

# The ASB Consortium

## Innovations to reduce poverty and conserve tropical forests

The Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn Consortium (ASB) works on two interlinked global problems: the environmental effects of forest destruction and persistent rural poverty in the tropics.

### How ASB Works: Local Collaboration, Global Partnerships

ASB, a system-wide programme of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) operating since 1994, is a partnership of over 50 institutions around the world, including research institutes, NGOs, universities, community organizations, farmers' groups, and other local, national, and international partners. The programme was born out of recommendations agreed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, appearing in Chapter 11 (Combating Deforestation) of Agenda 21. The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) hosts the Global Coordination Office in Nairobi, Kenya. ASB is governed by a Global Steering Group of 11 leading partners.

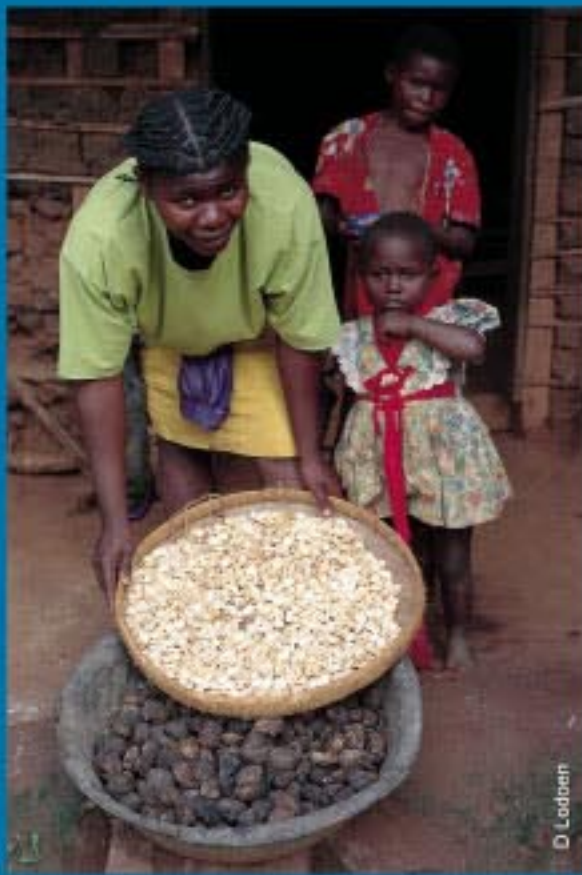


ASB focuses its efforts where global environmental problems and poverty coincide at the margins of the remaining tropical forests. Deforestation is often blamed on the slash-and-burn practices of migrant smallholders, millions of whom do clear and cultivate small areas of forest by this method. However, other groups also are involved, including plantation owners, other medium- and large-scale farmers, ranchers, loggers and state-run enterprises and projects. These groups often clear much larger areas, leading to conflict with traditional users.

**The fundamental challenge of ASB is to identify innovative policies, institutions, and technologies that can reconcile two of the great issues of our time: tropical forest conservation and poverty reduction.**

### Science grounded in local reality

Sustained collaboration by ASB partners has established benchmark sites in the Amazon of Brazil and Peru, the Congo Basin forest of Cameroon, the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, the northern mountains of Thailand, and the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Through this network of sites that spans the humid tropics, ASB ensures that analyses of local and national perspectives and the search for alternatives are grounded in reality.



Bush mango kernels and other agroforestry products are important food sources for this mother and daughter and many other rural families in Cameroon.



Resin harvest in damar agroforests in Indonesia, which were threatened by conversion to large-scale oil palm plantations. An innovative 1998 decree recognized the environmental benefits of this indigenous forest-like system – which is created by local smallholders – and guaranteed these communities' rights to harvest products from their trees.



Members of a Karen community in Northern Thailand, known for their sustainable mosaics of land uses. NGOs and researchers are working to develop techniques local groups can use to monitor watershed functions.



National teams develop methods for monitoring greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts to assess land use alternatives.

## ASB's expanding impact pathways

ASB research influences national development and environmental strategies through:  
 ... technology, policy and institutional innovation  
 ... investments to enhance capacity of ASB partners

ASB's solid scientific foundation has global influence through impacts  
 ... on science  
 ... on international organizations and global fora  
 ... on multinational corporations  
 ... and as a prototype for research on integrated natural resource management (INRM)

ASB has been heralded as a prototype of successful application of the INRM methodology. For example, the May 2003 World Bank report *CGIAR at 31: A Meta-Evaluation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research* recognizes that "ASB has been applauded ... for innovative field research, strong science, and for going furthest within the CGIAR toward implementing effectively a holistic, ecoregional approach founded on in-depth local research linked methodologically across long-term benchmark sites around the world to permit effective scaling up to global level. The intellectual value of this work has derived from the synthesis afforded by careful methodological coordination across sites on different continents, and close working relationships with ARIs and NARS" (from p. 15 of the *Thematic Working Paper on Natural Resources Management Research in CGIAR* by C Barrett).

