comprising 242 studies published from 1990 through 2017. Our study illustrates key knowledge gaps (where little or no evidence has been conducted) and knowledge clusters (where there has been concerted research effort). For example, we find that forest management and impacts on changes in monetary income have been relatively well studied, whereas there is a paucity of evidence on impacts on non-monetary income types (e.g. natural, human, and social). We discuss the value and relevancy of this systematic map approach for 1) identifying priorities for future research and 2) improving evidence-based decision-making for key stakeholders in the forest sector.