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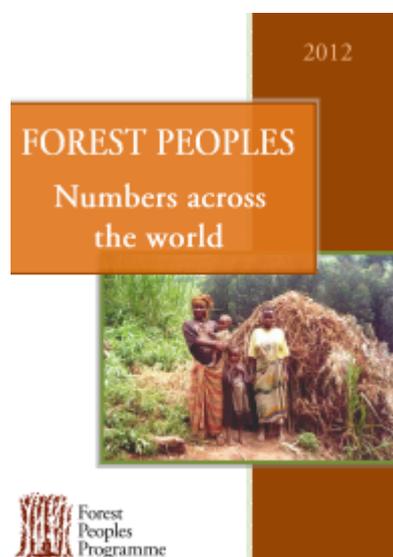
Forest Peoples: Numbers Across the World

Resource
2012

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Summary

Forests cover almost one third of the world's land area and nearly all are inhabited by indigenous and rural communities who have customary rights to their forests and have developed ways of life and traditional knowledge that are attuned to their forest environments. These communities have been managing the environment through their own systems based on traditional knowledge, practices, rules and beliefs for generations ('customary use'). Yet in many countries forest peoples do not have secure tenure over these areas and are denied access and use of their territories because of inadequate government policies, extractive industries' activities, or conservation initiatives, such as protected areas. At the same time, many indigenous territories are increasingly threatened by unsustainable activities such as logging, mining, cattle ranching and plantations. Where forest-dwelling communities lack legal recognition and where their rights are not protected by national laws, their land is vulnerable to land grabbers and their capacity to defend and sustain their forests and customary livelihoods in the face of corporate and government interests is seriously compromised. By providing estimated figures for indigenous and forest peoples' populations in countries and regions across the globe, this report seeks to raise awareness of the existence of peoples who primarily depend on forests for their livelihoods, and to enhance their visibility as key actors and rights-holders in the management and use of forests and forest resources. These figures may serve as a useful reference in advocacy for the recognition of forest peoples' legal and human rights. The process of compiling this report, has, in itself, also served an important purpose: to highlight the lack of accurate and up-to-date data on indigenous peoples and forest peoples, and to point out the critical need for further research in this direction. As FPP has previously noted, 'the lack of existing reliable information about forest-dependent peoples, their numbers, livelihoods and circumstances is itself a symptom of their marginalisation in forest policy making'.¹ Moreover, these figures have been compiled in the light of our awareness of unclear and contested definitions of 'indigenous peoples' and 'forest peoples'.

Authors

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