

# Forest and social resilience to climate change

Report of an informal meeting between IIED & partners  
Nairobi, Wednesday 15 November 2006

## Participants:

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**Background:** Forests provide one source of resilience and risk-reduction for local livelihoods. Effective adaptation and best use of forestry may therefore be important – but only if relevant institutions know what is going on and have the capacity to help forest-dependent people cope. They will need to be able to assess whether change in forest ecosystems, products and markets is significant – and to find appropriate responses, both locally and internationally. What is needed now is to assess whether forest changes really are a priority relative to other climate-induced changes (e.g. health) and, if so, plan how best to support the institutions that will serve local livelihoods.

**Aim:** To bring together CLACC fellows and IIED partners to share knowledge and viewpoints from our different areas of work on forestry and climate change and, if appropriate, to plan for future networking and joint work.

## Questions to guide the process:

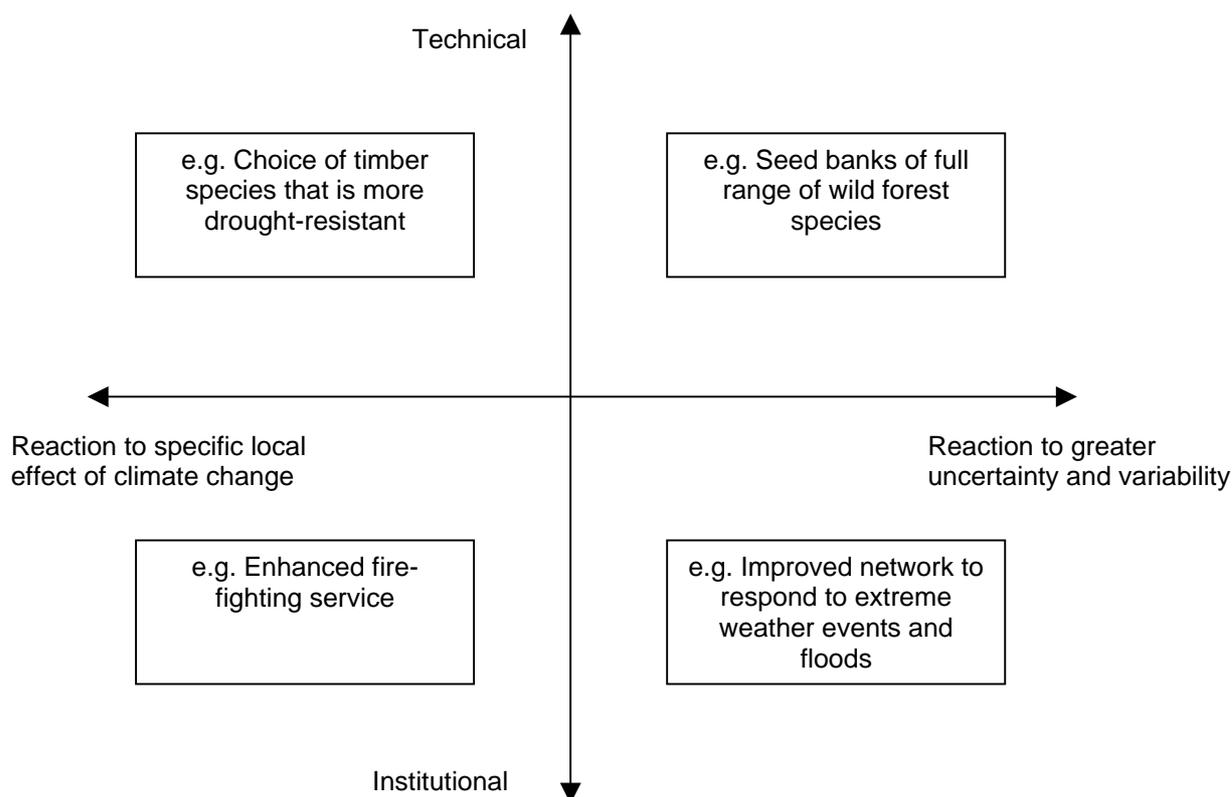
1. Are forest-related issues to do with climate change sufficiently important, relative to other sectors, to merit specific collaborative efforts?
2. What are the main actions needed to make forests and forestry as effective and resilient as possible in helping people to cope with and adapt to the consequences of climate change? (specifically in a country or ecosystem, or more generally)
3. Do these actions require particular institutional innovations, institutional changes or institutional reinforcements? (including civil society, government and private sector, locally, nationally and internationally)
4. Is there useful policy research and influence that we can do to raise the profile of, and seek support for, identified actions and changes?

**Discussion:** Participants agreed that forestry is key with regard to social resilience in the face of climate change – in terms of both mitigation and adaptation. There was substantial discussion on the main forest-related issues and associated areas of action, summarised in the diagram at the end of this report.

We noted some important inconsistencies in the way in which links between climate change and forestry are handled currently:

1. We often think that wetter and drier countries face different types of climate change problems and require different kinds of forest-based solutions, but in fact there are major overlaps (e.g. floods in Bangladesh, Malawi and Mozambique; Benin considered a wet country but considerably drier with different coastal forest compared to its westerly neighbours)
2. At international levels, discussion is around the abstract concept of “climate change”. What people outside this arena need is discussion of real changes, such as “longer dry seasons” or “heavier rainstorms”.
3. People in government and civil society working on climate change are delinked from people working on forestry, biodiversity and other environmental issues – and vice versa. Similarly, carbon sequestration forestry projects typically do not include communities, and community forestry projects typically do not include carbon sequestration payments.
4. Issues around climate change and conservation are not covered by the UNFCCC-COP and are receiving better attention under the CBD.

We discussed how adaptation can actually be done – in practical terms. We gave a number of examples of adaptation practices, which can be categorised as shown below (showing specifically forestry examples).



The meeting was very successful in bringing together a range of experience and perspectives on climate change, forestry and social resilience.

**Ways forward:** We agreed on the following as ways forward for the informal network created by the meeting:

1. Use the network (CLACC fellows + Dominic Walubengo of Forest Action Network in Kenya + IIED Forestry and Land Use staff in UK) as an *ad hoc* platform for information exchange on forestry issues and future collaborative project work among subsets of the overall group.
2. Use the framework of forest-related issues and associated areas of action (diagram at end of this report) to organise documentation of communities' own efforts to adapt to climate change, for example at the Dhaka meeting on community adaptation in January 2007.
3. Distribute information on funding sources for forest-based carbon sequestration projects – with the view to help move community-based carbon projects from rhetoric to action – and other sources of funding and support that acknowledge a principle of justice in responsibility for climate change versus responsibility to mitigate or adapt to climate change.
4. Explore and distribute information on forestry “Mit-Ad” projects that combine mitigation and adaptation.

***Report written by Sonja Vermeulen.***

**Facing up to climate change:  
Forest-related issues (green) and  
associated areas of action (yellow)**  
(the areas of action in the centre apply to  
all of the forest-related issues)

