

Non-Timber Forest Products for Livelihood Security of Tribal Communities: A Case Study in Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal, in India is the most infertile zone with extreme denudation and erosion of the lateritic soil. Lands are mostly rain-fed with very little irrigation. The present study with geo-botanical approach has been conducted in the district to collect data on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) to include information on what is collected, who collects it, quantities and uses. In study area the only crop is a single paddy harvest, thus products from the forest play a significant role in the livelihood of local people, particularly the tribal communities. The study shows the importance of understanding the diversity of use values which should be assigned to forest lands. A full understanding of the complexity of forest usage by local tribal communities leads to a need to change management strategies for these areas. This study looks at local use of non-timber forest products gathered from these degraded forest areas. It highlights the importance of understanding how tribal communities use forests, and the need to broaden the objectives of management of these forests to include a multiplicity of objectives and products with geo-botanical approach.