



Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung
Center for Development Research
University of Bonn

‘Development’ – our view at the Center for Development Research (ZEF)

The study of development^{*)} at ZEF is carried forward through study into human and environmental change. Through our research, we aim to support and inform local and international efforts to improve human well-being and ecological balance. In striving for a fairer and more equal world, we work to increase understanding of development and contribute to initiatives that build toward sustainability and the enhancement of the livelihoods of people, in particular the poor and marginalized. As a trans-disciplinary research institute, we continually seek to broaden and challenge leading scientific inquiry into processes of global change. Our views of development are embodied in research areas, strategies and methodologies that evolve from empirical study and academic and inter-cultural exchange.

**) As both actors in, and critics of development, the ZEF understands that the concept of ‘development’ has often had questionable implications and spawned contradictions. It can imply that some ‘developed’ societies, often those in Western Europe, North America and East Asia are more advanced than others, and that the goal of the ‘less developed’ others should be to imitate their ‘success’, whereas in some (notably ecological) aspects ‘developed’ societies may not be superior at all. Development also suggests that there is a modern form of knowledge governing how people should live and that visions of a ‘good society’ other than that of industrialized, capitalist states are flawed or inferior. This hegemonic view squeezes out alternative visions and implies that improving livelihoods and reducing inequality can be achieved mainly through technocratic projects with little local involvement that avoid difficult but necessary political questions and relations of power at sub-national, national and international levels.*