Selecting villages for more work on the basis of coding

By choosing settlements in differently-coded parts of the landscape, and conducting parallel forests-poverty toolkit exercises in them, something can be learnt about the variability of livelihood challenges over the area.
We selected a village in a Blue Rank 1 area – Pensanom on the main road.
And a village in an Orange Rank 3 Area: Kamaso.

Roads: tarmac, buses and taxis in Pensanom, or a muddy track, a half-broken bridge and a long walk in Kamaso?

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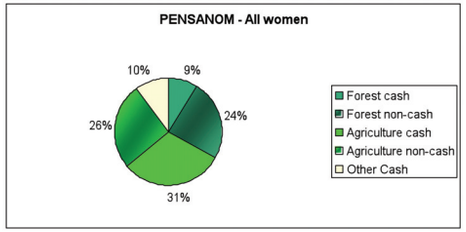
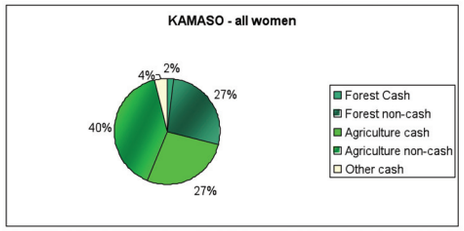
Text and diagrams, Gill Shepherd. Photographs and map, Gill Shepherd and Johannes Förster.
IUCN 'Livelihoods and Landscapes' Programme.

Market integration

Women's trading, very important in Ghana, is much easier for the women of Pensanom (in a Rank 1 area). They sell more household agricultural produce than they consume, and also earn 10% of all their income from other cash sources.



In Kamaso (in a Rank 3 area) women sell less of the household's agricultural produce than is consumed, and have few other chances to earn cash.



In remoter areas (orange and red on the map), dependence on forest foods and other forest products for both sale and consumption is highest. These are the areas where good forest policy can do most for livelihoods, and where local people can make the most active contribution to forest protection.

Poverty in the Landscape

Capturing variation and learning from it

Poverty in the landscape

The IUCN 'Livelihoods and Landscapes' Programme is using both settlement level and landscape level analysis to capture variations in dependence on natural resources.

Poverty at the settlement level

At the settlement level, we use the Forests-Poverty Toolkit, which:

(i) stratifies village households into wealthy, average, poor and very poor categories by mutual ranking among villagers based on locally-chosen criteria

(ii) applies modified forest-focussed PRA techniques to identify the variations in types of forest and natural resource dependence between these wealth categories and between men and women

(iii) gathers data on forest, agriculture and other key trends over the past 30 years

(iv) helps villagers to identify the key forest and natural resource problems they face in their area, and who might help them to reach solutions.

Using the data from (ii) above, LLS can calculate the proportion of the total annual cash and non-cash income derived from off-farm natural resources in the livelihoods of the settlement's individuals. Typically, in Africa, this will range

between 25 and 40%, and where the average per capita income for the area is known from publicly available data such as censuses, this proportion can be given a numerical value. In the LLS landscape in Ghana, for instance, the value of forests and off-farm natural resources is about $250 per head per year.

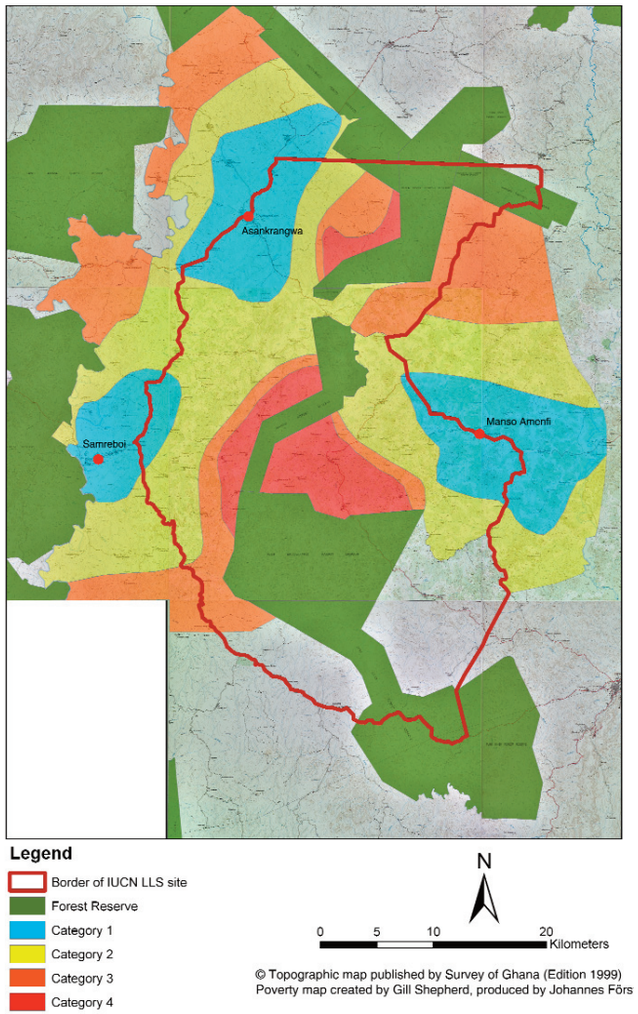
The value of forest income in context

The value of forest income may not sound high, but by contrast with per capita sums spent locally on health or education in the area, it is usually very significant, especially in remoter areas.

The figure also gives an indication of the proportion of individuals' livelihoods which would be lost if access to the forest were suddenly denied. It is clear that the loss would be substantial and virtually impossible to compensate for.

Poverty at the landscape level

LLS is also developing tools for poverty analysis at the landscape level: the relative wealth or poverty of settlements rather than of individual households. They have been tested so far in Ghana will be applied in China and Indonesia later this year, and then more widely during 2009.



Villages and settlements in a particular landscape are given a coding depending on how far they are from the nearest major weekly market and how much of that journey is on an all-weather road.

Distances are weighted to reflect road condition, public transport availability and consequent travel-time. The presence/absence of adequate potable water sources, schools, health posts and electricity are also factored in. The analysis shows which areas of the landscape are more disadvantaged from the livelihood improvement viewpoint, and also sheds light on a key issues for LLS - the complex relationship between a lack of livelihood opportunities and forest dependence.

Coding the landscape

The red line is the landscape boundary.

Villages in a Blue, Rank 1 area lie on an all - weather road within 10km of a main market town.

Villages in a Yellow, Rank 2 area lie 11-20 weighted km from a market town, on mixed roads

Villages in an Orange, Rank 3 area lie 21-30 weighted km from a market town, on mixed roads

Villages in a Dark red, Rank 4 area lie 31-40 weighted km away, in part over poor roads and/or tracks.

Most amenities are clustered in blue and yellow areas.

Remote dark red areas are all found close up against forest reserves and Protected Areas (dark green).