

# **Participation in FSC certified Community Forest Management Projects in the Brazilian Amazon**

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Are there ways that timber certification agreements can be improved to better serve poverty-alleviation goals? To what extent can the certification of NTFPs contribute to that function? Are there particular constraints against the participation of the poor in certification agreements? If so, how can they be successfully addressed?

## **SUMMARY**

Since the first Workshop on Community Forest Management in the Brazilian state of Acre in 1998 efforts have focused on improving livelihoods through community forest management while striving for Forest Stewardship Council certification. The Brazilian Amazon embodies the long history of attempts at attending to the needs of both rural communities and the environment.

This paper presents a description of the discussion on certification in Brazil, focusing on community forest management projects in the state of Acre. Interviews with actors from public, private, third and intergovernmental sectors of society on local, national and international levels provide insights into the major dilemmas facing the certification of community forest management projects. Literature and interviews provide varying perspectives on the topic of certification, while a questionnaire more carefully examines the production and commercialisation process of five community forest management projects to understand the participation of the four sectors in each project and the corresponding participation of the community.

By discussing participation and the certification process this paper defines the key challenges to the implementation of timber certification agreements. Findings concern participation, technical assistance, production, costs and non-timber forest products. Recommendations suggest how more participatory and affordable timber certification agreements might be implemented as to maximize the possibility of improving livelihoods and reducing poverty in community forest management in the Amazon.

## **CERTIFICATION IN BRAZIL**

Twenty-nine certified operations manage 1,247,000 hectares, which is the total area of certified forests in Brazil. The representative of the Rainforest Alliance/Smart Wood Program in Brazil, Instituto de Manejo e Certificação Florestal e Agrícola (IMAFLOA), certifies 53%, or almost 700,000 hectares of this total, monitoring the majority of Brazilian certified forests. The three other Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accredited organizations are Scientific Certification Systems, Inc (30%), Société Générale de Surveillance Forestry, Ltd. (13%) and Skal (4%). While other systems have appeared since the creation of the FSC they still represent inferior standards, as is the case with CERFLOR the Brazilian forest certification jointly created by Sociedade Brasileira de Silvicultura (SBS), Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (ABNT) and Instituto Nacional de Metrologia, Normalização e Qualidade Industrial (INMETRO) (Greenpeace Brazil, 2002).

About .05% or 5,109 hectares of the total certified forests is community managed. The Associação do Projeto Agroextrativista Chico Mendes (Cachoeira) became the first community managed forestry project in 2002 and was recently joined by the Associação de Seringueiros de Porto Dias (Porto Dias) in 2003. These two community associations have met the Brazilian FSC certification standards previously set for all operations no matter what the scale. This is a difficult task for any organisation given the bureaucratic demands in forest certification, but even more so for communities confronting challenges in organizational and physical infrastructure.

### **Research Problem**

The challenges to communities seeking certification are subject to discussion in several forums in Brazil. Certification issues are addressed by the FSC Working Group in Brazil; the national Work Group on Community Forest Management; and the Buyers Group for Certified Forest Products. Annually, these groups hold forums at which they address the issues and challenges surrounding the certification of community forest management (CFM). Several other opportunities for discussion also exist in workshops or seminars offered by public and third sector organizations such as ProManejo and IMAZON, amongst others.

The Work Group on Community Forest Management directly involves members of community associations and their technical advisors in their annual workshops. Beginning in 1998, yearly workshops discuss policy, production processes, market conditions, credit and funding, certification, and the challenges and accomplishments in CFM (Armelin 2002). In 1999 communities were encouraged to start to meet certification criteria while still in the initial stages of their projects. The incentive of increased profits drove the initial push for certification of community forest management projects (Armelin 2000).

Questions existed, however, concerning the appropriateness of FSC criteria for CFM required by timber certification agreements. In 1999 during a workshop field day exercise community members outlined criteria for an imaginary “community certification”. When compared later to the FSC criteria it matched almost identically (Armelin 2000). The workshop held by the Work Group in Rio Branco, Acre, in 2000 continued the discussion on certification criteria, but this time with a different set of

community members and their technical advisors. Once again the community members were asked about the necessary criteria for good community forest management. The participants consolidated their votes and arrived at a list of fifteen necessary components (Hummel and Amaral 2001).

**Figure 1: Necessary Aspects to Good CFM**

- Low impact
  - Environmental benefits
  - Respect for legislation
  - Economic benefits
  - Distribution of benefits
  - Social benefits
  - Guarantee of forest regeneration
  - Community involvement
  - Community organization
  - Planning
  - Respect for the customs and power of community decisions
  - Adequate technical criteria
  - Training
  - Safety and good equipment
  - Monitoring
- (Hummel and Amaral 2001)

For a second year in a row the criterion are still identical. The ability of Cachoeira and Porto Dias to achieve certification in conjunction with the field day conclusions illustrates that FSC criterion are reasonable requirements for CFM and, therefore, the difficulties in certification faced by communities are not caused by inappropriate criteria.

In November of 2002 in Rio Branco, Acre, the FSC Working Group held a workshop on adjusting FSC standards and criteria to fit small-scale and group forestry. Local and national participants from the public, private, third and inter-governmental sectors indicated the need for a more democratic and accessible certification process and simplifying FSC standards (Cesare 2002). The FSC Work Group acknowledged that while standards must be simplified, it is the more democratic certification process that is the primary focus.

The differences between the criteria established by the community in 2000 and FSC criteria emphasize community involvement, community organization and community participation. These key factors to a democratic process occur in the implementation of certification agreements and are re-emphasized by the conclusions of the FSC Work Group. Incongruously, however, implementation of certification in CFM relies heavily on the technical assistance and funding of the public, private, third and inter-governmental sectors to assist the communities to attain current standards of certification. Such a degree of external assistance discourages community involvement, organisation and participation and, consequently, hinders a more democratic and accessible certification process.

**Research Question**

How can certification agreements in community forest management (CFM) be implemented to maximize the possibility of improving livelihoods and reducing poverty?

This paper answers this question with the following structure. First, the paper reviews the methodology used in obtaining the findings, which are presented in the third section. The methodology reviews the author’s fieldwork and proceeds to present the

paper's five key findings, which represent the challenges to the implementation of certification agreements. The conclusion follows with a discussion of the findings and, finally, the paper presents five recommendations in response to the research problem.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to answer this question the author began her field research in Brazil in September of 2002. The research undertaken is in pursuit of a PhD in Social Policy from the London School of Economics and concerns the role of the private sector in certified community forest management projects in the Brazilian Amazon.

The field research was completed in two years due to the rainy season in the Amazon and its effect on the timber harvesting seasons. The first year, which was completed in December 2002, served to ground the research in the reality of community forestry in the Brazilian Amazon. Its objective was to solidify the research question, to determine the challenges relevant to CFM surrounding certification and to select case studies.

The methodology consisted of semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. Interviewees were both directly and indirectly related to certification through CFM. The semi-structured interviews involved selecting three interviewees from each quadrant of a table divided by geographical levels and social sectors. Geographical levels consist of representatives from local, national and international organizations. Social sectors divide into public, private, third and inter-governmental sectors. The state or government organizations and departments make up the public sector. The private and third sectors are defined as for-profit and non-profit, respectively, and the inter-governmental sector refers to bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies. Simple definitions have been applied at this time but are discussed further in the thesis.

**Figure 2. Example Interview Table**

Type of Organization	Local	National	International
Third			
Public			
Private			
Intergovernmental			

Although a total of 36 interviews should be the result, three interviewees were absent from the inter-governmental sector since there were no local representatives and three interviewees were not available on an international level for the public sector. The decision to pursue three representatives from each sector was to try to obtain differing opinions from varying levels of technical expertise and of exposure to the reality of the projects.

The semi-structured interview followed a loose outline surrounding the challenges to CFM. The author invited opinions on the problems in achieving long-term social, environmental and economic sustainability of CFM. Discussion consistently raised issues of certification, more specifically, the challenges to certification. Of the 30

interviewees, 10 are directly associated with certification, either as members of certifying organisations or linked to projects in the certification process. The other 20 are indirectly related, therefore, providing a diverse range of opinions on the certification process.

The researcher selected five of the fifteen existing CFM projects in Brazil to apply a questionnaire. The four CFM projects in the state of Acre were selected because of accessibility and diversity of representation and the fifth, located in Amazonas, was researched simply because the opportunity arose. There are currently only two certified CFM projects in Brazil. Both were analysed and compared to the three other case studies planning for certification. The questionnaire consisted of a table outlining the production and commercialisation process, which included certification. After consulting a forestry engineer and production manuals each step of the production process for each project was identified and discussed (Amaral, Veríssimo et al. 1998).

**Figure 3. Example of Questionnaire**

Please give the name and type of organization for each step. 1. Community members 2. Local Company 3. National Company 4. Local government 5. National government 6. Local NGO 7. National NGO etc.				
Activity	Completed by	Funded by	Ideally completed by	Ideally funded by
Management Plan				
Forest Census				
Vines Cut				
Etc...				

The coordinator of each project was asked who completed each step, how it was funded, and whom they felt should complete and fund the step, in their interpretation of the ideal situation for the community. These answers were then categorized into the type of organization (public, private, third, intergovernmental, local, national, international) funding and/or executing the project in relation to participation of the community members. The questionnaire established an arena to discuss the challenges facing each step of the production and commercialisation process, including the implementation of the certification agreement. Project managers raised both the concerns of community members and the difficulties they themselves faced as intermediaries between community members and certifiers.

This paper draws from literature on certification, secondary data, interviews and the questionnaire to understand the challenges to certification agreements within CFM. The methodology allows for the key issues to filter out through a triangulation of the various sources. The challenges to the implementation of certification agreements come to the forefront and examples of ways in which to confront these challenges discovered.

## FINDINGS

In order to improve rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation through the implementation of certification agreements a clear definition of the target group is necessary. The FSC Work Group workshop in Rio Branco took the first essential step to addressing poverty alleviation by identifying the forest target groups and discussing and defining Small and Low-Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) which embody these groups.

Target groups within Brazil were identified as,

- Small or micro-businesses in forest management using up to 2,000m<sup>3</sup>/year in logs
- Small property owners
- Re-settled rural land-owners with less than 100 hectares
- Extractivists
- Re-settled extractivists on land up to 800 hectares
- Members of extractive reserves on land up to 800 hectares
- Businesses that work with NTFPs that do not involve logging or the removal of trees (Cesare 2002)

By defining SLIMFs the FSC Work Group in Brazil could focus on the social groups in the Amazon facing poverty. With this in mind, conclusions on the criteria for small managed forests and for low-intensity forests were:

Small Managed Forests include:

1. Areas equal to 3,000 hectares total managed forest with a maximum volume of 1 m<sup>3</sup> of timber per hectare per year.  
ie. 500 hectares logging 500 m<sup>3</sup>/yr
2. 3,000 hectares for individual forest management of NTFPs.  
See low intensity forests.
3. up to 3,000 hectares of collective forest management with an annual logging area limited to 500 hectares per year and annual volume determined at x% of total volume.
4. Up to 3,000 hectares of group total with groups limited to 50 members and annual logging cannot exceed 10% of total area.  
All group members should either be small or re-settled property owners with 100 hectares or, should be members of an extractive reserve or resettlement project with a total of 800 hectares (Cesare 2002)

Low-intensity forest management was determined to be:

3,000 hectares exclusively dedicated to NTFPs and not permitting tree removal. In the case of group certifications the group is limited to 50 members (Cesare 2002).

## **Participation**

Now that the communities targeted for improvements to rural livelihoods have been identified, the challenges to implementation of certification agreements can be discussed. The first topic of discussion is the participation of communities in the certification process. In all five of the case studies the community associations completed or have begun the certification process through an intermediary (Interviews 2002). This person comes from a local or national public or third sector organization. With a background in forestry and serving as a CFM project coordinator he or she assists the community in presenting a project proposal to a public, third or intergovernmental organization for funding. Once funding is obtained then community members begin CFM endeavours with the aim of becoming certified (Interviews 2002).

The community members depend on the project coordinator to seek information on certification and become the point of contact for the certification process (Interviews 2002). Responsibilities of the coordinator to the community members involve explaining the conditions required by certification and keeping them informed of progress and change while maintaining previous responsibilities (Interviews 2002). The coordinator also becomes their representative in workshops and meetings relating to CFM and certification. At this point the community members are dependent on their coordinator and, in a sense, excluded from most of the certification process.

## **Technical Support**

The second challenge to the implementation of certification agreements is translating technical requirements into a language the community members can understand and work with. Cachoeira needed to translate certifiers' requirements into terminology the community could relate to. Outside technical support explained certain requirements by trading in technical indicators for the "three generation rule". The "three generation rule" put preservation in terms community members recognized, using the terms grandmother trees, mother trees and daughter trees (Interviews 2002). Community members clearly understood at what stage trees could and could not be harvested.

The technical challenge to certification representatives is to be aware that the conditions they place on communities do not increase the participation of outside organisations. Conditions which require computers and technological expertise such as graphs or map-making abilities demand external assistance (Interviews 2002). This also applies to the language used in documents. The language of the certification documents of the two certified case studies, Cachoeira and Porto Dias required technical support from outside organisations to communicate with certifiers (Interviews 2002).

## **Production**

The demands of certifiers also impacts projects abilities to profit in certified timber markets. Implementation of certification demanding high production costs limits the abilities of CFM projects to compete in local, national and/or international, while the price for certified timber in markets available to community producers also restricts impacts to poverty alleviation. The case studies demonstrate that CFM projects cannot compete in the local market with illegal logging that floods the markets and lowers

prices. Instead, four out of the five projects turned to the certified timber market in Sao Paulo, a market which increases logistical difficulties and transportation costs (Interviews 2002). However, businesses belonging to the Buyers Group for Certified Forest Products, many of which are based in Sao Paulo, have made it clear that they would not pay a higher price for certified wood no matter what the source (Cesare 2002, Interviews 2002).

The projects illustrate a diverse spectrum of production processes from less intensive and more unique systems to intensive systems modelled after the private sector (Interviews 2002). The two extremes are exemplified by the only two certified CFM projects Cachoeira and Porto Dias. Cachoeira involves a small-scale production process that appeals to an elite group willing to pay added value for the unique designs given to the certified wood products. Porto Dias illustrates a production process on a larger scale in hopes of competing with small to medium size companies.

Cachoeira demonstrates a lower intensity production process providing a stepping-stone for communities in CFM's initial stages (Interviews 2002). Using privately owned chainsaws and teams of bull and cart, community members divide orders for specific timber amongst themselves, and then log what is available. The project maintains a unique business relationship with the private sector guaranteeing sales and incomes for community members. Cachoeira, however, is not an example of a readily replicated CFM project and is only capable of dealing with small quantities and specific sizes of certified timber.

In the case of Porto Dias technical advisors felt that in order to provide the necessary quantities and prices in the certification market their production process must replicate that of a small to medium sized timber company (Interviews 2002). Therefore, they selected a production process involving increased infrastructure and machinery, which placed higher demands on the community in terms of costs, organization and maintenance. In addition, more machinery meant higher production costs and environmental impact.

Both CFM projects have implemented opposite approaches to the production process to meet demands of the certified timber market. The implementation of distinct production processes is significant considering that Cachoeira received its certification within a year of its application, while Porto Dias took several years. Many believe that the path taken by Porto Dias required a higher level of community organisation creating difficulties to achieving certification (Interviews 2002). However, given the challenge facing Cachoeira to produce large quantities, Porto Dias is now better equipped to meet market demands (Interviews 2002). The certification implementation processes of these two projects show signs of impacting decision-making about production processes adopted by future CFM projects (Interviews 2000). The implication is, therefore, that certification implementation processes help determine the CFM production processes adopted in the future.

## **Costs**

One of the biggest challenges to the implementation process of certification of CFM is that of costs. Once again outside participation is necessary, since the costs of certification forces communities to seek funding from the public, third and intergovernmental sectors. To a community which is already trying to pay for the

costs of creating a forest management plan, machinery, safety equipment and infrastructure without any start-up capital, then certification fees are an additional burden on community financial resources (Hummel and Amaral 2001). The communities of the five case studies originate from extractivist backgrounds and, in all but one case, have no experience working with timber (Interviews 2002). This inexperience translates into large expenses for technical assistance with certification. With zero start-up capital available through banks the projects depend almost entirely on outside support either in cash or kind. Amazonian banks have begun to negotiate small credit lines for CFM, however, this is not yet in practice and may take some time before the demands of banks match the capabilities of communities (Interviews 2002).

**NTFPs**

Essential to the discussion of timber certification agreements is that of the lack of certification for non-timber forest products (NTFPs). The research found a large demand for the certification of NTFPs because of its inclusive, low impact income-generating possibilities (Interviews 2002).

Active participants in the collection and use of NTFPs included men and women of various ages and backgrounds (Interviews 2002). The extractivist backgrounds of the various groups indigenous to Acre provide a natural tendency towards the production and use of NTFPs (Interviews 2002). This has naturally included both men and women from their youth into their old age. In the interviewed CFM projects men and women, youth and elders participate in NTFP-related activities (Interviews 2002).

NTFPs are also highly promoted amongst those involved in CFM because of its low impact on the environment (Interviews 2002). Evidence can be found amongst the many programs and projects sponsored by governments, international organisations and non-profits which promote the use of NTFPs in the Brazilian Amazon claiming environmental sustainability as a primary reason (Interviews 2002). Additionally, studies show that of the possible income-generating scenarios in the Amazon, ranging from agriculture to forestry, extractivism surpasses all others in environmental sustainability (Nascimento Guerra 2002).

Finally, the CFM projects interviewed already demonstrate income generation through NTFPs (Interviews 2002). All are dependent on NTFPs as an income because of the four-month timber-harvesting season in Acre, which causes communities to turn towards agro-forestry and/or the processing of NTFPs the rest of the year (Interviews 2002). The table below illustrates the continuous and diverse income that NTFPs provide for the region of the four projects in Acre.

**Figure 4. Activities Calendar**

Activities	Seasons of the Year											
	Winter (Rain)				Summer (Dry)					Winter (Rain)		
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Rubber Tapping												
Brazil Nut												

Copaiba Oil	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Açaí	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Logging	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Native fruits	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Agro-forestry (Planting &Harvest)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

(Plano de Manejo Florestal Simples 2002)

The most common income-generating activities in Acre are the collection of rubber and brazil nut. Studies by the government of Acre have demonstrated that both provide substantial incomes and impact poverty and livelihoods by discouraging urban migration (Interviews 2002). The case studies demonstrate that raw NTFP materials provide an immediate poverty alleviating income while CFM projects undergo their initial stages of development (Interviews 2002).

The national and international market for certified NTFPs exist and while demand on the national market is guaranteed, negotiations with international markets have indicated that they too are searching for a supply of certified NTFPs (Interviews 2002). The government's financial and technical support of rubber, Brazil nut and Copaiba oil illustrate the strong commitment to the promotion of NTFP-related incomes (Interviews 2002). In addition, recent funding in certified NTFP projects by Natura, a Brazilian cosmetic company, also shows a commitment to investing in a national certified NTFP market (IMAFLORA 2002). Market studies by the Department for Forestry and Extrativism (SEFE) and buyers interviewed in Sao Paulo both guarantee the demand for certified NTFPs (Interviews 2002).

## CONCLUSION

Certification by the FSC has had a positive impact on creating socially appropriate, environmentally healthy and economically viable systems (Greenpeace Brazil, 2002).

Certification is not the solution to all forest conservation problems but it is a powerful instrument capable of stimulating concrete changes in forest management and forest policy both directly and indirectly. The aim of this paper is to relate the key challenges to the implementation of certification as a means to improving rural livelihoods and to alleviating poverty. The primary conclusion is that the extent of impact on livelihoods and poverty is directly related to certifiers' abilities to reach community members involved in community forest management (CFM). This does not necessitate a change in criteria but a re-examination of the implementation of certification agreements.

How can certification agreements for CFM be implemented to maximize possibilities to improve rural livelihoods and reduce poverty? To answer this we present a definition of SLIMFs established by the FSC Work Group in Brazil. SLIMFs are defined as the rural communities whose livelihoods certification hopes to improve.

For the intentions of poverty reduction in the Brazilian Amazon the communities targeted are resettlement projects or extractive reserves consisting of 100-hectare plots or a total of 800 hectares (Cesare 2002).

The implementation of certification in these communities faces several challenges. The primary concern of implementation of certification for the purposes of long-term improvements to rural livelihoods and poverty reduction is empowering the community to become independent of external assistance. Pivotal to this independence are participatory and affordable timber certification agreements. To understand the needs of communities certifiers must work directly with community members as opposed to intermediaries from the public or third sectors. With a direct dialog in place certifiers are likely to recognize and understand how to minimize conditions that require external assistance in implementation. At present certifiers' conditions discourage community members self-sufficiency and encourage intervention from outside organisations. Instead, more inter-active certification processes guarantee both sides understand the capabilities and responsibilities of the other.

The implementation of certification agreements can also shape production processes adopted in CFM. CFM projects examine production processes with knowledge of previous certification implementation experiences. The success or failure of previous certification implementation experiences of CFM projects influence decision-making about production processes for future CFM projects. Although production processes may be more sustainable and create a higher impact on poverty alleviation in the long term they may be discouraged because of difficulties in obtaining certification. Quick certification processes may also encourage production processes involving a high degree external involvement and, consequently, discourage community participation.

The challenge to the implementation of certification with greatest potential for impact on rural livelihoods and poverty reduction is the certification of NTFPs. Certified NTFPs provide opportunities for all community members to contribute to the local economy, while the multiple use of a certified forest encourages an efficient and regulated use of the environment contributing to certification goals of environmental sustainability. Particularly important to CFM projects are the immediate initial incomes since projects take, on average, eight years to become independent, if ever (Interviews 2002). Finally, awaiting the certification of NTFPs are the benefits of private sector and government support and an identifiable national market.

The FSC Work Group in Brazil recently released its new criteria for SLIMF certification within which it addressed many of the critiques made in this paper. The new criteria encourage the direct participation of community organizations in contract negotiation, although it still permits the appointment of a public or third sector organization as an intermediary (Forest Stewardship Council 2002). The language of the contract has also been simplified. Although the new criteria still requires a great deal of documentation it allows for flexibility in medium, ie. written or audiovisual.

The multiple uses of forests through NTFPs as economic activities received attention throughout the document, while stipulating increased social participation and environmental education. Emphasis is also placed on traditional knowledge and community traditions. Most importantly, the document requires steps to be taken by communities to demonstrate an independence from outside organizations, a

responsibility indicated in this paper as principally held by certifiers. In sum, both certifiers and community members share the responsibility of creating a certification process empowering the community and encouraging social, economic and environmental sustainability.

A critique of the document might be that while prohibiting biases in gender, culture and age, no requirements were set to ensure the specific participation of minorities in certified CFM.

Finally, cost remains a major dilemma for the implementation of certification agreements amongst CFM projects. With difficulties in meeting the demands of starting a small business, community members once again require external involvement in their communities in order to afford certification. The reliance on financial support from the public, private, third and inter-governmental sectors disfavours the improvements made in FSC criteria since financial independence is crucial to community empowerment. Without the ability to address certification costs independently communities resort to external funding, which is always accompanied by technical involvement. A CFM project with financial independence will seek less external assistance and, therefore, assume responsibilities that might otherwise be in the hands of outside organisations. Still, with the costs of certification, the goal of poverty alleviation through certification is only attainable with outside funding. CFM projects without the need for outside funding would be capable of mobilising their own capital and poverty would not be a concern.

Certification as means to poverty alleviation may not be the most direct route, but it may be one of the more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable options. This is not because of higher prices on certified products, but because it alleviates poverty through increased possibilities generated by demand found in newly opened national and international markets. While issues such as education and health still need to be addressed as the primary ways to improve livelihoods in communities in the Brazilian Amazon, long-term solutions to poverty alleviation are discovered in new opportunities generated through certification (Interviews 2002). For example, in community forest management (CFM) certified NTFPs provide immediate diversified incomes involving all members of society while, simultaneously, participatory and affordable timber certification agreements are developed to provide a sustainable social, economic and environmental base for the community's future.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Direct interaction between certifiers and community associations**

The objective is two fold. The first is to involve communities in negotiation, decision-making and problem solving encouraging more participation. The second is to give the certifier a first hand view of the communities characteristics, limits and abilities to create flexible, participatory and empowering certification agreements with a direct impact on poverty alleviation in community forest management. Direct dialog enables a first hand understanding of a community's characteristics. This will allow certifiers to set realistic conditions and to use this knowledge to create the most direct links

between certification agreements and improvements of rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation in order to generate the greatest impact.

### **Approachable technical expertise established for community members**

Certifiers have most likely received training as forest engineers and have learned techniques and terminology unfamiliar to those outside of the forestry field. Their responsibility in working with the certification of CFM projects is to translate those techniques and terminology into metaphors and terms familiar to community members of the particular project. In doing so, certifiers avoid the need for an intermediary to communicate between the two and minimize the involvement of outside organizations.

A stepped approach to independence encouraged by certifiers through certification agreement criteria also promotes gradual adjustments to independence of external assistance while encouraging community empowerment. This also allows outside organizations to develop technical and business management skills in the community in its initial stages.

### **Support of research into production methods for certified markets**

Most CFM projects aim for certification from the initial stages of implementation. In doing so certification implementation experiences of previous CFM projects are taken into account. Projects may determine production methods on the speed of certification. With such an influence on production certification agreements should be aware of the possible implications of the certification process. Studies into production methods for CFM are necessary to establish best practices. Best practices can then be examined in relation to certification agreements to ensure that their implementation improves rural livelihoods and alleviates poverty.

### **Adjustments to certification costs for community forest management.**

Goals of poverty reduction and improvement of livelihoods are often linked to community empowerment in development literature. If community empowerment is to be encouraged through financial independence then adjustments must be made to the costs of certification for CFM projects.

Fees should still exist but considerations must be made for the lack of initial capital and credit options open to CFM. Timber certification agreements should allow for accreditation fees to be paid off over a period of time or as a percentage of profit. On a national or international level, the creation of a fund for credit or grants created from the sales of FSC products or from a percentage of fees from large scale plantations should assist with the financial challenges of CFM, while maintaining communities in native forests and simultaneously contributing to poverty alleviation and environmental goals.

### **Certification of NTFPs.**

Certification of NTFPs encourages diversified incomes, participation of a diverse cross-section of society and reduced environmental impact. Certification provides opportunities for minority community members to contribute in a developing market. Enabling minorities to become an integral part of income-generation presents possibilities for representation in community organizations. The multiple-use of a

certified forest encourages the most efficient use of the environment while regulating its use guarantees its preservation.

The financial difficulties faced by communities initiating CFM projects are the primary reason for the inclusion of NTFPs in timber certification agreements. NTFPs allow the flexibility needed by rural communities because of their ability to function as either a primary or secondary income. Certification of NTFPs in timber certification agreements allows for communities to take full advantage of infrastructure set in place through CFM. It then enables community members directly involved in CFM to complement their income throughout the year and community members indirectly involved to generate a year round primary income. In addition, it plays an important role as a secondary income when CFM projects lost timber deals and suffered equipment failures the community members were able to resort back to NTFPs to generate income (Interviews 2002).

Companies such as Natura have demonstrated that the demand for certified NTFPs exists. The government of Acre provides financial and technical support for the production and marketing of NTFP projects. The use, production and marketing of NTFPs by community members follow traditional patterns much deeper than any relationship with forestry. All that remains is their certification to stimulate the income generating possibilities of NTFPs.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

The author has lived and worked in Brazil with environmental community development projects over the last five years. Since beginning her academic career at Tufts University, she has complemented it with an MBA in Private and Public Project Elaboration, Evaluation and Analysis from the Fundação Getúlio Vargas and is currently in the process of a PhD at the London School of Economics in Social Policy. Her experience ranges from advising rural women's groups in micro-credit projects in Bolivia to supervising 39 community development projects for the UNDP Small Grants Program in Brazil. She has brought together international experiences in proposal writing, market analysis and editing into the paper investigating the relationships between communities and companies in FSC certified community forest management projects in the Brazilian Amazon.

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