

Preserve the past to enrich the future

HELP provide families with a sustainable forest-based income



“Oh God, I am climbing the coconut tree,” he whispers. “Protect me from harm.”

With no safety gear beyond a strap of palm frond tied around his ankles, he launches himself onto the tree’s arcing trunk, which rises dozens of feet into the air. With a swift series of spider-like maneuvers, he is at the top of the tree within seconds, slicing the nuts from their stems with a heavy blade he carries tucked into his loincloth. One misstep and he would surely fall, as much as 100 feet to the ground.

Indonesia, India and the Philippines are the main producers of Coconut Palm tree related products and produce more than 50 billion coconuts a year, a tropical bonanza that feeds a billion-dollar industry. Just about every coconut is plucked by hand.

Plucking coconuts is a job that has been in Mr. Mohan’s family for generations. All his uncles and brothers were pluckers. This was the ancient and seemingly immutable destiny of all sons of a handful of communities, or untouchable, caste. But Mr. Mohan, who like many southern Indians uses only his surname and a first initial, would never allow his son, Shabu, who finished high school, to take up the work. Nor would he let his daughter, Shalini, who also went to school, marry a plucker. None of his brothers or sisters allowed their children to become pluckers, either.

“It is a risky job,” said Mr. Mohan’s wife, Girija. “Our people can choose now. Nobody would choose this work.”

And so a relatively prosperous and well-governed state in southern India, is in the grips of an acute shortage of coconut pluckers that threatens to undermine one of its most important industries. The scarcity of coconut pluckers in Kerala illustrates the loosening of the once rigid caste bonds in many parts of India, freeing young people from hereditary jobs. Unlike northern states, where caste remains a force and education remains out of reach for many, Kerala has a 100 percent literacy rate, and the shackles of caste are looser than ever.

But this has created a crisis of its own: If no one wants to pluck coconuts anymore, how will this industry survive? Or ask yourself, what are we going to do with the Coconut palm plantations and retired trees?

## **Papua New Guinea**

In Papua New Guinea, Coconut Palm tree plantations are transformed into Oil Palm plantation or are making way for tuna canneries. Large co-operations offer small land owners / villagers a one off payment for their land. The sold land, which has been in the family for generations and supported the daily need of life with farming etc, is gone forever. These lands are then transformed into oil palm plantations for greater revenue or sold for re-development of factories.



## Indonesia

Coconut is a major tree crop in the Asia Pacific region and showed large areas with senile palms which are no longer productive. With Indonesia estimated of about 50% to 60% over-aged palms, the country has a coconut wood resource of approximately 185.6 million senile trees which could be cut down and replaced. Based on our calculated recovery, around 56 million cubic meters of sawn wood is available for economic utilization. But as of today these senile trees are slashed and burned.

## Borneo

In Borneo the WWF stops further developing of forest into Palm Oil plantations and 200,000ha of rainforest has become a protective area.

It is hard to overstate the importance of coconuts to life. Every last bit of the coconut tree and its fruit is put to use. Some use coconut tree roots to brush their teeth in the morning, and fall asleep under a roof of fronds at night.

The coconut oil and flesh are used not only in food, but also as ingredients in myriad beauty products, including glistening hair oil and creamy skin moisturizers. Its bristly fiber is a major export product, providing doormats to the world. Its wood is used to build houses, bridges and boats.

Coconut Palm wood trees are essential to the economy

Choose wisely it's everybody's future