



## TENURE SECURITY FOR BETTER FORESTRY

Understanding forest tenure in Africa





# Why is forest tenure important?

Forests' condition depends on how they are used and managed, which – in turn – depends largely on the forest tenure systems that are in place. Much of today's forest tenure combines elements of traditional forest management with government-controlled exploitation and/or conservation of forest resources; often, more than one system is applied within the same forest area. If people are unclear about their rights and responsibilities regarding forest land and resources, the results are confusion and conflicting claims to resources.

Insecure tenure makes the people who inhabit or exploit forest areas unsure about their future, leaving them with little incentive to manage resources sustainably. Denial of access to vital forest resources can force local populations into destructive practices such as illegal logging, uncontrolled and damaging use of forest resources and unsustainable trade in forest products. Global society is increasingly aware of forests' important role in socio-economic development, and of the growing threats of deforestation and forest degradation.

Among the most important tasks of governments seeking ways to conserve, restore and manage forest resources sustainably are the examination and overhaul of forest tenure systems, to give people and institutions control over their resources and the rights to manage and profit from them.

**Forest tenure** determines **WHO** can use **WHAT** forest resources for **HOW LONG** and under what **CONDITIONS**.

## Sustainable forest management and poverty alleviation: a virtuous circle

A forest tenure system that is clear and appropriate for local conditions is more likely to result in:

- sustainable forest management, which improves the quality and accessibility of the forest resources that many poor rural people rely on – thus contributing to poverty alleviation;
- poverty alleviation through increased income from forests, which encourages local people to invest in the forests and treat them with care – thus contributing to sustainable forest management.

### Forest ownership structure

