

# The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) services in the forest ecosystems of Western Ghats: A case study

Recognising the importance of valuing the ecosystem services, the TEEB-India initiative (TII) has been launched by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate change for the forests, wetlands, coastal and marine ecosystems. This study, funded by The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Ministry of Environment and Forests, GoI, is part of the TII initiative on forest ecosystems for which Western Ghats has been considered as study region as it is the most bio-diverse hotspots in India.

A comprehensive evaluation of the ecosystem services enables visualisation of the trade-offs that different groups of people face clearly in addition to guiding efficient resource allocations, providing a hint at the future uncertainties in resource availability, designing biodiversity conservation programs, highlight the distortions from non-recognition of values from ecosystem services.

The objective of this study is to assess the ecological and economic values provided by the ecosystem services in Western Ghats. Uttara Kannada district has been selected as the representative study region as it is representative of the diversity of the Western Ghats. A key contribution of this report is the biophysical quantification of biodiversity and some of the key ecosystems services. Data was generated using

standard field ecological methods during 2014, based on the permanent plots established in the region, and the monetisation of values based on primary survey of various stakeholders in the region. The study indicated that forest ecosystems underpin the wellbeing of populations directly and indirectly dependent on them. The study also revealed important synergies and trade-offs faced in the selected study area of Western Ghats.

The study revealed that there are important trade-offs faced in the region. It needs to be clarified that the total economic value should be used only to compare two alternate scenarios. In the present case, the comparison should be between the present scenario of flow of benefit in a highly regulated regime vis-à-vis, the alternate scenario in which forest conversion is not regulated and hence the benefits are absent.

