

for R&D excellence, we find that many of them have names which are not easy to pronounce by the local people. These institutions recruit from the best available talent pool, regardless of citizenship and country of origin.

India is no longer a basket case. It is not even a sleeping giant. It has woken

up. When will Indian institutions close their eyes to such unacademic factors as citizenship and begin to hire from the most qualified persons willing to apply from Tahiti to Tacoma?

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1. Sharma, O. P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2009, **96**, 1560.

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## Biodiversity and climate change – links with poverty

India has an amazing biodiversity; a result of its varied climate, soil and its rich cultural and ethnic diversity. There are over 53 million tribal people belonging to 550 communities. They all depend on nature and its variable ecosystems. Forests ecosystem are host to a wealth of biodiversity, 70% of the flora and fauna inhabit the tropical forests.

Similarly, the rural population in the global south living under poverty conditions depend on the biological resources to meet 90% of their needs. About 80% of the world's population depends upon traditional medicine to meet their basic health needs. But due to the range of human activities, unsustainable consumption and production patterns and the growing pressure on natural resources due to climate change make the loss of biodiversity an ever-increasing problem<sup>1</sup>.

A report from UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) on poverty notes that wild products provide 14–23% of the rural poorest income and in times of drought it rises to 42–57% in the drylands of India<sup>2</sup>.

These people are further affected due to the climate change which reduces the livelihood assets of the poor, such as access to water, homes, and infrastructure. The impacts of climate change on natural resources and labour productivity are likely to reduce economic growth; exacerbating poverty through reduced income opportunities.

Under changing climatic conditions, the natural resources are facing increasing threats from climate change. Integrated management and climate change within poverty reduction strategies and food security planning is critical.

Biodiversity conservation and maintenance of ecosystem integrity are essential for reducing people's vulnerability to climate change. Indians are aware of the dangers of climate change and recognize that climate change is already taking place and also recognize the responsibility to do more by way of mitigation as well as by way of adaptation. The conservation of biodiversity, including restoration and rehabilitation, can be a key adaptation strategy to help vulnerable people cope with climate change. For example, mangroves provide coastal protection against rising sea levels and storm surges. Successful conservation of biodiversity depends upon the active involvement of local and indigenous communities and promotion of gender equity. India calls for sustainable policies and for changes in our lifestyle, which united the protection and the sustainable use of our natural resources with measures against climate change and poverty eradication. In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, 189 world leaders agreed to a set of time-bound and measurable goals for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These Millennium Development Goals focus the efforts of the world community on achieving significant improvements in people's lives by the year 2015 (refs 1 and 3).

Forests, by acting as a sink for greenhouse gases help mitigate the effects of climate change on forest biodiversity. Similarly, forests are a major issue in climate change politics due to carbon storing capacities. They are complex ecosystems that yield subsistence and income for

more than 60 million indigenous people who are almost wholly dependent on forests; 350 million people who depend on forests to a high degree, and more than 1.6 billion people who depend on forest products to some degree, for survival necessities e.g. for fuel wood, medicinal plants and some foods<sup>4</sup>.

Needless to say, the forestry sector not only offers an environmentally acceptable option for mitigating and avoiding disaster, but also for meeting the forest products needs of local communities for poverty eradication. It additionally has vast potential for mitigating climate change by way of adjusting atmospheric carbon.

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  2. Opening Remarks on behalf of the Executive Secretary . . . Integration of Climate Change February 2009; [www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2009](http://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2009)
  3. IUCN/DFID/EC Biodiversity Brief1: the links between biodiversity and poverty. Retrieved from [www.undp.org/biodiversitycd/BioBrief-1poverty.pdf](http://www.undp.org/biodiversitycd/BioBrief-1poverty.pdf)
  4. Gender, Climate Change and Biodiversity, 2008; [www.genderce.net/action/biodiversity.htm](http://www.genderce.net/action/biodiversity.htm)
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