

Making knowledge work for forests and people

Strategic Plan 2011-2016

Tropenbos International





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Making Knowledge Work for Forests and People

Tropenbos International Strategic Plan
2011-2016



Foreword

Twenty-five years ago, Tropenbos International was created to harness the contributions of the science community towards the sustainable management of tropical rain forests. Much progress has been made since then, and I am proud of the contributions that we, with our partners, have been able to make.

However, even though tropical rain forests are better appreciated than ever for their contributions to local and global wellbeing, there are still serious challenges. FAO statistics show that rapid development and unsustainable land use practices, driven by increasing global demand for food, fuel and fibre, have taken a toll of almost 300 million hectares of forest since TBI's creation – thus reducing their potential to contribute to sustainable economic development. About a billion of an estimated 1.2 billion extremely poor people depend at least in part on forest resources. At the same time, initiatives ranging from greening supply chains to improving forest governance and compensating forest owners for carbon sequestration services hold promise for a change for the good.

We believe that tropical forests can be a part of the solution to many of the challenges faced by the world

today. This is the main message of our new Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016, of which this brochure is a summary. It shows how TBI will contribute to improving forest governance and management for the benefit of people, conservation and sustainable development. The plan prioritises research, capacity building and dialogue that:

- help shaping productive landscapes which sustainably meet the demand for food, water and forest products
- achieve sustainable international and domestic trade in timber and wood products;
- improve local governance and management of forests; and
- make investment in sustainable forest management attractive.

This new strategic plan will put TBI on a strong footing to make knowledge work for forests and people in the years ahead.



René Boot
Director, Tropenbos International



TBI Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016: highlights

Tropenbos International (TBI) is a non-governmental non-profit organization. It was created in 1986 as a Dutch response to increasing concerns about the disappearance and degradation of tropical rain forests worldwide. Now, 25 years later, TBI is thriving.

Over the years, TBI has established itself as an important platform for the forest and development agenda, both in developing countries and internationally. It has built a reputation for improving knowledge and personal and institutional capacity in order to support better management and governance of tropical forest resources in a range of programme countries. With the support of the Government of the Netherlands, TBI has achieved a respected position on tropical forest issues. As a knowledge broker and a platform for discussion, TBI supports forest dialogue and development in the common interest of developing countries and the Netherlands.

This Strategic Plan lays out TBI's ambitions, priorities and approaches for the period 2011– 2016. It comes at a time when TBI's external and internal contexts are rapidly changing. Forests have gained prominence in the international debate by virtue of their importance to climate stability and biodiversity. Developments in tropical forests, shifts in the international forest policy context and changes in the mandates of TBI's key partners and other actors call for a re-assessment of TBI's role and functions. Donor policies, including those of the Government of the Netherlands, TBI's main supporter, are undergoing thematic and structural changes.

TBI's own contribution in the forest arena has also changed; this has implications for its future priorities and approaches. Consequently, the purpose of the Strategic Plan is to re-establish TBI's niche and approaches, justify the choices TBI makes with regard to its thematic priorities, target groups and approaches, build internal ownership and enhance TBI's corporate profile.



In TBI's vision, tropical forests have critical contributions to make in providing the range of goods and services required by local communities and the people of the world. Well-managed forests — as components of productive landscapes — can simultaneously contribute to the objectives of alleviating poverty, providing ecosystem services and fostering sustainable economic development.

Any real long-term improvement in the use and conservation of forests requires knowledge and skills. Public, corporate and civil society decision makers — with access to credible knowledge and independent information — are more likely to make decisions that are fair and sustainable. Informed decision making also requires strong individual, organizational and institutional governance and management capacities across the forest sector and beyond, as well as effective multi-actor networks and platforms for sharing knowledge.

TBI's Goals

TBI's core business is making knowledge work for forests and people.

- TBI's mission is to improve tropical forest governance and management in order to support conservation and sustainable development.
- TBI's goal is to achieve the sustainable management of tropical forest lands for the benefit of people, conservation and sustainable development.
- TBI's objective is to ensure that knowledge is used effectively in the formulation of appropriate policies and in the management of forests for conservation and sustainable development.

TBI's Functions

For partners and stakeholders in partner countries, the Netherlands, the European Union and internationally, TBI fulfils a variety of functions:

- intermediary and knowledge broker
- needs-oriented developer of knowledge and capacity
- platform for and facilitator of evidence-based multi-stakeholder dialogue
- agenda setting and advice
- fostering critical and reflective thinking
- advancing the international forest dialogue
- network and linkage for forest actors

TBI's Value

- Respected, well-connected staff in established offices
- Extensive local and international networks and partnerships
- Integration of knowledge across disciplines and sectors
- Practical expertise in forest management and policy
- Ownership and participation by stakeholders
- Interaction between international and national forest agendas
- Orientation on stakeholders' needs

TBI's Approach

TBI's approaches recognize that good decisions depend on credible, relevant and practical knowledge and information. Good decisions also require strong individual and organizational capacity and institutional governance across the forest sector, as well as strong networks and platforms for the sharing of knowledge. Knowledge must be targeted to the right audiences. Sound information that supports societal processes has the capacity to resolve and prevent conflicts and dilemmas.

TBI's approach has several important components:

- TBI enables comprehensive, evidence-based multi-stakeholder dialogues that are supported by the generation of critical knowledge, development of local capacities, and strengthening of institutions.
- TBI is an intermediary, linking policy makers, practitioners and knowledge providers; formal, professional and traditional knowledge; and northern and southern actors.

- TBI is a knowledge broker, helping people make their own choices by developing scenarios and mapping their consequences.
- TBI supports partnerships by engaging scientists, policy makers, the private sector, local communities and civil society at the local, national, regional and global level in collaborative action.
- TBI achieves local impacts by creating lasting and dependable local policy and knowledge networks that are supported by effective country offices in a range of partner countries.
- TBI supports communication by adapting knowledge into practical information for policy makers and forest practitioners.

TBI's target groups

- Forest-dependent people
- Policy makers and regulators
- Practitioners, forest managers, forest owners and forest users
- Non-Governmental Organizations and civil society
- Researchers and educators





Principal strategic choices

TBI's strategic plan for 2011– 2016 builds on the strengths that it has developed over the past 25 years. The plan sets out some clear choices that will strengthen TBI's core business: making knowledge work for forests and people.

- While maintaining its local relevance and responsiveness to international policy priorities, TBI will focus its activities on four key global issues for improving forest management for people, conservation and sustainable development: 1) productive landscapes; 2) sustainable timber trade; 3) local governance and community management of forests; and 4) innovative financing mechanisms.
- The strategic plan strongly articulates TBI's work as an intermediary and knowledge broker, linking policy with knowledge communities, policy makers with corporate and community practitioners, the forest sector with other sectors, and northern with southern actors and agendas.
- TBI will make knowledge work by providing information and facilitating access to it, building capacities, strengthening organizations and enabling evidence-based dialogue through collaborative activities with partners in country programmes and internationally.
- TBI will increase its effectiveness by actively promoting collaboration between public, civil and private sector efforts in its four key themes, both in the Netherlands and in the programme countries.
- TBI will diversify its funding base as a key strategy to maintain institutional sustainability.





Key themes

Productive landscapes provide the context for TBI's thematic choices. Productive, well-managed tropical landscapes are critical in supporting the goals of sustainable development. The resources they provide — agricultural and forest products, water and ecosystem services — support sustainable growth, jobs and self-reliance in developing countries, and produce goods for international trade. International public goods provided by productive landscapes, such as climate stability and biodiversity, represent a shared interest for international collaborative action between the developing world and the global community.

Within this broad context, TBI will focus on four themes related to pressing forest-related challenges on the global development policy agenda:

1. **productive landscapes** that fulfill the multiple purposes of agriculture, water provision, forestry and poverty alleviation while sustaining critical biodiversity and climate functions;
2. **sustainable timber trade** for domestic and international markets;
3. **local governance and community management** of forests as a condition for sustainable local economic activities and forest conservation; and
4. **innovative financing mechanisms** for sustainable forest management.





These key themes address key global challenges for improving forest management for people, conservation and sustainable development. They address relevant issues for local livelihoods and national forest policies and practices in the countries where TBI works, and in domains where TBI's approaches and partnerships provide added value. Together, they incorporate the legacy of knowledge, experience and stakeholder recognition that TBI has gained over the years.

The themes incorporate several concepts:

- forests as an engine for **local and international entrepreneurship** and poverty alleviation;
- forests as providers of **international public goods** such as climate stability and biodiversity;
- the importance of legitimate **forest governance** as an enabling condition for poverty alleviation, fair and sustainable trade and sustainable economic development; and
- the development of effective and equitable **international policies and markets** related to climate, responsible trade and legality vis-à-vis forests, forest-dependent people and forest landscapes.





Productive landscapes

TBI defines productive landscapes as being capable of providing a wide range of products and ecosystem services and that fulfill the economic and environmental requirements of current and future generations at the local, national and global level. They consist of mosaics of interdependent elements, including croplands and pastures, agro-forests, watersheds, wetlands, forests and other (near) natural ecosystems, as well as wood plantations and urban and infrastructure elements.

Intensified agriculture, small-scale agro-industrial wood production, small-scale logging from farmlands, water capture and storage, restoration of forests, biodiversity conservation and biomass storage are examples of local and global functions that can be achieved in these productive landscapes. A range of actors exerts competing claims on the natural resources found in these landscapes. Landscapes are considered “productive” where mechanisms — based on inclusive and informed negotiation of the interests of stakeholders — exist to resolve competing claims, and where the land is used in a legal, legitimate and sustainable way.

Achieving productive landscapes is a huge challenge. Tens of millions of hectares of land are located in areas that were forested as recently as fifty years ago but degraded now. Forests, often degraded, survive as remnants in a matrix of lands used for other purposes. Millions of people live in and depend on these degraded landscapes.

Sustainable development is possible when landscape planning and management are based on adaptive learning processes and when ownership and tenure — as well as social, economic, cultural and environmental values and the aspirations of local inhabitants — are taken into account. The main challenge is to reconcile the competing claims and interests of multiple stakeholders at various spatial scales. This requires informed negotiated trade-offs of landscape-level functions in a way that leads to resilient and flexible solutions that promote local economic development, increase food security and water management and benefit livelihoods and the environment.

In its work, TBI emphasizes the critical contribution of forests in productive landscapes:

- forest ecosystems (and trees) are integrated and indispensable components of productive multiple use landscapes;
- forests provide extensive environmental, social and economic values, including stable environments for the production of food, energy and clean water, and deliver global public goods such as climate stability and biodiversity in developing countries;
- natural resources from forests contribute directly to economic development and poverty alleviation;
- much of the land needed to address food, water and climate crises is currently forested or was recently deforested;
- forests occupy more than half of the land in dozens of tropical countries; and
- more than a billion poor people depend on forested landscapes.

Productive landscapes are landscapes capable of providing a wide range of products and ecosystem services and fulfilling the economic and environmental requirements and aspirations of present and future generations at the local, national and global level.



Theme: Management of multi-functional landscapes

The effects of climate change, sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation need to be considered at the landscape scale. Several conditions are necessary for the productive use of landscapes: good governance, sustainable resource management and effective management of global public goods.

The ability of forests to support agriculture and water production and to provide global public goods should be factored into land-use decisions at the landscape level. This is particularly important in dynamic landscapes that are subject to competing interests among local, national and international actors, due, for example, to agro-commodity production and infrastructural developments.

TBI supports the conversion of recently transformed forest landscapes across the tropics into productive, resilient and multi-functional landscapes. TBI programmes will strengthen landscape governance by incorporating information about the socio-economic and environmental basis of livelihoods into decision-making processes. The principal means by which TBI achieves this goal are the development and application of participatory planning, negotiation and adaptive learning tools; support for participatory and informed decision making; and evaluation of the effectiveness of landscape-level interventions in terms of livelihoods, biodiversity and environmental services. Initiatives will be aimed at good governance at a range of spatial scales, and will include strategies for increasing food security, responsible land use, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



Theme: Sustainable trade for domestic and international markets

Increasingly, international trade and market instruments are being used to promote the responsible production of commodities originating in multi-purpose landscapes. Although the international dimension of the timber trade is widely known, the importance of sustainable trade for the domestic and international markets for providing livelihoods and fuelling local development has only recently been recognized.

TBI's objective will be to contribute to providing the foundations for effective regulatory and market actions that bring the large and poorly regulated domestic timber trade under regimes that increase sustainability, reduce conflict and satisfy rural livelihood needs. TBI's work will focus on understanding the extent, drivers and impacts of the small-scale domestic timber trade and on the social and environmental impacts of implementing international market and policy initiatives.

These efforts will emphasize the impacts of illegal logging, forest degradation, competing claims on forest resources and inequities on the distribution of timber-related benefits. They will also address the potential of small enterprises to foster local development. These initiatives are considered in the context of international efforts to promote legal and sustainable forest management, including FLEGT¹, forest certification and REDD+².

1 The Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade action plan of the European Union.

2 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries



Theme: Local governance and community management of forests

From the perspective of poverty and livelihoods, the merits of local governance and community management of forests are subject to debate. Discussions centre on the extent to and conditions under which local and indigenous authority and knowledge benefit livelihoods and improve ecosystem functions.

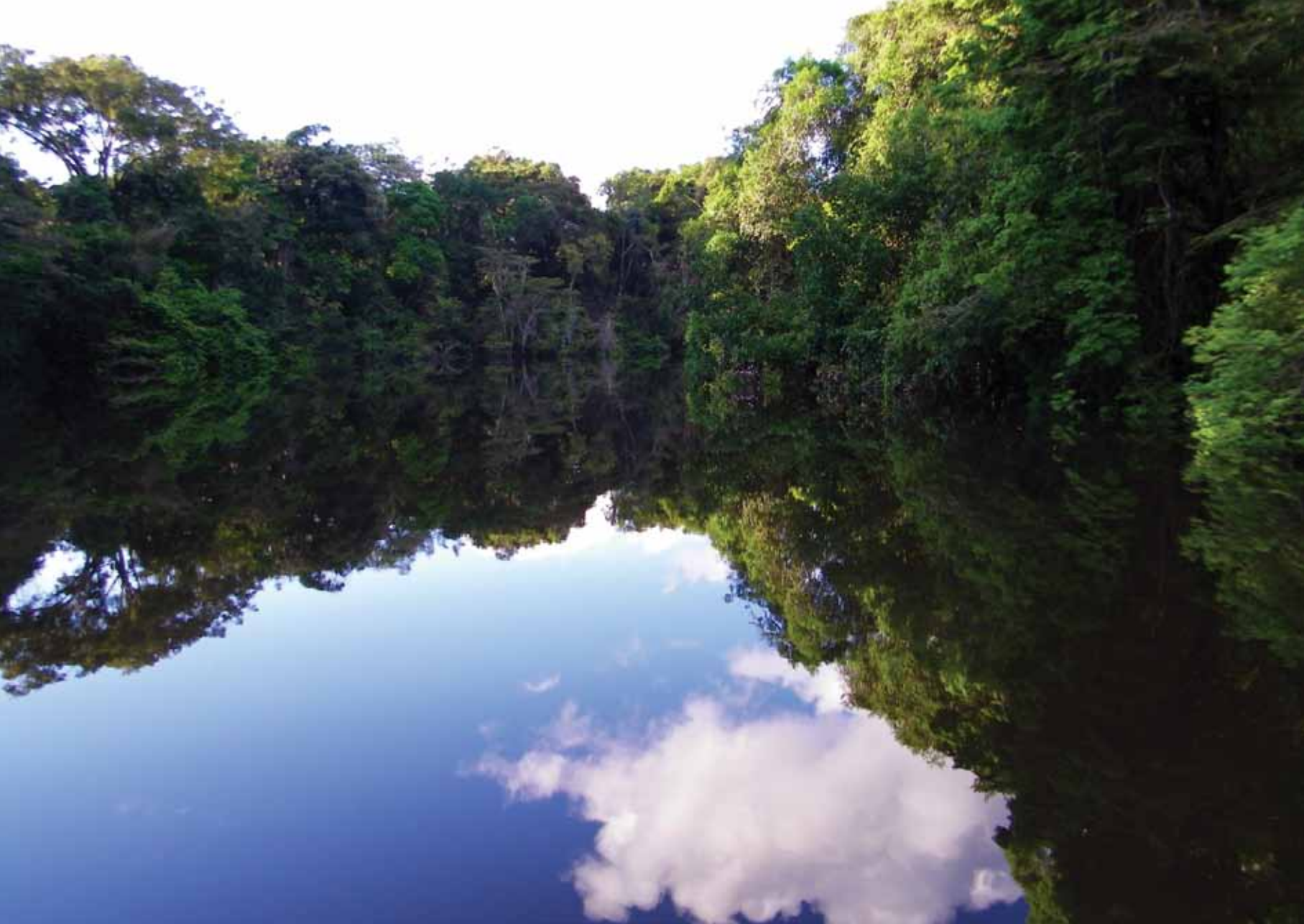
TBI will contribute relevant and practical information to the debate and to the practice of local and decentralized forest governance. The aim is to inform the development of effective local and decentralized forest management arrangements (including ownership and tenure), address weaknesses in current arrangements, and improve the way in which local and/or community interests are addressed in government, non-government and corporate policies related to natural resources and landscape management in TBI's partner countries. The broad context for these efforts is the influence of external policies and markets on local governance arrangements and institutions, and how this affects the balance between local and central control over forests.



Theme: Financing sustainable forest management

Financing the cost of sustainable forest management addresses the lack of financial incentives for multi-purpose forest management, which is an important driver of deforestation and forest degradation. There is a broadly recognized need to make multi-functional forest management attractive to a wide range of investors. This requires measures at different levels (local, national and international) that consider forest management and forest managers, all stakeholders and all financing (investment and payment) mechanisms. These measures must be embedded in a context that supports multi-functional forest management.

TBI aims to understand and improve locally and culturally relevant financing mechanisms for forest communities and small enterprises, including the financing of small-scale, informal livelihoods. Further, TBI will support the development of broadened forest financing policies and mechanisms, both nationally and internationally. This will support the emergence of international frameworks of new and promising financing sources, instruments and mechanisms to enhance the financing of sustainable forest management and climate change mitigation.



Approaches

Making knowledge work through knowledge, capacity building and dialogue



TBI's approaches emphasize the importance of informed multi-stakeholder dialogue in achieving sustainable solutions for practical and relevant problems. By improving knowledge, personal capacities and institutional competence, TBI contributes to better governance and management of tropical forest resources. TBI mobilizes the research capacity and expertise of universities and institutes to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, technologies and expertise. In addition, TBI provides independent supportive

and advisory services related to tropical forest issues and development to the Netherlands government, its embassies, host country governments and international organizations, and the private sector.

Country programmes

Country programmes are a key component of TBI's approach. In each of its country programmes, TBI organizes joint activities with partners and creates networks in which it links with researchers, policy makers and practitioners. These efforts are supported by an agreement with a government ministry responsible for forests or the environment and are guided by a Bi-National Committee consisting of key forest sector stakeholders. TBI has country programmes in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Suriname and Viet Nam, most of whom have bilateral development relationships with the Netherlands.



TBI country programmes and year of inception. Solid symbols: country programmes (2012–2016); Open symbols: project activities.

Country programmes allow TBI to accomplish several goals:

- establish itself among the research community and practitioners as a trusted and well-connected partner;
- promote bottom-up and top-down exchanges and interactions between local and international forest actors, focusing on TBI's high-priority themes; and
- apply lessons learned and exchange information among partner countries.

International activities

TBI's international approach is strongly focused on its four key themes. Generation and dissemination of knowledge and fostering informed dialogue — based on experiences in the country programmes — are central to these efforts. Internationally, TBI provides networking and advisory services and conducts policy and impact analysis that support its thematic expertise; link its national, thematic and international components; and provide value to donors:

- theme-oriented participation in international policy discussions;
- analysis and impact evaluation of international policies and initiatives; and
- networking, sharing of knowledge and international exposure for country programme experiences.

Partnership

Increasingly, the business community has taken the lead in promoting sustainable procurement and trade, and in implementing corporate social responsibility practices. Knowledge, innovative ideas and evaluation of the impacts of business policies and practices will be needed to increase the impact of these efforts on sustainable development. Each of TBI's key themes provides opportunities for meaningful engagement with the private sector:

- implementing responsible forestry and plantation practices (High Conservation Value approach, certification, reduced-impact logging);
- developing inclusive business investment models for multi-functional forest management;
- clarifying relationships between community forest management and local and international commodity production and trade (logging, oil palm, carbon trade);
- supporting small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) as a driver of sustainable economic growth; and
- promoting good governance to allow market mechanisms to operate effectively and fairly in order for the forest product trade to drive local development.





Communication

Effective communication is critical to increasing the impact of TBI's mission and programme objectives. Communication priorities address the three main dimensions of TBI's work:

- TBI country programmes – aiming at national impacts, recognition and visibility;
- TBI's themes – aiming at impacts, recognition and visibility in community forestry, landscape management, sustainable trade and financial mechanisms for SFM, nationally, internationally and in the Netherlands;
- TBI's approaches – aiming at impacts, recognition and visibility for the way TBI organizes its research, capacity development, organizational strengthening and dialogue.

TBI communications efforts support four goals:

- adoption of findings, particularly those related to the four key themes;
- increased awareness and understanding of local and global forest issues related to TBI's priorities;
- support for partners and stakeholders to participate in evidence-based multi-stakeholder dialogue and communicate effectively about information and information needs; and
- increased exposure and visibility for TBI as a trusted partner and source of reliable and accurate information on forests, forest-dependent livelihoods and sustainable development.

By making knowledge work for forests and people, Tropenbos International contributes to well-informed decision making for improved management and governance of tropical forests. Our longstanding local presence and ability to bring together local, national and international partners make us a trusted partner in sustainable development.

