Towards Pluralistic Forestry

Experiences with Community Based Forest Management and Social Forestry

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Eschborn, 2001
Published by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH
Postfach 5180
D-65726 Eschborn, Germany

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ISBN: 3-9801067-1-3

Nominal fee: 5,- €

Produced by: TZ Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, D-64380 Rossdorf

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Social Forestry in Latin America –
A First Overview of the Issues

SONDRA WENTZEL

I Introduction

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was quite some enthusiasm in Latin America for participatory protected area management, so-called Integrated Conservation and Development Projects or ICDPs, and for social forestry, especially community-based forest management or community forestry. Social forestry was promoted as a sustainable development model for rural, particularly indigenous people in forest areas. High hopes were set in non-timber forest products (NTFP) because their extraction was assumed to have a limited impact on the forest (concept of ”extractive reserves”). Small-scale commercial timber extraction also received increasing attention.

By the end of the 1990s, a more realistic assessment was being taken and there has been increasing recognition of the difficulties and limitations of these approaches – but also the conviction that participation of local people in conservation and forest management is a sine qua non. The Latin American experiences, gained in a context of increasing democratisation and in some countries profound legal and institutional reforms towards decentralisation, people’s participation and recognition of indigenous rights are therefore worth careful assessment.

This article presents some results of a 4.5 months study tour on the state-of-the-art of social forestry in Middle and South America. The focus was on

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18 Between late July and mid December 1998, I visited (not only GTZ-supported) forestry and conservation organizations and projects in the USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil (see Appendix 1; some information on the countries visited in Appendix 2). The study tour was preceded and accompanied by an extensive literature review. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody I met once again for sharing their precious time and information with me. Notes on each country including bibliographies of relevant documents are available upon request via e-mail (SWen642491 @aol.com).
community or smallholder management of natural humid (sub-) tropical forests for commercial timber extraction. The idea for the study arose from first-hand experiences in the rather difficult circumstances of South East Asia, especially Indonesia. The study tour was conducted to contribute to our understanding of social forestry and provide a basis for improving GTZ services in this field. The three broad questions pursued were:

1. Is sustainable management of these forests economically viable in Latin America, given that the density of commercial timber species is even less than in South East Asia? The success of social forestry obviously hinges on the feasibility of sustainable forest management in general.

2. Which experiences have been made with different types of social forestry, especially with regard to institutional arrangements (relationships between the forest administration, private enterprises, NGOs and communities; suitability of different types of local organisations for – different aspects of – social forestry)? Although these arrangements obviously need to be country- and culture-specific, it was intended to identify some general lessons or principles.

3. On this basis, what conclusions can be drawn on desirable or even necessary adjustments in project management instruments and procedures?

Given the amount of information gathered, this article is only a first step in what will hopefully become a joint process of learning from experiences in social forestry in the GTZ and beyond.

II The Economic Viability of Sustainable Forest Management in Latin America

There are major differences in the size and state of (sub-)tropical broadleaf forests in Central America (including Mexico) and South America (focus here on the Amazon basin). The pressures from timber extraction and, in its suit,
conversion to other land uses have so far affected a higher proportion of the (initially much smaller) forests in Central America than in the vast Amazon basin.

In Latin America, especially in the Amazon, forests under sustainable forest management (SFM) are rare. Nevertheless, a still limited but increasing number of certified forest enterprises document that SFM is technically possible.

However, the economic viability of SFM is still being debated. So far, timber extraction in Central and South America has focused on high-value mahogany, which has already been included in CITES Appendix III as an endangered species. In all countries visited, un- or underdeveloped markets or unattractive prices for lesser known or secondary timber species were mentioned as a major problem for SFM. Exceptions are those regions where deforestation has already advanced to such a degree that construction timber, for example, is getting scarce. The key economic issues are the failure of markets to internalise costs & benefits of SFM and to fully value future benefits of forests, and the volatility of markets for certain extracted luxury goods (Freese 1997).

For Central America, a recent study confirms that expectations for immediate economic returns from certification (the costs of which are so far usually covered by outside sponsors) are too high. In some cases there was no price impact at all (Camino/Alfaro 1998). Finally, it is predicted that "projected increases in global round wood prices will not be large enough to make a significant improvement in the commercial prospects of sustainable tropical forestry" (Southgate 1998:60).

In this situation, there is a need for more discussion about how to finance SFM in high-diversity broadleaf forests. The question arises as to which parts of the SFM management cycle can and should be self-financing for the forest enterprise (be it run by a private company, a community or a smallholder), and which costs need to be covered by which combination of public and private, in-country and international sources? In this context it is argued that since the benefits of forest conservation and management are highest at the national and international levels, while the costs are usually highest for local people, special support for communities or smallholders is warranted (Richards 1996).
So far, Costa Rica is the only country that has established a system of "payments for environmental services" (Pagos para Servicios Ambientales such as CO₂ sinks, water, biodiversity and natural beauty). These payments are not only for reforestation, but also for natural forest management and forest protection by smallholders. In Honduras, the FINNIDA-supported MAFOR project has experimented with a Fondo de Manejo Forestal at municipal level (MAFOR 1996). The CIDA-supported Broadleaf Forest Development Project (PDBL) has done the same at regional level on the Atlantic coast (contributions from the forest agency, municipalities, producer groups, and the private sector) for those forest management costs which producer groups are unable to cover (PDBL 1995, Poirier 1998).

III Key Issues in Social Forestry

III.1 Land Tenure

In Latin American forest areas, as in all the tropics, addressing land tenure conflicts is a major issue in SFM and a precondition for developing social forestry. In most countries these problems remain unsolved. An exception is Mexico, where, since the Revolution, indigenous communities have had their land ownership – at least in theory – recognised, and settler communities in frontier areas like Yucatán were given large forest areas as ejidos in common property. However, contrary to Africa and Asia, the Amazon has seen an impressive process of indigenous mobilisation since the 1960s that has concentrated on recognition of territorios indígenas. For indigenous people, this includes rights to land, water and mineral resources. During the 1980s and 1990s, often in the context of profound constitutional reforms, especially in South America, but also in Nicaragua, indigenous people have received different types of government recognition over extended – usually forested – areas (Reconocimiento 1993). In the Amazon, these areas comprise more than 100 million hectares (Smith forthcoming). Indigenous peoples are now facing the challenge to consolidate, demarcate, defend and manage these areas.

20 For details of the system, see Heindrichs 1997 and Watson et al. 1998.
For this, “the alternative with the best track record is demarcation of community lands and award of community titles, leases, or special status ... accompanied by recognition of traditional authority to resolve resource rights disputes. This option does not require the state to understand the complexities of the communities’ tenurial system. Community-based tenure offers a protective and enabling shell ... that allows locally derived management institutions to flourish and adapt to their ecological and social environment” (Alcorn 1996:246). The GTZ and KfW-supported indigenous land protection project (PPTAL) at the Brazilian Indian Agency FUNAI, a part of the PP-G7 (Programa Piloto para a Protecao das Florestas Tropicais do Brasil), has gained valuable experience with this difficult task. In Nicaragua, The Nature Conservancy and the GTZ-supported BOSAWAS protected area management project have supported the demarcation of and participatory management planning in five indigenous territories which constitute the core of the reserve.

In countries like Honduras and Guatemala most forest areas are still classified as state forests. Here, arrangements like “usufruct contracts” (Honduras) or “community forestry concessions” in the multiple use zone or buffer zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Petén, Guatemala) provide local people with some tenure security (albeit no recognition of land rights). In Honduras, under the Sistema Social Forestal from the mid 1970s onwards, co-operatives and community groups could obtain annually renewable harvest rights to pine resin and timber (later in the context of 40-year contracts). In 1993, this system covered an area of 548,000 ha mainly of pine forests, managed by 311 groups (Ochoa 1995). In Guatemala, since 1994 communities in the Maya Biosphere Re-

21 This is currently being compiled in a publication. Check the PPTAL website at: http://www.funai.gov.br/pptal

22 For an example, see Kipla Sait Tasbaika 1997.

23 In Honduras, until 1992, even trees on private land were defined as state property and subject to stumpage fees.

24 See article by Killmann et al. in this issue.
serve – the oldest of which were founded around the turn of the century by chicleros (latex gatherers) – have been given the possibility to apply for concessions for the commercial use of timber and non-timber forest products.\textsuperscript{25}

Another interesting type of forest management unit in both countries are municipal forests (bosques ejidales), which may gain more importance elsewhere in Latin America in the process of decentralisation. These forests are managed as an income source for local government and/or local people. They are the focus of the FINNIDA-supported MAFOR project in Honduras (pine forest areas) and of the GTZ-supported PMS in Guatemala (Carrillo/Ordonez 1998). In Bolivia, the new forest law (1996), besides handing over 25\% of the royalties from timber concessions to municipal governments, foresees the establishment of municipal forest reserves (up to 20\% of state forests in their area) to be managed by groups of local people (Agrupaciones Sociales del Lugar, ASL) (Kaimowitz et al. 1998). The BOLFOR-project (USAID) is supporting the newly created Forest Superintendency in the implementation of these innovative regulations.

Nevertheless, a recent comparative assessment of different tenurial arrangements cautions that the prospects for common property management regimes (CPMR) – or rather a ”continuum of open-access, CPMR and private tenure land-use arrangements along which communities are continually evolving in one direction or another” (Richards 1997a:1) - are an open question:

- Longer established indigenous CPMRs are affected by increasing market integration and centralised tenure legislation, although this does not necessarily lead to their demise;
- More recently created CPMRs, both among indigenous and non-indigenous people, may face even more social, legal, institutional, economic, and technical problems.

\textsuperscript{25} Contracts cover a period of 25 years (in some cases 50), and the communities have to pay a one-time fee, a performance bond and standard production-based taxes (Gretzinger 1998).
In Costa Rica, most forests, apart from a few small indigenous areas, are in private hands. This creates a different type of challenge for social forestry which also applies for smallholder settlements and co-operatives in many Latin American forest frontier areas. The experiences gained in GTZ-supported projects in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Ecuador, and recent developments in Brazil indicate that smallholder forest management for commercial purposes can be viable from about 40 ha onwards (Brazil), 20-30 ha (Costa Rica) or even under 20 ha (Ecuador) if administrative and technical requirements are simplified. In the GTZ-supported PROFORS-project in Sucumbíos, Ecuador, the focus is on enrichment planting on individual plots (farmers receive support for a max. 4 ha). Timber harvest has not started yet, but predictions of future profits are quite high.

Forest management plans have also been established for smallholder co-operatives consisting of individually owned or operated plots, but there is much variation in labour organisation, i.e. in what is done individually and what collectively. No systematic comparison and assessment of the different organisational options seems to exist yet. In one Guatemalan case, for example, standing timber is sold individually by all co-operative members to the same trader at a jointly negotiated price. In other cases, attempts are made to add value through co-operative-run timber extraction and processing (see III.2.2. below).

III.2 Forest Management

III.2.1 Non-Timber Forest Products

After the murder of rubber tapper leader Chico Mendes in Brazil in late 1988, "extractive reserves" (an official land-use category in Brazil, but also relevant as community concessions in state forest areas elsewhere) received much scientific and public attention. By now, however, major ecological and economic limitations of a dependence on non-timber forest product (NTFP) extraction have been recognised: threats of over-harvesting in boom periods, price decline due to oversupply, substitution by other products, all ultimately result in the poverty of extractors.
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There seem to be inherent limitations in NTFP-based social forestry since in natural forests these resources are either of high commercial value but low abundance or visa versa. This makes it difficult to establish socially, economically and ecologically sustainable enterprises (Salafsky 1997/98). A Brazilian author argued some time ago that ”extractive reserves have importance as a means of slowing down the expansion of the agricultural frontier for the short and middle term. In the long term, however, the disappearance of extraction is inevitable” (Homma 1992:31).

As a result, ”the typical venture aimed at promoting commercially viable harvesting of NTFPs is a small-scale one, aimed at taking advantage of a limited niche characterised by an existing and accessible market as well as favourable growing conditions. There is not room in Latin America for many such projects” (Southgate 1998:57).

Nevertheless, relevant and – on a local scale – encouraging experiences have been gained in Latin America with regard to the management of selected NTFPs as potential components of broader social forestry schemes, e.g. game in the Amazon (Bodmer et al. 1997, Fang et al. 1997) or in Mexico (Plan Piloto Forestal, see under 3.2.2.), or high-value medicinal plants (see Müller 1998 on raicilla in Costa Rica). In most cases, however, NTFP management means plant population enhancement or cultivation within or even outside natural forest, not just maintaining the extraction of a natural product at a sustainable level. An example for this are the tagua palm patches in Ecuador and Colombia, site of the Conservation International’s highly publicised initiative to promote ”vegetable ivory” buttons and carvings for ”tropical rain forest conservation” (Southgate 1998). Especially in the case of ex situ management, the contribution to natural forest maintenance - if any - is limited to decreasing harvest pressures. In the worst case, NTFP cultivation can even compete for land with natural forests.

III.2.2 Timber Extraction, Processing and Marketing

The usual argument for community-based or smallholder timber production is that, since timber is currently the most valuable product extracted in large
quantities from tropical forests, local people need to have their share if they are to have a stake in forest maintenance. The general characteristics of community timber production (CTP) are that

- resource rights are either owned by or assigned to local community members
- people harvesting the timber live near the site (timber is part of a larger land-use framework)
- harvesting is smaller in scale and less capital intensive than in industrial timber harvesting
- CTP enterprises seek to add value to raw materials on or close to the harvesting site
- capital is reinvested locally (incentive for sustainability) (Salafsky 1997/98:5/6).

Community timber production may have ”inherent limitations where large-scale industrial wood production or preservation of fragile ecosystems are of primary concern” (Cabarle 1991:8), but in principle it seems an interesting option for many forest areas.

In Southeast Asia, the still limited ”evidence is at best mixed” (Salafsky 1997/98:23) as to whether these enterprises can be ecologically, technically, economically, institutionally, and socially sustainable. In Latin America, the experiences of several well-documented projects in Quintano Roo, Mexico (Plan Piloto Forestal), lowland Peru (COFYAL) and lowland Bolivia (CICOL), and cursory information on other initiatives also show that establishing viable community-based forest management and timber processing and marketing enterprises in (sub)tropical broadleaf forest areas is difficult.26

26 See Richards 1993, LTC 1995; more references in Appendix 3. The experience of indigenous communities in the more homogeneous and accessible pine forests of Oaxaca, Mexico, who without much outside support have developed impressive forest enterprises, is more encouraging (see LTC 1995, Merino 1997).
One basic issue that has already been mentioned is the questionable economic viability of sustainable forest management in general (see section II) which seriously affects fledgling community enterprises. Another is the fact that most forests now managed by communities or smallholders have already been "creamed off" by previous logging and thus form a resource base in need of rehabilitation. In fact, although all community enterprises visited or documented have received substantial free-of-charge technical and often also financial support, they have difficulties making profit. There is also the issue of economies of scale: in Quintana Roo, Mexico, for example, approx. 9000 ha of production forest are considered necessary for a viable community enterprise, and in ejidos with smaller forest areas community members are said to lose interest in forest management due to limited immediate benefits.

Technically, no major problems are reported with regard to timber extraction by local people, neither by selective logging based on inventories and management plans, nor under the strip-cutting system developed by the Tropical Science Center in Costa Rica and applied in Peru. Both systems are implemented with no or minimal post-harvest treatments. With adequate training and support, local people were able to conduct all necessary field-based tasks with regard to inventories, management planning, timber extraction and processing. In several cases young foresters of community origin are taking over the technical services previously provided by outsiders. In many countries, organisations and projects, technical guidelines, manuals and training courses for simplified inventories and management plans have been developed which can be used by new initiatives.

Serious difficulties often occur with regard to the business management of community sawmills or timber marketing enterprises, but these may be due as much to social pressures on the individuals in charge than to insufficient skills (more on this under III.3.).

27 The technical details are described at length in the literature and will not be dealt with here.
III.2.3 Multiple-Use Management of Forest Resources

Multiple-use management of forest resources is being promoted as a means to reduce the dependence on a single or a limited number of products and to ensure a more steady flow of benefits. In the countries visited, there are attempts to combine the extraction of an increasing number of timber species with locally-specific NTFP or with eco-tourism. However, in practice this is often complicated by the trade-offs involved in many combinations of forest products.

In Honduras, for example, where GTZ-supported projects promote multiple use forest management in - comparatively simple - pine forests (Uebelhör 1998), there may be conflicts between resin tapping and timber harvesting concerning use rights, harvesting schedules, and physical impact. The Plan Piloto Forestal in Mexico (broadleaf forest) concluded that the issue is not the maximisation of the number of forest products used (i.e. increase in total yields), but rather their optimal combination to achieve synergies enhancing forest area maintenance (Janka 1998). Eco-tourism in at least one case in Mexico and another in Costa Rica made the communities cancel previously established logging plans since tourists prefer to see undisturbed forest. It remains to be seen which benefits will be higher and more stable in the long run.

III.3 Community Organisation

Establishing a viable business is a challenge for entrepreneurs all over the world, even more so for communities or smallholders with limited experiences in market economy. First of all, the terms ”community” and ”community-based” are often being used without much analysis of the social units in question. They provoke images of small, homogeneous groups with shared norms and common interests and a tradition of collective action, which is often not warranted (Agrawal 1997). An in-depth five-country study on Amazonian indigenous ”communities” and their economic projects shows that even among these relatively isolated,

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"traditional" people, "the modern community, resguardo or comuna, as a property-owning unit, ... is quite likely not the same kind of kinfolk grouping that traditionally practised resource management. As a result, each community needs both new mechanisms to develop and put into practice a plan, and new social norms to ensure group compliance to the plan." (Smith 1996:213; see also Smith forthcoming). They "need to balance the interests of individuals, domestic units and the collectivity that owns the territory" (ibid. 214). "Community" can therefore not be taken for granted as a basis for organising social forestry.

"Community forestry will be more successful where local institutions have a tradition of co-ordination, and there are established rules for managing common property resources" (Cabarle 1991:8). The organisational challenges throughout the process are:

- First Phase: Leadership to secure or obtain a forest area
- Second Phase: Managerial capacities; here, grassroots support organisations (NGOs) are often important
- Third Phase: Transparency and fairness (not necessarily equity) in the distribution of benefits
- Ongoing: Negotiating effective outside support while maintaining internal consensus (e.g. on land use decisions)
- Ongoing: Sound fiscal management, e.g. avoiding over-subsidising community projects from the profits made at the expense of reinvestment in the community forestry enterprise (ibid. 6/7).

A more fundamental issue is that "the contradiction of values between the indigenous Amazonian economy and the market economy has led to a confusion within the moral order of indigenous societies" (Smith 1996:214). This puts the managers of community enterprises under much social pressure to share their apparent wealth (i.e. community funds). There is also a constant conflict between immediate redistribution of benefits for either community or individual needs and reinvestment in the enterprise needed e.g. for maintenance of equipment. The
study concludes that, ”in general, collective enterprises have not been viable among indigenous Amazonians” (ibid. 205) and that ”production is an activity best left to the domestic unit” (ibid. 208). Others argue that in view of the unavoidably increasing market integration of remote areas, it is necessary to anticipate its potential negative effects and strengthen grassroots organisations in processing and marketing, focusing on already individualised areas of the indigenous economy (Richards 1998). In any case, the more isolated and less market-integrated the people among whom a forest enterprise will be established are, the more problems can be expected and need to be anticipated with regard to business management.

Another issue is the user group approach pursued or at least permitted in several countries. In Asian countries like Nepal or India, it has proven to be more practical to work with the immediate traditional users of forest resources instead of government-imposed territorial units. In Latin American countries like Honduras or Bolivia, in contrast, where the formation of groups is promoted to gain access to new forest areas, the distribution of benefits from forest management among all inhabitants of a certain forest area and municipality becomes an issue. If the process of group formation is not guided by certain criteria and monitored, it can lead to the exclusion of a large part of the population. This may be desirable for business management purposes, but its social acceptability should at least be discussed in each particular case. User groups can then be requested to contribute to municipal or community funds.

Research on supra-community organisations like associations or federations in Latin America shows that they are usually more suitable for political purposes (pressure groups for land and resource rights, access to markets, etc.) than for managing economic projects, and that they hardly ever become self-financing (Bebbington 1996). Nevertheless, there are now associations of community forestry enterprises, like JUNAFORCA (Junta Nacional Forestal Campesina) in Costa Rica (founded in 1991) or UNOFOC (Unión Nacional de Organizaciones de Forestería Comunal) in Mexico (founded in 1992), and CICAFOC (Comisión Centroamericana de Forestería Comunitaria) at a Central American level
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(founded 1994 and a major partner for the FAO-supported ”Forest, Trees and People Program” (FTPP) activities in the region). These associations, like many of their member organisations, provide technical services which were formerly a government monopoly or non-existent. In addition, they strive to participate in national discussions about policies affecting them.

III.4 Institutional Change

All recent overviews on social forestry agree on the need for policy and institutional changes within government forest agencies (and beyond) and the development of a new division of labour and collaborative relationships with the private sector and NGOs (pluralistic approach). While major - and sometimes conflicting - political and economic reform processes (redemocratisation, decentralisation, deconcentration & deregulation, structural adjustment programs, neoliberalismo) have been underway in most Latin American countries, forestry has not always been at the core of these reforms. Other sector policies - as in the case of export crop or livestock development - often have negative impacts on forest maintenance. Also, forest policy reform processes have not always been well documented and analysed.

Nevertheless, several recent more theoretical considerations, comparative studies on natural resource management and forest policy reform processes, as well as country studies on Costa Rica and Bolivia document the serious conflicts of interests between different stakeholders, but also potential strategies for reform towards a more appropriate division of labour and framework for collaboration. These issues cannot be discussed in detail here, but the preliminary conclusions of a comparative study by IIED indicate the overall direction:

29 So far, there seem to be no equivalents in South America.

• "‘Policies that work for forests and people’ will derive from processes that generate local multi-stakeholder understanding and commitment, that link policy-making with its actual outcomes, and that are able to deal with change." (Bass et al. 1997:189) The "10 elements that work” are:

- Opening up the policy process to civil society through forest forums at national and sub-national levels.
- Information, monitoring and research which actively feeds into policy and management processes.
- Capabilities to address extra-sectoral influences on forests.
- Agreed national goals for forests – focusing on people and their needs for forest goods and services.
- Policy instruments better geared to stakeholders and national goals for forests.
- Decentralisation, devolution and strengthening capacity as appropriate.
- Standards and codes of practice for improved accountability.
- Development and spread of resource-conserving technology.
- Democracy of knowledge.
- Framework for continuous policy improvement (ibid. 189-190).

The role of the state – and therefore also of central-level forest agencies – ideally gets reduced from direct involvement in implementation to creating a conducive policy environment, setting norms, monitoring compliance, and mediating conflicts between different stakeholders (Richards 1996). This situation leads to the paradoxical situation that commitment is needed from those who are losing power through reform, and that a minimalist state is expected to deal with the complex new task of facilitating its own reform (Carney/Farrington 1998). Therefore, during the reorganisation of forest agencies, especially with regard to social forestry, the previous gap in extension and other services for local people can hardly and should not be filled by central or regional government agencies. However, the development of alternative approaches is still in process.
As already mentioned, local governments are increasingly important actors in Latin America: new laws in Brazil (1988), Guatemala (1988), Honduras (1993), and Bolivia (1994), for example, permit or even require greater municipal involvement in forest management and conservation. However, besides often still lacking the technical and managerial capacity for providing the foreseen forestry extension services to community or smallholder associations, local governments may also be under pressure by local business elites not to use their new opportunities in the common interest.

In such situations, local peoples’ organisations can and need to demand accountability. In addition, as the Mexican and Costa Rican cases show, producer associations can establish their own forest extension services. In contrast, there is so far surprisingly little NGO involvement in social forestry that goes beyond small pilot projects. It seems that many NGOs in Latin America are still in a process of reassessing their position vis-à-vis the state (Bebbington 1997) and timber extraction. In contrast, there is much more NGO involvement in nature conservation. There is also little information on successful partnerships in social forestry between local people and large private companies in Latin America, which, given the situation of ongoing direct competition for and conflict over resources may not be surprising.

Photo 3: Members of an extension service of a Mexican producer association discussing a community's management plan
Obviously, there are no blueprints for “multi-agency partnerships”. Nevertheless, it is clear that the institutional change process requires a profound reorientation of government officials and their new partners at all levels, focusing on social skills. One contribution to this is the development and spread of participatory methodologies. As in other parts of the world, PRA (participatory rural appraisal), integrated human development, sistematización (process documentation and analysis), self-evaluation etc. have been applied, tested and adjusted in many social forestry projects in Latin America.

A major challenge in the endeavour of institutional change is usually the process of “scaling-up” from intensively supported and monitored pilot projects focusing on a small area and a limited number of communities to a regional or even national level. In the countries visited, the Plan Piloto Forestal in Mexico is certainly the project with the broadest impact, having covered in its 15 years of work (1983-1998) approx. 400,000 ha of forest managed by 50 ejidos in several associations which provide their own technical services, operate their own sawmills and marketing, and have some influence on forest policy through their regional and national federations (Janka 1998). Although this area is half of the federal state’s remaining production forest, in comparison to the situation in “mega-forest” countries like Brazil, it is not very large. Due to sheer distances and the number of administrative layers, institutions and persons involved, scaling-up will be much more difficult in a country like Brazil than in Costa Rica, a factor so far insufficiently taken into consideration in development co-operation, not only in forestry (see e.g. number of GTZ-supported projects and staff in Table 1).

IV Challenges for Project Management

The challenges involved in developing and institutionalising SFM and especially social forestry have consequences for development co-operation. The ODI review on institutional aspects of natural resource management concludes that donors should be ”strengthening ... democratic pluralism” (Carney/Farrington 1998:92). Apparently, there is little hope for success in authoritarian settings. For forestry, there is agreement that international technical assistance is best provided
via "a programme approach that supports governments at every step of the structural modernisation and implementation process" (Morrell/Paveri 1994:37). Continued support is needed for managing reforms and establishing innovative partnerships. Also, there should be a more systematic selection of countries, and more control over quality of aid interventions, donor co-ordination and "increased funding of autonomous or semi-autonomous development funds" instead of single government agencies (Carney/Farrington 1998:104).

The recent DfID (at that time ODA) evaluation of experiences with ”shared forest management” focuses more on consequences for the donor agency itself and concludes that the principle of participation implies ”a challenge to development agencies’ self-perception” (Bird 1997:179). ”Shared forest management initiatives require time. This means changes in project management procedures to match longer timeframes to budgetary cycles, and in monitoring procedures where process-type indicators are credible proxies for longer-term impacts” (ibid. 181). All this, in turn, requires new skills among agency staff.

In this context, USAID is working increasingly through international NGOs (like CI, WWF, WRI, TNC). This approach can have advantages like mobilising experience in participatory work and contacts with national NGOs, but also limitations, especially in countries where NGOs are not yet accepted partners for government agencies (Richards 1994). Within German development co-operation, the BMZ tropical forestry sector concept (BMZ 1992) stresses the need for German agencies (mainly GTZ and KfW) to address the situation of forest-dependent people and ensure their participation in forestry projects, and to support not only government agencies, but to collaborate also with national NGOs.

Two recent comparative BMZ evaluations31 and studies by a ”sector project”32 address institutional issues in (social) forestry projects in Latin America. In

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31 On Ecuador & Costa Rica (BMZ 1996) and Mexico & Dominican Republic (BMZ 1997).

addition, several projects have started to document their own approach. The projects discussed vary considerably in terms of focus, which may be placed more on the forest (trying to gain control over the deforestation process by means of involving local people) or on the welfare of forest-dependent people for their own sake. As a result, and also due to the different political settings, their strategies differ as well.

The overall trend in German development co-operation in forestry is moving away from only working with – usually badly equipped and poorly motivated – central government forest agencies and towards institutional pluralism at different levels. In some countries, programme approaches combine policy advisory services at a central level with field-based projects in forestry, social forestry and protected area management. There is increasing recognition, that process-orientation and the capacity to react flexibly to sudden opportunities are vital for project success – which in turn requires changes in project planning and management. In the context of the decentralisation of the GTZ and the creation of regional forestry sector networks (Fachverbunde) among project staff, mutual conceptual and practical assistance during project planning, implementation and evaluation (as it happened for example with PPF/Mexico and projects in Guatemala, Honduras and Ecuador) is an interesting option.

The recently updated GTZ forestry concept outlines basic principles, service areas, ”topics for the future” and a new set of skill requirements for GTZ advisors (GTZ 1999). The focus is much less on technical than on personal, social, and management skills. With regard to forestry-specific qualifications, the ability to deal with policy and institutional issues, and experience in social forestry and integrated land use systems are given the same importance as technical knowledge in forest management and nature protection. With these advisors, it should be possible to deal with the challenges of social forestry in Latin America and beyond.

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V References


Towards Pluralistic Forestry


Reconocimiento y Demarcación de Territorios Indígenas en la Amazonía. La Experiencia de los Países de la Región 1993. Bogotá: Fundación GAIA & CEREC.


Towards Pluralistic Forestry


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr./Acr.</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFE-COHDEFOR</td>
<td>Administración Forestal del Estado - Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal, Honduras</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFH</td>
<td>Agenda Forestal Hondureña</td>
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<td>AFOCO</td>
<td>Apoyo a la Forestería Comunal, Honduras (GTZ)</td>
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<td>AMA</td>
<td>Acuerdo Mexicano-Alemán, Mexico (GTZ)</td>
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<td>APCOB</td>
<td>Ayuda para el Campesinado Indígena del Oriente Boliviano, Santa Cruz, Bolivia</td>
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<td>ASL</td>
<td>Agrupación Social del Lugar, Bolivia</td>
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<td>BMZ</td>
<td>Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, Bonn, Germany</td>
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<td>BOLFOR</td>
<td>Proyecto de Manejo Forestal Sostenible, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (USAID)</td>
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<td>BOSAWAS</td>
<td>BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve Support Project, Nicaragua (GTZ)</td>
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<td>BSP</td>
<td>Biodiversity Support Project, Washington</td>
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<tr>
<th>Abbr/Acr.</th>
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<tr>
<td>CATIE</td>
<td>Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, Turrialba, Costa Rica</td>
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<td>CERES</td>
<td>Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica y Social, Cochabamba, Bolivia</td>
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<td>CI</td>
<td>Conservation International, Washington</td>
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<td>CICAFOC</td>
<td>Coordinadora Indígena Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria Centroamericana</td>
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<td>CICOL</td>
<td>Central Intercomunal Campesina del Oriente de Lomerío, Bolivia (supported by APCOB, BOLFOR)</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CIFOR</td>
<td>Center for International Forestry Research, Bogor, Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>CITI</td>
<td>Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species</td>
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<td>COATLAHL</td>
<td>Cooperativa Regional Agroforestal Colón, Atlántida, Limitada, La Ceiba, Honduras</td>
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<td>CODEFORSA</td>
<td>Comisión de Desarrollo Forestal de San Carlos, Costa Rica</td>
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<td>COFYAL</td>
<td>Cooperativa Forestal Yánexha Limitada, Peru (supported by USAID, later WWF)</td>
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<td>COICAP</td>
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<td>CONAP</td>
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<td>CONIF</td>
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<td>COSEFORMA</td>
<td>Cooperación en los Sectores Forestal y Maderero, Costa Rica (GTZ)</td>
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<td>CTP</td>
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<td>DfID</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
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<td>FINNIDA</td>
<td>Finnish development cooperation agency</td>
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<td>FLONA</td>
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<td>FOIN</td>
<td>Federación Indígena del Napo, Ecuador</td>
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<td>FSC</td>
<td>Forest Stewardship Council</td>
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<td>FTPP</td>
<td>Forest, Trees and People Programme (FAO), Rome, Italy; offices in Latin America in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia</td>
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<td>FUNAI</td>
<td>Fundacao Nacional do Indio, Brazil</td>
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<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, Eschborn, Germany</td>
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<td>IBAMA</td>
<td>Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e Recursos Naturais Renováveis</td>
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<td>ICDP</td>
<td>Integrated Conservation and Development Project</td>
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<td>IIED</td>
<td>International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK</td>
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<td>AMAZON</td>
<td>Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazonia, Belém, Brazil</td>
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<td>INEFAN</td>
<td>Instituto Ecuatoriano Forestal y de Areas Naturales y Vida Silvestre, Quito, Ecuador</td>
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<td>ITTO</td>
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<td>MERGE</td>
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<td>MOPAWI</td>
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<td>Program for the Use and Management of Natural Resources, Tena, Ecuador (supported by CS)</td>
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<td>RMSH</td>
<td>Ressourcenmanagement durch Selbsthilfe; sector project (GTZ, until 1998)</td>
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<td>SFM</td>
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<td>TCO</td>
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<td>TNC</td>
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<td>WRI</td>
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The Social Forestry System in Honduras

WOLF KILLMANN, KONRAD UEBLHÖR AND GUNTER SIMON
SOCIAL FORESTRY PROGRAMME (SFP), HONDURAS

I  Background

Honduras is a decidedly wooded country. 87% of its 112,500km² are defined as necessarily forested, unsuitable for other land use. Today, however, only 50% of the country’s area is covered by forest, half by pine forest and the other by tropical deciduous forest (mangrove, tropical wet evergreen forest, tropical dry forest and cloud forest). So far, 107 conservation areas have been put forward (about 23% of the country’s area), of which 48 (or 15% of total area) have been given a legally protected status. The largest part of the protected area is cloud forest (watershed area) and tropical wet evergreen forest. Over the last 10 years, between 80,000 and 100,000 ha forest have been lost annually, mainly because of the conversion of tropical forest into agricultural land, in particular pasture.

According to official statistics, 45% of Honduran forests are owned by the state, with 31% privately owned and the remaining 24% communally owned. In fact, there is a substantial grey zone, and unclear property rights lead to permanent conflicts in rural areas.

Around 60% of the 6 million Hondurans live in the countryside. This is where poverty (70% of the total population live in poverty) and illiteracy (45% on average, in rural areas 60%) are highest.

In 1996, about 110,000 people were employed in forestry (mainly in pine forests). This sector produces about 5% of GDP, and with proper forest management, this contribution could be increased to double that level or more.

II  The social forestry system

The social forestry system in Honduras (Sistema Social Forestal - SSF) aims to ensure that forests fulfil their social function.
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Working definition for the project:

SSF describes a collection of strategies and measures with the objective to increase the direct and active participation of the rural population living in and adjacent to forest areas, in forest use. It is hoped that this will reduce rural poverty and at the same time ensure a sustainable management of the renewable resources of the country.

Important aspects are the participation in or the direct take-over of management of state forests by cooperatives and communities on the one hand and the creation of jobs in private forestry on the other.

III Legal framework

The SSF is named as a strategy for the first time in the Forest Law of 1994 (Decreto Ley 103). The new Honduran forestry department established in this legislation (Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal) is charged with developing the social forestry system with small farmers in order to protect and maintain the forest and to support its regeneration. This was meant to help reduce forest fires, excessive forest pasture, illegal logging and shifting cultivation. It was left to COHDEFOR to decide in what way the small farmers were to participate in the forest-generated benefits.

The same law defines operational aspects of favoured small farmer organisations, such as their legal form, the form of contract, the allocation of areas of use, use techniques, agroforestry, participation of citizens and governmental assistance.

On the basis of this mandate, COHDEFOR started its work with small farmer organisations in state, community, and private forests, as all forest stands on land of various ownership were legally under the stewardship of the state.

However, with the passing of the Law on the Modernisation of the Agricultural Sector (LMDSA, Decreto 31-92) in connection with the Structural Adjustment Programme in 1992, COHDEFOR lost the jurisdiction over private and communal forests. Formerly a ‘firm’ with economic objectives, it now became
transformed into a state agency (Administración Forestal del Estado - Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal/ AFE-COHDEFOR, or A-C for short). The forest stands now became the property of the landowners and the A-C was now only responsible for the management of state forests. In private and communal forests, it merely retained normative functions.

The Agricultural Modernisation Law (LMDSA) expanded the beneficiaries of SSF beyond cooperatives and other small farmer organisations. It specifies that the A-C has to include the integrated development (desarrollo integral) of rural communities in the forest management plans of the state forests.

In the implementation decree accompanying the LMDSA, this is expressed in more detail. It stipulates that small farmers up to 20 ha are to be included in the SSF, regardless of whether they are formally organised or not. Theoretically, this means that a larger proportion of the rural population can benefit from the SSF.

Specifically, the new law stipulates that

- management plans (planes de manejo) have to be presented and approved by the A-C for every kind of forest use in state forests.
- the A-C is to support SSF as a strategy of sustainable rural development in state forests, whenever an ‘appropriate settlement density’ in the rural population has been reached. This support is in essence the acknowledgement of the rights of the local population, the incorporation of the communities in the implementation of the forest management plans and their inclusion in any resulting revenue.
- in the case of public auctions of standing trees, the responsibilities and rights of the population at that site must be taken into account. At the auction, a statement of the following must be given:
  - number and location of groups or farmers
  - the envisaged form of incorporation of their rights and responsibilities via the A-C or the buyer.
• the A-C is responsible for regulating the property rights on the forest
• small forest owners can join together to implement forest management planning, but are free to organise forest utilisation individually.
• communities located within state forests are able to rent forest areas and to use them in accordance with the corresponding forest management plans. The usufruct contract with the A-C (contrato de usufructo) regulates the term of use and other details.
• contracts for services, work and labour with communities or farmer associations to implement silvicultural measures should be supported by the A-C.
• communities and farmer associations are able to participate in investment funds set up for afforestation.

In the year 1995, a presidential decree established the Fondo de Manejo Forestal (forest fund). This stipulates that the A-C should donate 50% of proceeds made from usufruct contracts to a forestry fund, which, in the corresponding zone, is to be jointly run by the A-C, a forest-user group and an international development cooperation. The funds are to be invested in the forest to ensure its sustainable management.

A presidential decision made in 1996 added certain restrictions to these earlier decrees. Small farmers or their associations are now only allowed to sell up to 1000 cubic metres of pine or 200 cubic metres in deciduous forest per year in direct sales (as opposed to public auction). Furthermore, the decision to include forest user groups in the dealings of the forest fund made the year before was revoked. Another resolution made in the same year restricted utilisation possibilities still further. Commercial logging by small farmers was banned. Instead, it was decided that commercial logging is to be carried out by the timber industry and that the usufruct benefits in the SSF cover only other forest uses. Participation of small farmers in timber utilisation could take place at the most in the form of employment as labour for the timber industry.
Since the enactment of the Agricultural Sector Modernisation Law in 1992, which included a wide range of possibilities for the local population to participate in the management mainly of state forests, this potential has steadily been reduced through a number of decisions and decrees.

### IV Implementation of the SSF

In the first years since its foundation in 1974, the A-C concentrated its support on establishing cooperatives, almost all of which were involved in pine resin tapping, with a few exceptions undertaking timber processing with manual saws. A state company was the main buyer for resin and this ensured a stable price. When this company went bankrupt in 1984 the price for resin collapsed, and a large number of cooperatives stopped working.

An FAO pilot project, based on the participation of a majority of the population within the project areas, gave the SSF a new direction. A wide range of activities, such as felling and manual sawing, resin tapping, seed collecting, thinning etc. were supported. In each of the four project areas, a forest technician was employed by the project, who lived in the community and assisted every kind of farmer organisation. The work was not restricted to forestry activities but included the expansion of village infrastructure and help in dealing with other government institutions (e.g. education, health).

- Good results, especially a substantial decrease in forest fires in the project areas, led to the concept of Areas de Manejo Integrado (AMI, areas of integrated management) being added to the SSF in 1986. These were areas between 1000 and 10,000 ha, fully or partly wooded, where communities received assistance through a permanently stationed forest technician. However, the 50 or more project areas were gradually given up over the next six years for the following reasons:

- within the A-C, the priorities in forest policy changed, with saw mills being allocated forest stands for their supply which were within AMIs.
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- The extensionist technicians were often insufficiently trained for the job and also badly chosen; in addition, they were often deployed in other areas or, with the right qualifications, left to join the private industry.

- The technical extension and the commercialisation of the products, which were often not allowed to be sold on the free market, were left without the necessary backing and logistics.

- Appropriate methodological instruments for developing and propagating applied technology, training, self-help, participative planning etc. were also lacking.

A new shift in policy was initiated by the Agricultural Sector Modernisation Law of 1992, which was mentioned above. This expanded the SSF to include communities and small producers and, in theory, allocates small farmer user-groups decision-making possibilities and influence.

According to a survey undertaken by the FAO, 311 groups were organised in the SSF in 1993. The nature of forest use was as follows:

- Sale of standing trees: 27%
- Lumber cut with manual saws: 25%
- Resin tapping: 25%
- Agroforestry: 23%

Other forest uses were forest nurseries, forest protection (all kinds), small sawmills, joineries, fuelwood collection and sale, cashew nut cultivation, collection of seeds and small livestock pasture.

Objections to the restriction of use to 1000 m³ per year in pine forests and 200 m³ in deciduous forests were raised by the participants, who quite rightly argued that they deserved to have complete authority over forest use if they were expected to ensure management and forest protection for the total area at the same time.

According to a survey undertaken in 1997 by the PDBL project, which is supported by Canada, there are currently 50 000 ha (or 1% of the total state
forest area) which are under proper management in the form of usufruct contracts and management plans.

Due to the dominance of the private sector in the management of state forests and the lack of necessary extensionist structures and personnel for social forestry within the A-C, it is mainly organisations involved in international cooperation together with a few local non-governmental organisations which support and implement the larger projects of the SSF in state forests.

V Problems in implementation

V.1 Forest policy

A major problem which had a lasting negative influence on the implementation of the SSF lay in the inconsistent and erratic forest policy of the country. Between 1974 and 1992, the A-C was solely responsible for the management and use of all forests of all ownership categories. However, in spite of intensive bi- and multilateral assistance, it did not have the administrative, organisational or man-power capacity to fulfil this obligation. This meant that large forest areas were left to themselves or to the resident population, who frequently used them for agriculture rather than for forestry. Large parts of commercial pine forests were allocated to saw mills to supply them with timber for relatively little charge, without this leading to a proper forest management. The LMSDA legislation returned the standing stock to the private and communal landowners, and the A-C was left with a purely normative role. It retained only its jurisdiction rights and its utilisation rights over state forest land. Many private landowners then evicted the farmers who had been living on their forest land, as this had now become a valuable revenue source. This led to major conflicts in rural areas and resulted in an increase in rural poverty and to further land occupations in state forests.

The ‘socially oriented’ government headed by president Reina (1994-1998) was caught in the dilemma of having to fulfil the management plans in state forests, which had been imposed by the banks to supply industry with sufficient amounts of timber via public auctions, and at the same time of trying to carry on with the
SSF as a measure to reduce rural poverty. Reconciling the two demands has proved impossible. The forest management plans concentrate on achieving a sustainable timber supply and on a rapid conversion of natural pine forests into homogenous age-class stands in the compartment system. Neither the concept of multiple-use forestry nor a cooperation with the population living in the forest can be found in the management plans.

A new strategy for a long-term development of the forestry sector was developed with the participation of the state sector, sections of the timber industry and civil society. The process and its documentation (PLANFOR 1996-2015) was supported by bilateral technical cooperation (in particular Germany through the PSF). In spite of massive resistance by the World Bank and USAID, this was then declared to be government policy in a public statement made by president Reina. Afterwards, PLANFOR was accepted by both donors.

However, during the last administration, objections were raised by opponents who saw in the SSF the danger of valuable forest resources being given away to small farmers. They managed to push through the amendments mentioned above, which severely restricted the possibilities of the SSF.

The administration of president Flores, in power since January 1998, has increased these tendencies. It quite rightly argues that the A-C has proved incapable of managing the state forests sustainably. This fits the general neo-liberal model followed by the government, in which the goal is a ‘minimal state’, where forest office staff is to be cut back and where free forest extension services are to become the exception. The new government would like to copy the Chilean example by leasing large parts of the state forests to concessionaires in long-term contracts (a de facto privatisation). Obviously, a broadly implemented SSF concept contradicts this and it is possible that it will have to be replaced with other ways in which the rural population can participate in the revenue from the forest.
V.2 AFE-COHDEFOR

The A-C is still a very bureaucratic apparatus which works slowly and clumsily. The usufruct contracts and their corresponding management plans are very complicated affairs which require previous knowledge. The authorising procedure in the administration can take at least six months and reaching the signatory phase is often connected to a payment.

The frequent, politically motivated turnover in the forest department staff hampers their work. New staff have to familiarise themselves with their job and often lack the trust of the local population. In addition, the staff is overworked because the employment of qualified personnel is thereby often rendered impossible.

So far, there has not been a single case of the forestry fund being used for its planned purpose. Money paid into the fund has now been frozen.

The idea or concept of SSF has only been accepted by very few forest officers at the intermediate and lower levels. A wide range of different interpretations exist as to what SSF actually means. The few foresters who are interested in implementing SSF in practice usually have no support from their politically instated superiors.

V.3 User groups

Most user groups lack the expertise and financial means to develop forest management plans. Where plans exist, they do not have the technical skills necessary to implement them. The exceptions are groups which are assisted by bilateral development cooperation projects. Experience of these projects shows that considerable effort has to be made in non-technical training, because the rural population has no prior experience in cooperative forms of organisation. Even the communal organisation in the villages often does not function properly, but this is the precondition for the communities to press for their rights with respect to the state authorities.

The survey financed by Canada mentioned above, however, shows that there are also problems in marketing the forest products. Communal utilisation is often economically unattractive.
V.4 Summary and outlook

Honduras is the only Central American country which has an official policy to implement social forestry since 1974. Various changes in the legislative framework led for a while to a better integration of the rural population in forest management and then to renewed restrictions to this integration.

The survey on usufruct contracts undertaken by the Canadian-supported PDBL project shows that forests managed under these conditions are in a relatively better condition than before the management started or than neighbouring forest areas. In pine forests, less forest fires, a better regeneration and less damaging management could be demonstrated. Deciduous forests registered less illegal logging activities.

On the other hand, in relation to the total forest area of the country, the SSF concept has contributed very little to the income derived from the use of the Honduran forest resources. Accordingly, it has contributed correspondingly little to reducing rural poverty.

The effects of the tropical hurricane Mitch, which hit Honduras at the end of October 1998 will also influence the development of the SSF. The necessity of filling the empty state coffers in order to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure supports those circles who demand a further transfer of state forests to efficiently functioning private enterprises. The effects of the hurricane have also added momentum to the debate over a more ‘efficient’ management of state-owned pine forests through concessions and the passing of a ‘concession law’ is being contemplated. This would necessarily mean a further restriction of the SSF.

The argument put forward by opponents of the SSF, that rural poverty would be reduced by a ‘trickle down’ effect induced by employment in commercial forestry enterprises, has so far not shown the hoped for impact.

However, it is assumed that even with more commercial use in Honduran forests, a certain portion will still be managed according to the principles of the SSF and that the policy guideline of a participatory management of some state forests will remain.
Rational Management of Tropical Dry Forest with the People at the Centre of the Project Azua, Dominican Republic

_PETER ASMUSSEN, MARTIN SCHNEICHEL_

Since January 1999, the rural regional development project ‘Bosque Seco’ (Rational Management of Tropical Dry Forest) in the Southwest of the Dominican Republic is in its follow-up phase. The objective of the project was to enable the rural poor to meet their basic needs and to manage those natural resources at their disposal in a sustainable manner, so that the forest can not only be protected but also recover from decades of exploitation and gain in productivity.

The two elements of this objective could only be met together, as the population makes its living mainly from charcoal burning, extraction of posts, simple timber and sleepers for the small railroads of the sugarcane plantations, and to a lesser extent from rearing goats and bee-keeping, irrigated agriculture on very small pieces of land, collecting oregano, and work as day labourers. There are hardly any alternatives.

_The context_

The “target group” of charcoal burners and small farmers belong to the poorest and most marginalised section of Dominican society. Over half the population over twelve years of age is illiterate. Water, electricity or medical welfare seldom make their way to the communities of the dry forest. The roads are in bad condition and communication is virtually impossible. The villagers are usually not organised, neither by the state nor privately, the exception being a more informal membership in a political party. Church services are also barely available. Local non-governmental organisations hardly ever come to the communities. Until recently, people had to rely on middlemen for selling products from the dry forest and also for buying food. These middlemen also gave food as credit for future...
supplies of charcoal or sleepers, increasing the dependence of the population on them.

The women are doubly disadvantaged. Their standing within the social structure of the dry forest communities is low, as they have few possibilities to earn their own income alongside their housework and they ‘only help’ with the forestry work. *Machismo* is rife in this society, which allows the women little personal freedom and this results in a lack of self-confidence. They are in a very dependent situation.

The badly degenerated tropical dry forest, covering around 5000 km², is a secondary forest of leguminosae (prosopis juliflora is the dominant species), thornbushes and cactuses (3-5 metres high) which emerged after the original stands of mahogany, oak and other valuable species were felled. It is mainly situated on state land or is in the hands of large landowners, who normally do not manage it but rather acquired ownership in order to qualify for forestry credit, or for land speculation purposes. Hardly any of the small farmers possesses a land title and conflicts over land traditionally used by them are the order of the day.

Dominican forest legislation prohibits the felling of any kind of living wood. Exceptions are only given in extremely bureaucratic procedures and are connected with official or unofficial payments. Charcoal burning was also illegal in principle. The charcoal burners and their wives were constantly under threat of being arrested or having their goods confiscated, whether during burning, transport or selling. On the other hand, charcoal is still the main fuel for many poor Dominican households. The subsidies for cooking gas, and pressure applied by the forest department on large consumers, however, have led to a dramatic drop in demand for charcoal over the last years.

**Project procedure and impact**

From 1987 onwards, the GTZ, together with the regional planning institute *Instituo para el Desarrollo del Suroeste*, INDESUR, started an attempt to regenerate tropical dry forest within an orientation phase. This was to be achieved
mainly through the development of alternative income sources. In the fulfilment of these tasks, the executing agency was to be supported for a reasonable period until it could continue the work independently.

In a second phase of the project, the focus now shifted to the tropical dry forest itself, hitherto largely ignored in its role as an income source. An inventory of this forest was undertaken and charcoal burning received more attention. The initially planned development of alternative income sources proved to be unrealistic, and so the project staff, with the assent of the forestry department, started to organise the sale of forest products themselves.

Gradually, four concept elements emerged on which the project concentrated in its further development:

I. *Organisation of users.* I.e. strengthening of the self-help groups of those men and women who live off the forest products at a village level and the federation of these groups, the FEPROBOSUR. The objective was the formation of an independent and autonomous representation of this group of people for the later development process.

II. *Rational management of the tropical dry forest.* Development and application of a *simple* - for campesinos comprehensible - integral and sustainable form of management for the tropical dry forest, which enables its regeneration whilst concurrently providing income.

III. *Direct sales of forest products to provide higher income.* The sale of all FEPROBOSUR products on the main markets in Santo Domingo and some province capitals whilst to a large extent avoiding intermediate trade. This objective is aimed at raising the household incomes and at achieving a high degree of economic independence for the federation FEPROBOSUR.

IV. *Transfer of land titles.* The safeguarding of future utilisation of revenue from the new, and labour-intensive, forest management by granting land titles based on the Dominican land reform. These were to be issued to village groups for collective management and not to individuals.
Through a joint planning and operating process which involved all the relevant and de facto active agents of the region, significant progress could be achieved in all four areas.

I. By the end of 1996, men and women of 40 communities had formed 82 groups, and FEPROBOSUR had, after becoming financially independent by charging a fee for the central marketing of the products, developed into a confident representation of the target group. The federation advocates its interests successfully in relation to other institutions and is now nationally known and respected.

II. The tropical dry forest is clearly and visibly regenerating. The volume of standing timber has doubled between 1992 and 1996, the shading of the soil has increased and the ubiquitous cactuses have begun to be supplanted by the now more common and taller deciduous trees. Timber utilisation, initially confined to dead wood, has now been expanded to include first thinnings of the dense and thriving stands.

III. In the area of wood products, FEPROBOSUR has practically acquired a monopoly position for the Southwest of the country and has replaced the old marketing structures consisting of local and regional middlemen. It either delivers its products directly to the consumer or supplies a wholesale retailer who organises the distribution to the municipal markets. For the campesino families, this direct marketing and the diversification of the products they can offer from the tropical dry forest translates into a stable and significantly higher income.

IV. Over 167,000 ha of tropical dry forest have been transferred so far to the property of campesino groups in the form of provisional land titles. These are now managed according to sustainable criteria and are protected by the campesinos against non-local users. The readiness to do this has made the supervision by forest department staff to a large extent superfluous.
Supporting the executing agency and the user groups

As time passed, it became increasingly apparent that it would be impossible to support the executing agency enough to enable it to assume total responsibility over the planning and implementation measures by the end of the cooperation. The executing agency became an object of political interests and conflicts arose between the project team and the director of INDESUR over the jointly agreed-upon objectives of the project. At the national level, the will to seriously tackle resource management and eradication of poverty was obviously lacking.

The project reacted to this situation by incorporating local NGOs from 1992 onwards and by consistently putting the local resource users at the centre of all events. To this aim, the nine villager self-help groups working with the project were encouraged to form the umbrella organisation FEPROBOSUR, which took over the marketing of charcoal within a few months.

This task could only be managed by the full-time employment of one of the target group representatives and could not be carried out from his remote community. For this reason, the president of FEPROBOSUR moved to the provincial capital Azua, the project headquarters. He soon became first an additional and then the main focus point for charcoal burners and farmers who visited the project. Soon, a controversy developed between FEPROBOSUR and the powerful association of transport companies, who had been transporting charcoal to the capital Santo Domingo at exorbitant prices. In the face of massive resistance, the young farmer organisation, still in its initial phase, managed to win its first bargaining success and implement the agreement.

The expansion of the project into new areas led to new tasks for FEPROBOSUR. Its representative had to visit all the relevant communities, participate in lots of meetings, arbitrate conflicts and set up new groups of charcoal burners. Soon, several other members of FEPROBOSUR were helping the president. An office independent of INDESUR was sought and rented. The work could no longer be done on the side, salaries and expenses had to be paid, the radio transmitters of the project staff were taken over. In addition, a telephone
was needed and it became necessary to travel to the various, widely scattered villages. All this cost money, which could be provided by levying a fee on the products which were to be sold. Within a few months, FEPROBOSUR was able to carry the running costs itself. The project financed a few necessary investments, for example six motorbikes, and still paid for further training and for the larger members meetings.

At the same time, the partnership between the president of FEPROBOSUR and the representatives of the nine communities within the project necessitated new forms of working and planning. In the communities dependent on charcoal burning, neither mid- nor long-term perspectives are possible due to the primacy of daily survival. Some of the farmers did have experience in organising, which included setting up annual working plans, but these were often not implemented, as written testimonies do not rate high in this society which lacks a tradition of writing. Even for those who were able to read and write, typical methods and instruments of technical cooperation were of little use. However, there was lively interest in concrete measures which could improve their precarious economic situation. In order to agree on objectives and activities, planning procedures were developed which were oriented to the needs and skills of the most active members.

Two important needs of the charcoal burners were now defined as objectives at this stage: the direct sale of charcoal to raise income and the regeneration of the natural resources in the vicinity of the villages to provide for a secure livelihood for their children in the future. Other measures, like building their organisation and a supporting structure of NGOs, the integration of women, the implementation of small-scale infrastructural improvements and acquiring land titles were all developed as time went by. The framework for the everyday practical work was given by the possibilities and problems identified by the campesinos themselves and countless, mainly informal discussions concerning the planning and evaluation of all activities. It was only the success of this process, which basically consisted of common sense and the will to work together, which led to this approach being understood as a new concept.
Contacts with local NGOs, which had existed since the middle of the second phase, were now intensified and other potentially interested organisations were asked to cooperate and were helped and integrated with further training courses and financial assistance. A body of six NGOs, the ‘Grupo de Apoyo’ was formed, which advised the FEPROBOSUR in various areas. Four of these NGOs took responsibility for the support of one region with several communities; one of these offered additional courses for the development of leadership capacities, another prepared the allocation of land titles and helped with legal problems by for example pushing through the acknowledgement of groups as legal entities.

The representatives of the target group, of the NGOs, INDESUR and the GTZ met regularly to exchange experience and to coordinate joint planning, agreements and even activities. After a while, certain INDESUR technicians were deployed in these NGOs and they now work there as integrated staff under the supervision of the NGOs.

Even though INDESUR was no longer conceptually involved in the project, it still had an important role to play. Firstly, it supplied the legal framework within which the project could develop. This is important considering the traditional distrust between the state, self-help groups and NGOs. When dealing with or filing an application to other state institutions, it is important to have a state advocate. It also continued to supply traditional counterpart services, such as the upkeep of vehicles and the payment of the salaries of certain technicians. It was clear to everyone that the state had to remain integrated into the project and had to continue to play its part.

Two governmental organisations in particular had to be integrated or at least involved: the forest administration subordinated to the military FORESTA and the Agricultural Reform Office IAD. The former supplied the project with forestry technicians from the second phase onwards to advise and control the charcoal burners, issued permits for the transport and sale of timber and charcoal and eventually reduced the fee for these permits considerably. The control of transport into the capital was now carried out by two military road-checks, on each of which a charcoal burner recommended by FEPROBOSUR and
employed by FORESTA was posted. Today, the local charcoal markets in the Southwest are organised jointly by FORESTA and FEPROBOSUR.

The Dominican Land Reform Office IAD distributes land titles to farmers, usually for agricultural activities. After several years, the project was able to persuade it to issue titles for forest management, and to issue them to groups of people, women as well as men, for common management, instead of only to individuals as before. However, like all state institutions in the Dominican Republic, the IAD suffers from lack of funds, and therefore often cannot fulfil its obligations in the field. For this reason, several of the project groups are helping the IAD. One of the NGOs possesses considerable experience in this area and can coordinate all activities. A further two church NGOs specialising in legal support for grass-roots groups have taken the responsibility for individual court cases. The GTZ paid for the employment of an experienced land surveyor and of a motivated lawyer and the IAD also supplied lawyers and land surveyors. Representatives of the target groups were naturally also involved in most of the implementing stages. Since the beginning of this cooperation, it has been possible to transfer 167,000 ha of forest.

After a while, the leaders of the target group became quasi-members of the project team. Local representatives, GTZ field staff, locally contracted personnel and INDESUR technicians all jointly plan, implement and evaluate project measures. Persons closely connected to the target group, namely former members and leaders of the farmer organisation MCI (Movimiento Campesino Independiante), which collapsed because of political interference, have taken the place of former project technicians as locally contracted staff. Among these, there are many who are highly experienced in the organisation and leadership of groups. They proved better suited than academic foresters or agriculturists for tasks related to advising local communities. Less than three years after its foundation, the “target group” itself took over the task of expanding the project into new areas, as it has an interest in growing larger, in integrating more members, in spreading the financial risk onto more shoulders and in eliminating illegal competition.
The project team’s method of working with campesinos

The success of the project was made possible primarily by the committed work done by the campesino groups themselves. The main concern of the project team was to motivate and support these groups. The most important prerequisite for this is participation, namely participation of the project staff in the decision-making process of the “target group”, in the implementation of the activities decided by the target group and in the evaluation of these activities, in contrast to the participation of representatives of the target group in the planning process and activities of the project team. In order to ensure participation in this sense, a number of procedures have proved important:

On the first official visit made to village communities where the project team saw opportunities to have an effect on development, the principles of technical cooperation with the following possibilities and limitations were explained:

- the project is willing to work with all the villagers who wish to do so, as long as they show initiative in changing their situation themselves. This offer is made to both men and women of the village. Meetings with little or no participation by women will give rise to this question being raised with the aim of ensuring an appropriate participation of women. As long as there is no significant participation by women, the project team will offer no concrete assistance.

- As cooperation with individual campesinos or families is not possible, the interested villagers must organise as a group and apply for membership within FEPROBOSUR.

- The project team does not work for the campesinos but rather with them, it supports their initiatives and activities. It is made very clear that the project team is in no way obliged to work with that particular community, and that faced with a lack of interest it will offer its services elsewhere.

The project team contrasted starkly with other institutions and the promises of periodically visiting politicians, in that it made clear that it had nothing to give
away, neither money, nor food, nor material. The support consisted chiefly in experience in rural development, expert knowledge, and the utilisation of connections to state institutions and NGOs.

In joint workshops made up of campesinos and members of the project team, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) instruments were used to analyse the situation of the village. The questions asked by the project team were focused more on potentials than on problems. The aim was to define activities for the management of the existing resources of the village which could enable villagers to increase their income on their own. The process consciously avoided orienting the planning towards problems which could only be solved with the help of investments from national or international funds. In many communities, the priorities of men and women differed at first. The project staff had to ensure that the women were given a hearing and that decisions made were later accepted by the whole community.

The discussion process in the community needed time. For this reason, it has proved expedient to spread the situation analysis of the community over a longer period of time and not to finish it, as is usual in PRA-workshops, within a week. The analysis can thereby be continuously expanded and updated in the consciousness of the community and the responsible advisors. A written documentation of this process has hardly any relevance for the participants.

When planning and implementing activities, it has proved wise to coordinate the contributions of the participants at meetings beforehand and to decide in what order they should be discussed. The advisor of the project team should discuss the main points with the respective groups or individuals. When a discussion on details or contested points within the community takes place, he should cease to attend as soon as this is advisable, i.e. as soon as the community no longer needs his mediation. The project team becomes involved again only after the village community has decided on what course to take and has informed the team of their decision. This procedure must be explained to the community and a date must be fixed. At first, this all takes rather a long time, and the project team has to be patient. However, once a discussion and decision-making process has been
successfully completed, a dynamic can be expected which will soon compensate initial ‘delay’.

Whenever possible, the project did not make advance contributions, but rather gave assistance after the village community had taken the first agreed step. If material or equipment was necessary for this first step which was not available in the village, then these would be supplied by the project, but it would always be explained and clearly stated whether and why this took the form of a gift, if it was lent, or if it was given as a form of credit. Greater financial assistance is normally not possible for technical cooperation projects. Whether other institutions were prepared to contribute to certain activities remained something which had to be organised by the campesinos themselves. Support in this, for example in formulating an application, was naturally given. The respective agreements between the project advisors and the campesinos would normally not be written down, except in the case of credit.

In the joint planning process, a common goal would be formulated and then a discussion would take place on how to achieve it. Then, the first steps would be undertaken. At each meeting, be it formal or informal, with the whole village, with certain groups or with individual leaders, the steps taken would be evaluated according to their purpose and the actual effect they had, the new situation would be analysed and the further course of action would be discussed. Only in exceptional cases would this process or parts of it be documented. It was important that decisions would be discussed beforehand, that they could be made quickly and that it was possible to act flexibly or to react to the actions of a third party. This flexibility in decision-making after short, informal agreements in the community, in the car, after work over a glass of beer, and sometimes a little more formally in the FEPROBOSUR or project office, was the essence of the participatory project planning.

**Behaviour of the advisory staff**

The project procedure described above makes relatively high demands on the advisory staff, who have to build up a personal relationship with the
Towards Pluralistic Forestry

campesinos. This kind of target group work cannot be accomplished within the rhythm of a normal nine-to-five office job. Because of the nature of the campesino working day, it is necessary to have time in the evenings, at the weekend and on holidays. It requires a sensitive touch, but also enough self-confidence to be able to act, advise or to withdraw according to each specific situation, as there exists no formally agreed planning document to fall back on. In this kind of work, the project management should give the advisory staff plenty of leeway, has to be there to talk to in case of any problems arising, should motivate the staff to use their freedom of action and should anticipate mistakes and be ready to deal with them constructively.

It is not absolutely necessary to speak the ‘language’ of the campesinos, but it is more convincing. The university education of the advisors is usually more a hindrance than a help, and people close to the target group with experience in the ‘university of life’ are often more suitable. Common sense is needed, as are easily comprehensible explanations. Words foreign to the farmers should not be used and it is important not to speak in long sentences, even though people from educated classes like to do so. At meetings, it has proved useful not only to say what one wants, but also to provide a negative formulation of how something should not be done. Humour can defuse critical points, can attract more attention and can sometimes state the facts better, but it is hardly learnable. Often, university graduates are not used to portraying information in simple words.

Among the advisory staff of state institutions, but also among many NGOs, the view is often held that campesinos need sensitisation and that their awareness for the destruction of their environment needs to be kindled. However, the campesinos are the first to experience the damage to their environment and they usually know the reasons for it. This ‘consciousness-raising’ is usually quickly dealt with if one asks how the environment looked like 20 or 30 years ago, what has changed since then and what the causes of this change could be. The drying up of streams, the reduced rainfall, the loss of harvests, the lack of tree shade and deforestation soon crop up. In addition, campesinos know many things that project staff do not know. To accept that their knowledge takes a different form
and is transported and articulated differently is difficult for some advisors and this prevents them from negotiating on equal terms, not just to impart their knowledge but also to learn from the campesinos.

Advisors should formulate their suggestions as a question, and then wait for discussion and comment. One should deliberate carefully at what point superior knowledge - if this is truly available - should be pushed through, and when it makes more sense to let the campesinos experience a failure.

If objectives are to be jointly striven for, they need to be clearly comprehensible to everyone, and practically conceivable. Economically relevant objectives motivate best. For example, if the self-confidence of a group is to be improved, there is no point formulating this as the objective to be jointly aimed at, but rather, activities need to be found which, if successfully implemented, would have the desired effect. In the project ‘Bosque Seco’, for example, the financially perceptible success in the negotiations over the transportation costs of the dry forest products led to a significant increase in the respect given to FEPROBOSUR and to the self-confidence of its leading staff.

If a peoples organisation is to be built and supported, this is dependent primarily on the personal development of its members, at least of its leaders. If this development is successful, then a rapid increase in the potential to solve incoming problems independently is the result. This is why the advisory staff has to steer a careful course between the underestimation of the campesinos, which can lead to frustration and to the advisor getting a reputation of being paternalistic, and an overestimation, which can lead to mistakes which might otherwise have been avoided.

The high demands made on the advisory staff mean that the GTZ-advisors cannot simply rely on the advisors ‘functioning’ by themselves and that they should keep close contact with the leaders of the target group at least. As soon as possible, however, staff should refrain from paying routine visits to the individual villages.
The sustainability of a development process, be it in the area of natural resources management or of independence in the target group, need not wait until the final assistance phase of a project to be realised. The fact that project support is limited in time should be rooted in the consciousness of all participants and the organisation of the work should lead step by step to a situation where even if the project-staff were to leave prematurely, then the main processes and activities could continue. When planning a project with the aim of a sustainable later development, these aspects should be taken into account from the start.

As we are dealing with poor sections of the population, this includes not only imparting planning and decision-making skills but also defining economically relevant goals and their achievement. Without a perceptible improvement in the family income, every initiative undertaken will collapse after a certain period. That is why a focus on potential benefits and not towards problems is crucial. This is the only way to set a process going where a responsible shaping of the future and the long-term sustainability of the project measures can be attained.

**The situation in 1999**

Towards the end of the normal assistance phase, FEPROBOSUR combines 84 village groups in those 40 communities which are most important for the protection and sustainable use of the tropical dry forest. A managing committee made up of seven men and two women, with the support of the project staff, is working towards the strengthening of the organisation and is responsible for the nation-wide sales of wood and charcoal worth around 1.5 million DM. It supports the integration of women in all activities as well as the implementation of small infrastructural measures in the villages by supplying material and further training.

The women’s groups in the villages are in no way less involved in the decision-making processes than the men and are accompanied by a team of particularly active women chosen from their midst. FEPROBOSUR has developed into a nationally known organisation which is acknowledged by state institutions as the representation of the silviculturalists of the Southwest. Its represents the interests of its members confidently and successfully, negotiates and enters into contracts.
for the use and protection of forests, and takes part in national conferences. For the future, it has plans for the self-reliant securing and improvement of the living and working conditions of the communities.

Of around 5000 km² of tropical dry forest, more than 1,800 km² are now under sustainable management. Another 800 to 1000 km² belong to the Jaragua national park and are therefore as protected as the national park administration can guarantee. The rest, apart from stands on the Haitian border, is hardly used. The regeneration, therefore, is fully underway. Taxation plots show an increasing rate of increment, which has resulted in the tripling of the timber volume since 1992. The shading of the soil has improved and trees are beginning to crowd out the cactuses.

These successes have finally convinced the state institutions. The long-standing resistance by the forestry department has changed into a laissez-faire attitude, intercepted with occasional and hesitant support. The land reform office has accepted the communities which are to be given land titles, is starting its own supporting programmes there, and for this reason is starting its own office in the project location. In order to ensure the continuation of a participatory approach, the office is employing some of the locally contracted project personnel.
Social Forestry - Hope from the midst of despair?

Experience and Reflections from the Integrated Forestry Development-Project in Ambatolampy, Madagascar

MARTIN TAMPE

I THE DEVELOPMENT IN MADAGASCAR

The forest policy of Madagascar has undergone a radical change over the last few years. Whereas at the beginning of the nineties, the responsibility of the forestry administration for the management, control and regeneration of public forests still went without saying, today not only the incorporation of the local population but also their leading role in management is a stated objective. This has been laid down by a number of laws (Law on the local management of natural resources N° 96-025, Forest law N° 97-017) but has not yet reached the implementing stage.

How did this happen? Through the combination of

- the admission that the hitherto practice of the forestry administration was unable to prevent the destruction of over 80% of Madagascan forests, which had originally covered practically the whole island. Painful elements of this are the daily bribery and the insufficient provision with personnel and material which degrade the forest officers to curious rarities in forest areas but not in the capital.

- the increasing political importance ascribed to the environment and the forest, encouraged in part by the environmental action plan.

- an active support of the reformulation of national forest policy by the donor countries coupled with the prospect of funds for its implementation

- the simultaneously introduced policy of decentralisation and privatisation

- the strengthening of non-governmental organisations
• a surprising determination to and capability for change within a large section of the forestry officers.

What consequences did this have when seen on the background of Madagascar’s forest history?

Historical and prehistoric studies in cultural and settlement history and pollen analyses have proven that a shift in the composition of the flora and fauna of Madagascar took place in connection with climatic change some 5000 years ago. In the Western and South-western parts of the island in particular, increasing drought and rising temperatures changed the environmental conditions. Settlement began about 2000 years ago, and for over 1000 years seems to have had little ecological impact. Only in the 12th and 13th centuries, as the conflicts between the different tribes for predominance increased, in which the highlanders (Merina) finally won, were large districts especially around and north-west of the capital Antananarivo laid bare by recurring fire. The forest has remained a hide-out for enemies, thieves and evil spirits, in other words a threatening factor, until today. The fact that since the varying settlements by Europeans significant amounts of tropical timber were exported, contributed perhaps to impoverishment, but certainly did not have a decisive influence on deforestation.

Forest clearings with the aim of other land use (in particular pasture) was another factor for deforestation, but, because of the sparse settlement or lack of population and utilisation of large parts of cleared areas, this was probably of minor importance.

Today however, several hundred thousand hectares of natural woodland and secondary forest, in particular in the last remaining larger forest area, the eastern slopes of Madagascar, are burned and cleared annually for short-term shifting cultivation. An effective control, or the possibility to halt this is non-existent. It is no wonder then, that the incorporation of the population in the conservation and sustainable management of the forests has become the big (and last?) hope.
Since the end of 1997, the new forestry law and the decree ‘New forest policy’ are in force. They ascribe user groups a central role in the management of public forests. This can be organised directly through management contracts, but also with ‘secure local management of natural resources’ (GELOSE). In the latter case, a utilisation plan is set up either for individual resources or for the whole territory of a village. In a participatory process, a distribution and form of resource use which is both wished for by the villagers and accepted by the (village and technical agency) administration is decided on. This plan is not as binding as for example registered land tenure, but it does give the village security in the face of outside claims.

In any case, the forest and land remain state owned. Only the timber used is transferred to the user group. This is a regulation which is similar to the German hunting legislation, where the property claim over game is transferred only after it has been killed.

**Photo 4:**
Value generation from sustainable use: The Forestry Union of Ambatolampy, Madagascar, sawing up timber in the forest
II WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR THE «HOPE IN SOCIAL FORESTRY»?

It is not self-evident that it is promising to 'set the fox to keep the geese'. And as the first trials in Madagascar are still young and have not matured into consolidated examples of social forestry, it is only correct to speak of hope. The justification for this hope is not very specific:

- in particular regions and social constellations trees and woodland have a cultural importance which could be used for their conservation
- the well-funded information and training campaign for a forest and field integrating land use is at its height
- the damage to the countryside in areas without forests (most of the country) is evident
- agricultural yields are sinking, and this can be linked partly to the disturbed ecological balance
- disturbances in the ecological balance are registered with alarm by the people, who do not see a viable ‘way out of the crisis’
- wood shortage has led to severe increases in the price of fuel in many regions
- revenue from the forest is becoming more attractive due to increasing timber prices and a better exploitation of non-wood products (such as honey or internationally sought for medicinal plants)

Whether these factors can lead to a long-term shift in the self conception and cultural and economic conception of Madagascar remains to be seen. There are still weighty arguments against:

- cultural and economic habits are stubborn and cannot be overcome overnight;
- a pronounced individualism and distrust hampers social organisation which go beyond the extended family units
• Madagascan society and religious community, characterised by two faces (traditional/pre-Christan - colonial/Christian or Islamic) shows little inclination to respect the regulations of a state which is known to be corrupt;

• expected economic returns from a sustainable forest management are extremely limited due to the dumping prices which exist on the world market but also in Madagascar because of short-term forest exploitation practices (the prices reflect the harvesting and transportation costs but not the cost of silviculture, road maintenance and administration);

• the mean annual increment in autochthonous Madagascan forests is not more than 1 m³ per hectare;

• the transition away from forest-destructive land and forest use practices is initially experienced as the immediate loss of benefits;

• the relinquishing of short-term benefits does not guarantee that others will not enrich themselves and that mid- and long-term benefits will materialise;

• the omnipresent fire in Madagascar does not inspire confidence that long-term investments in forests will be effective;

• secondary forest uses such as honey production are developing slowly and necessitate a safe marketing chain;

• tourism as an alternative source of income is only possible in certain areas because of the lack of good infrastructure in the forest areas of Madagascar.

It is indisputable that an integrated forest-land management in rural areas would, in the long-term, result in a maximum total of benefits for the population and the economy. This has been shown convincingly for certain individual cases and this is the basis of the project’s confidence.

III STRATEGIC ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT

The implementation of forest management plans and village development plans is not seen as dependent on outside funding. Rather, the project aims to develop models which are generally applicable and is conscious of the limited funds which
are available nationally. Therefore, the emphasis is laid on measures which support self-help and the training necessary for the implementation of realistic action. The project rests on the following strategic conceptions:

**III.1 Integrated land use approach**

The sustainable management of forests is not usually at the centre of the social and economic interests of villagers. If the forest is not perceived as a danger, then at most it is regarded under the aspect of fulfilling basic needs. It would be a hopeless task from the beginning onwards, however, if a participatory and committed development process were to be started ‘from the back door’, i.e. from the most marginalised factor. Indeed, in many cases there is even a marked competition between forests and other land uses.

With an integrated land use and village development approach, there is a chance to operate with real motives and reasons and to avoid creating a superficial interest in forests which in reality is motivated by an opportunist expectation of financial benefits. In this more realistic approach, the forest can be awarded the attention it really commands in its role as a productive factor, a protective element in the countryside and a cultural location.

In the example of the natural forest management in Tsinjoarivo, the plan wants to reduce the forest area in favour of the agricultural area in the mid-term from 70% to 60%. In this context it can be remarked that the existing forest-free area, with intensive cultivation, could feed ten times the number of people currently living in the area (about 2000 people).

However, because of the current state of knowledge of, training in, introduction to and trials of new agricultural techniques, this fact does not hinder new clearings as of now. It can be expected, though, that together with an economic development on the basis of a significant rise in agricultural production, solutions can be reached step by step for other problem areas like infrastructure, health and education.
A research project funded by the ‘Tropical Ecology Support Program’ (TÖB) connected to the GTZ project was able to contribute substantially to the improvement and concretisation of this integrated approach to land use and development planning. By incorporating services agencies, it was possible to achieve perceptible changes for the village population in the first implementation phase.

### III.2 Economic profitability

Lots of activities seem clearly ecologically sensible and technically feasible. Whether they can become effective in the sense of a sustainable development also depends on their economic profitability. In order to avoid bad investments and disappointing experiences, a systematic analysis is carried out on the practical feasibility, the profitability to be expected and thereby also the mid-term option of self-financing. The creation of an extension structure funded by the users themselves is one of the central challenges of the current phase and is to be the subject of a TÖB research project.

With the aim of carrying out profitable projects, the GTZ project has been supporting the forming of village savings funds and credit groups. The now existing 15 funds involve around 17,000 people and manage total assets of about 350,000,- Deutsch Marks capital, 100,000,- DM mid-term third party funds and 30,000,- DM savings. The capital stock comes mainly from the selective support of private investment (local subsidies) which are to be repaid into the newly founded credit institutions. Through a consistent supervision of the project formulation, by accompanying the projects with advice and by a careful observance of the necessary guarantees, the funds were able to ensure a repayment rate of about 95%.

However, it has been found that in spite of technical feasibility, high success probability and secure financial resources, promising innovations are not carried out or are given up after a while. In these cases, it is often social, cultural and individual factors which play a decisive role in blocking or opening up new development perspectives. The need for intensive assistance when trying out new
techniques and advice with problems and difficulties that crop up is also frequently underestimated. The project is currently engaged in developing new forms of services in rural areas and in their economic stabilisation within a commercial relationship between seller and customer.

### III.3 Support of a sustainable dynamic in behaviour and culture

The participatory approach in the identification, planning and implementation of project activities is the determining organisational element, even when it is often not intensive and broad enough. The affected regional organisations (technical services, regional administration, NGOs, cooperatives and self-help groups) steer the project in a cooperative way.

But as in many other cases, it has been found that the formulated objectives and principles are not necessarily the ones which dominate the course of action. This can be grounded in simple untruthfulness, but is often caused by enigmatic cognitive-emotion-action-continuums of the respective persons. In the same way, economic incentives alone are not reliable indicators for the realisation of innovations and development initiatives.

Without claiming to have dealt with this complex but extremely important subject satisfactorily, the project does see progress in an iterative monitoring and analysis process of behavioural and cultural dynamics. A short monitoring rhythm which focuses particularly on hindrances in plan realisation, has proven exceedingly fruitful for a collective learning process and in developing a transparent behavioural culture, but also for clearer discussions and more realistic targets in the planning process.

Aspects which should be given attention in every planning and monitoring in the above sense include:

- realistic analysis and planning of capacity
- exact description of the work situation
- analysis of social implications
• analysis of expected conflicts
• documentation of the personal risks involved in the implementation of planned activities
• comparative benefit-analysis for the participating actors
• analysis of disadvantaged groups by the project or by rational project steering, and possibilities of incorporating them in a constructive way.

IV THE MANAGEMENT BY USER GROUPS IN AMBATOLAMPY

IV.1 Preparation

The first project plan drawn up at the end of the eighties entailed the support of the forestry administration in the management of the regional forests (pine afforestations). Six months ago, this has been replaced by a management contract between a user group which had emerged over the last four years (forest union of Ambatolampy) and the forestry administration. Conditions in the contract are

• the implementation of the existing forest management plans
• the employment of forestry and finance experts
• the maintenance of the existing forest roads and buildings
• the maintenance and replacement of machines and equipment left to the user group;
• a permanent right of the forestry department to control the technical and financial management;
• the pledge that burnt areas defined as forests will under no circumstances be converted to other forms of land use.
• the sole use of generated income for the management (or expansion) of the forest.
This contract was only possible through the support and assistance given to the gradual creation of 214 grass-roots groups and their eventual association to individual cooperatives in the three forest areas, which finally led to the foundation of the forest union.

This structure was complemented by intensive discussions with the forestry department, which, at the executing level at least, now ‘suspiciously supports’ the model. The local forestry officers are still the source of many smaller conflicts, however, in which the rather non-united population eagerly participates. The background of these conflicts are illegal revenue sources and positions of power which are threatened by the new situation.

**IV.2 Technical management data**

Management currently takes place in one forestry station (Manjakatompo) in the western part of the region, which consists of 1,700 hectares of pine afforestations, 1,300 hectares of natural forest and 5,000 hectares of upland steppe, in one pine afforestation covering 150 hectares in the middle eastern part (Ampahibato) and in so far only a small part of a large natural forest comprising of 15,000 hectares in the far East of the region (Tsinjoarivo). Whereas the management of the pine forest follows simple regulations along the classical method (mainly natural regeneration, spacing, thinning and pruning, 25 year rotation period), in the natural forest, a more differentiated technique in tune with the local population is being sought for. This distances itself consciously from the standard regulations (rotation by areas with a systematic utilisation of all boles above 40 cm chest height diameter) and is oriented towards the principle of the selection system (*Plenterwald*). The forest is divided according to diameter into three strata (1: up to a diameter of 10 cm; 2: a diameter between 10-20 cm; 3: a diameter over 20 cm), which are handled differently. To simplify management, up to six crop tree species are selected for each plot, which deviates from the principle of a high as possible diversity, for small areas at least. The activities in the three strata are aimed at increasing the quality and share of crop tree species. However, it should be made clear that these measures are optional ones which make timber utilisation possible, but which are
not necessary for the continued existence of the forest and which only increase the value of the stands after long periods. The maximum limit for timber extraction lies at 30% of standing timber within a decade, which translates at an average maximum use of 0.85m³ per annum and hectare. This corresponds to increment estimations for autochthonous Madagascan tree species. The silvicultural interventions are planned according the following principle (table 1):

**Table 1: Possible silvicultural interventions in the 3 horizontal stand strata**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowest stratum</th>
<th>Middle stratum</th>
<th>Highest stratum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occurrence</td>
<td>Occurrence</td>
<td>Occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of crop tree</td>
<td>of crop tree</td>
<td>of crop tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>species</td>
<td>species</td>
<td>species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>intervention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Possible intervention</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Possible intervention</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Possible intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Individual felling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Opening up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Thinning</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Opening up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Thinning</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Individual felling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Secondary felling</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Secondary felling</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Opening up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Individual felling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Opening up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Planting / sowing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Secondary felling</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Opening up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that hardly anything is known about the increment rate of Madagascan tree species and about their reaction to silvicultural interventions, should give rise to accompanying research, but should not be an obstacle to a planned management. The alternatives are between generating an interest in the conservation of the forest and with that gradually developing an understanding of silvicultural
knowledge and techniques, or that the forest will disappear in a very short time. In this context, many questions seem of rather secondary importance.

Whereas in the pine forest areas under the jurisdiction of the forest administration, the responsibility of the user groups is restricted to the actual forest management itself, in the natural forest area Tsinjoarivo, which is state land in a general sense (terrain domanial), a communal management of all natural resources is being prepared. This includes public pasture, water economy, and a bundle of public social services, so that a village development plan is emerging.

**IV.3 The economic situation**

A proper management of forests requires pre-prepared information and training and a functioning system of enterprises which have the necessary basic equipment which can ensure a technically and financially successful accomplishment of the plan. These initial investments come to a total of 71,6 DM per hectare for an enterprise covering 1,500 hectares (table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>costs per hectare in DM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information, preparation (20 days), training (80 days)</td>
<td>6,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry equipment, administrative equipment, vehicles</td>
<td>54,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest management plan, maps (10,- DM + 1.- DM)</td>
<td>11,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71,6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of the Ambatolampy forests, these costs were carried by the project. It will now be shown that these can be financed easily under optimal conditions, and in a series of payments under (normal) adverse conditions, by the revenue from the forest itself. There is, however, absolute agreement among the forestry consultants and experts of Madagascar that the actual management and future economic planning must be financed by forestry generated revenue. That is why it is
necessary to have an economic viability calculation before drawing up a
management plan.

If the construction or reparation of forest roads becomes necessary, then this
obviously exceeds the above calculation. The cost can be estimated at around 10
DM per metre. Given a hypothetical road density of 20 running metres per hectare,
this would result in an investment of 200,- DM per hectare. This shows that any
investment in the road network needs careful deliberation. Nevertheless, the use of
the roads as connecting roads between the villages is an additional benefit. The
maintenance costs come to about 0,3 DM per metre and year, that is 6 DM per
hectare and year for our example.

The utilisation potential in natural forests differs according to the growth
conditions to varying degrees from the pine forests. Given a mean annual
increment of 1 cubic metre, a useable bole wood percentage of about 40% can be
reached in the natural forest. In the favourable case of infrastructure being
available, the resulting fuelwood (another 40%) can also be marketed. In
Tsinjoarivo these figures are significantly lower, however, as there is hardly any
large timber as of now and there are no roads. In pine forests, an annual increment
of 20 m³ is realistic, with the proportion of sawnwood and fuelwood being the
same at around 40% each.

Due to these different conditions, a very different labour volume is necessary,
which translates in the cost structure of the regular management as follows
(table 3):
Table 3: Running costs in natural forest and pine forest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Costs/a/ha natural forest (DM)</th>
<th>Costs/a/ha pine forest (DM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel forestry work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel technology/ administration</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials/ repairs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of infrastructure</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This results in the following balance sheet for the Ambatolampy (Figure 1)

![Costs / Profits](image)

**Figure 1: Costs and profits in the current condition of the Ambatolampy forests**

The wood price for indigenous quality timber is at about 350.- DM/ m³ in the capital city Tana. In the depleted forest of Tsinjoarivo, an average on location timber price of around 50.- DM/ m³ can be expected, at a total quantity of 0.5 m³/ a/ ha. The price for on location pine stands at about 25.- DM/ m³ for sawnwood and 3.- DM/ m³ for fuelwood. Given the currently usable wood of 10 m³ / a/ ha in Manjakatompp and Ampahibato, this would mean gross profits of 140 DM/ a/ ha.
It is clear that the depleted natural forest in Tsinjoarivo cannot carry the estimated costs. Therefore, the material equipment (vehicles) has been reduced to a minimum, and the administrative costs are carried by the forest union UFA. A profitability analysis on the management of such forests, which are more the rule and not the exception, would have to include local use and marketing of non-forest products (medicinal plants, honey) and other services (tourism) as well as the value of biodiversity and the improvement of soil fertility, in order to establish a competitiveness with other land use forms.

If the economic objectives are consistently striven for (quality timber in natural forests, stand improvement in pine forests) then a significant increase in the net profits can be attained. In natural forests this will take a long time, but in pine forests, depending on the stand condition, silvicultural tending can lead to perceptible success within a few years. Several examples of natural and pine forests in Madagascar show what is possible (Figure 2):

**Figure 2:** Costs and Profits in ideal stands

In the natural forest, a mean annual increment of 1m³ and a utilizable 0.5m³/a/ha of quality timber is assumed, which would obtain a price of around 200.- DM in location. In pine forests, an annual mean increment of 20 m³ is assumed which would allow the utilization of 16 m³/a/ha.
Community Forest Ownership: 
Key to Sustainable Forest Resource Management. The Gambian Experience

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DOMINIQUE REEB, FORESTRY ADVISER, GTZ/DFS

I Introduction

At the turn of the century The Gambia was still covered by dense and almost impenetrable forests. In 1981 about 430,000 ha or 45% of total land area were classified as forest, it was estimated that this area was further reduced to about 340,000 ha or 30% of land area by 1988. Likewise, the degradation of the forest condition is so severe that most closed forests have disappeared leaving only a tree and shrub savannah of poor quality. At the same time, The Gambia belongs to the group of the least developed countries, with an average income of $325 per capita and its population of 1,025,000 (1993) relies mainly on forest resources for its energy needs.

The main cause of forest destruction are annual fires which systematically burn most vegetation. This is in combination with human activity resulting from the high population density (96 inhabitant/km$^2$) and its growth rate of 4.1% per year (1993 population and housing census).

While the seriousness of deforestation and the resulting environmental degradation with its socio-economical consequences were timely acknowledged, the situation in The Gambia with regard to forest management since the official introduction of the concept of scientific forest management by the colonial administration in the latter part of the 1940's, has been one of state control and manipulation. In the early 1980's it became apparent that the prevailing forestry practices were inadequate to halt the destruction of the country's forest resources and that new approaches would have to be sought to meet the challenge of preserving a sufficient forest cover.
It is in this context that the Forestry Department, with the support of a German funded project (the Gambian German Forestry Project, GGFP) started to initiate a concept of natural forest management in 1984.

II The initial situation

Forest management in The Gambia, as in the developing countries in general and in Africa in particular has hitherto been characterized by extensive state involvement with little recognition of the potential for achieving positive long term sustainable forest management, development and utilization through the involvement of the local communities. The Gambia government Forest Policy of 1976 was a broad statement of policy that was not specific on the instruments for achieving these objectives. It expected public involvement in the development of the forest resources without providing a conductive environment for this.

With the introduction of the state owned Forest Park concept in the 1950's and of the forestry legislation in 1977 which vested the state with overall power over the national forest resources, the local population that claimed traditional ownership of surrounding forests began to develop a feeling of alienation which finally resulted in their unwillingness to participate in the protection and management of what used to be 'their forests'.

Because the communities no longer saw the forest as theirs, they began to perceive all their activities in the forests as 'illegal', with the consequence that forests utilization practices became increasingly damaging. This behaviour was further enhanced by the restrictive Forest Regulations. Inevitably the forest resource base of the country continued to deteriorate as the result of a lack of public concern and of an increase in population pressure and illegal activities.

The forestry personnel who were mostly involved in forest protection in accordance with the forest laws were deemed to be playing a policeman's role and were both feared and disliked by a significant cross section of the local communities. Thus their technical advice on forestry matters was not taken seriously by the target communities.
In conclusion, this institutional framework deprived the rural population of responsibility for forest management, although it was most affected by deforestation, while the forestry administration was entrusted with a mandate it was unable to fulfil due the tense relationship with the population and also because of the lack of human and material resources. In reality, forest resources became 'ownerless' and were exposed to systematic 'mining' that caused considerable destruction and wastage. While everybody could acknowledge forest destruction and was aware of its consequences, the existing and unadapted institutional set up was preventing any efficient action.

In the mid-1980's, when more knowledge was gained in The Gambia about the state of forests and about the potential of natural forest management, it became clear that the government would never be in a position to manage the forest resources countrywide on its own and that a new approach would have to be found to save the remaining forest cover.

**III The process of change**

**III.1 The introduction of community forestry**

The introduction of Community Forestry in The Gambia was born out of the realization by the Forestry Department of the futility of its efforts at protecting the nation's forest resources without the committed and willing involvement of the local community. The department also recognized the inadequacy of the policy under which it was operating as well as the inadequacy of the Forest Act and Regulations. Consequently, in 1987, the Forestry Department and the Gambian German Forestry Project wrote their first "Proposal for the introduction of Community Forestry in The Gambia". The proposal went through two revisions until, in 1990, the first attempts at introducing community forestry were undertaken.

Although the policy and legislative environment remained the same at the start of the programme, the commitment to change the approach within the department and the Ministry responsible for forests as well as the commitment within
government to see that the negative trend in forest degradation is halted and eventually reversed, made it possible to implement community forestry. The long-standing demand by the local communities to allow them to manage their own forest facilitated the process.

### III.2 Institutional arrangements for community forestry implementation

The introduction and application of community forestry is a process of confidence building and is demand driven. One of the primary conditions a community has to fulfil before entering a Community Forest Management Agreement with the Forestry Department is the creation of a Forest Committee at the village level. This committee, which is generally formed on the basis of the already existing village institutional structure, consists of representatives from both the male and the female members of the community and is responsible for all work organization at village level. Its members are assisted by extensionists and the forestry staff in areas such as participatory problem and solution analysis, work planning and preparation of management plans. They also receive training in rudimentary forestry practices such as forest protection, tree nurseries, plantation and utilization as well as in basic book keeping. Where necessary and possible, training in other revenue generating economic activities is also provided. Other members of the community benefit from this training through their participation in work implementation and through their committee members.

Community forestry implementation distinguishes three phases: a preparatory phase during which the forest management by local communities is prepared; a preliminary phase during which the communities shall demonstrate their capacity in forest protection and management; and a consolidation phase during which the communities gain further managerial and technical forestry skills aimed at self-management. For the development of confidence between a participating community and the department it has been found necessary to mutually agree upon a Preliminary Community Forest Management Agreement (PCFMA) for the preliminary phase and a Community Forest Management Agreement (CFMA) for
the consolidation phase. The basic idea of the PCFMA is to develop suitable conditions for community forest management. It gives time to conduct negotiations, manage eventual conflicts over land ownership and allows the villagers to demonstrate their genuine interest in protecting their forest. Before submitting the PCFMA, the villagers have to demarcate the forest they intend to manage on a permanent basis. Special care is given at this stage to integrate other land use forms such as agriculture and pastural land management. Once it has been approved by the local authorities and by the Forestry Department, the PCFMA is valid for a period of three years and is then automatically replaced by the CFMA if the community has shown its ability to manage their forest.

This CFMA grants permanent ownership rights over the forest resource of a clearly demarcated forest to the community or communities and specifies details on the extent of cooperation with the Forestry Department, such as technical assistance and on the specific responsibility of both parties. With the CFMA, the communities are entitled to keep the benefits derived from their forests. The only condition attached to the CFMA is to manage the forest resource according to a simple management plan that has to be approved by the responsible Divisional Forest Officer.

Every agreement signed with the community is accompanied with an attestation from the traditional chief to the effect that the community has customary ownership of the land that they claim or that they have permission from the chief's office to annex the forest land for their community forestry activities. In the traditional Gambian society the traditional chief is regarded as the customary custodian of all unclaimed lands as well as those claimed lands which have not been cultivated before. In recognition of this role, the traditional leaders are involved from the beginning. Many community forests already established are being jointly managed by two or more villages. It is in the negotiations of these joint managements that the traditional chiefs have been found most useful. As traditional seats of arbitration, the involvement of the chiefs helps to stem any future conflict between claimants of the land concerned.
In situations where there have been multiple claims on a piece of forest land, the Forestry Department and the chiefs work together to secure a joint management of the forest by the claimant communities. Because such conflicts cannot always be solved between communities especially in the densely populated area close to the urban centres where competition for land is high, the Chiefs recently innovated and implemented the concept of a 'peace committee'. This committee is composed of seven elected village heads (Alkalolu) that are highly respected for their knowledge of traditional rights and for their objectivity. Already in two occasions, this committee was able to settle serious conflicts without interference of government administration.

The community, through their forest committee, is also required to open a bank account into which all revenue from the forest management activities is paid. While part of this money can be used by the community to finance development activities at the village or larger community level, the agreement requires that a certain proportion, about 40%, be reserved for reinvestment in their forest. During the PCFMA stage they are exempted from all taxes. After the CFMA, while still exempted from all licence and permit fees they are required to pay 15% of their collections into the National Forestry Fund as a contribution towards the development of the forestry sector and community forestry in particular.

Extension work is mainly carried out by teams of private extensionists and foresters. However, in order to enable the large scale implementation of community forestry within a reasonable time, the Forestry Department has encouraged the collaboration of experienced NGOs especially in the field of extension. So far two strong and renowned NGOs are participating in community forestry.

The practice of community forestry is not without problems, however. As surprising as it may seem, it takes a long time to create a sense of forest ownership among the villagers. This is the result of profound mistrust about governmental actions and policies. This sense of ownership has to be carefully built up during the PCFMA stage. To achieve that objective, the use of financial or material incentive is avoided. No compensations are given to the villagers for
the protection and plantation work that they carry out in their forests. A task decided upon by the forest committee and executed by the villagers without external support strengthens the perception that they are the real owners of their work and therefore of 'their forest'.

### III.3 Management Activities

Forest management at the community level is based on the principle of management planning. With technical assistance from the department, communities prepare simple management plans which guide their intervention in the forest area. Adapted tools are used for adequate visualization and documentation of the plan. One of the key pillars of the management plan is the establishment of fire protection structures around the forest such as fire lines and the subsequent establishment of greenbelts. In the early stage, planting material for the greenbelt such as stumps and seeds are provided by the Forestry Department. The greenbelt also serves as a permanent demarcation line clearly indicating the ownership status of the forestland.

The communities are also encouraged to set up village nurseries where seedlings for planting in the firebreaks or for enrichment planting are produced. Ultimately all plant production should take place at the village level, while the Forestry Department will limit its supply of seeds to those which are not available locally.

Through their forest committees, the communities organize themselves in such a way that fire prevention structures are put in place with minimum delay. Customary norms are followed for organizing themselves into work forces for the accomplishment of the various tasks. The Forestry Department does not involve itself at this level of organization. In this way the communities can realize their own potential.

The interventions at the community forest level are based on the successful experiences on natural forest management of the Gambian-German Forestry Project which has demonstrated that keeping fires out of the forest is the most important initial intervention for a successful revival and development of the
forest. Other activities include controlled and planned harvesting, e.g. initial concentration of all harvesting activities on deadwood exploitation, and enrichment planting with valuable timber species. Dead wood exploitation immediately yields revenue for the participating communities.

IV The outcome

IV.1 The policy and legislative review process

For the sustainable countrywide implementation of community forestry, the Forestry Department saw the need to review and revise both its forest policy and legislation, based on the successful experience gained during the past years, in order to create an appropriate and conducive environment for local community and individual involvement in forest management. This was done in line with the expectations of Agenda 21 and the Forestry Principles of the Rio conference.

As mentioned earlier the Forestry Department realized the inadequacy of its operational policy for forestry development and therefore embarked on a process of a participatory review of the policy in 1992. This process was concluded within one and a half years from commencement.

The resulting draft policy was then presented to a workshop attended by multi-disciplinary policy level personnel as well as representatives of the local and traditional authorities who had the opportunity to propose certain changes and to introduce new elements. Government approval of this policy was received in November 1995.

The policy makers had the chance to develop this policy according to tested concepts and to the exhaustive experience gained during five years of people's participation in community forestry. Therefore, the new forest policy could put forward realistic proposals which could respond to the basic needs of the population rather than just setting theoretical goals.

The Gambia now has a Forest Policy that specifically calls for community forest management undertakings as well as private forestry. The policy also calls for
community ownership of the forest resources being managed by them and the benefits accruing from them, while calling on the government to provide technical assistance and guidance to the participating communities and individuals through the Forestry Department.

However, this policy requires supporting legislation, which the current forest laws cannot provide. The Forestry Department initiated a similarly participatory process of legislative review. This process, which is now completed, while resulting in maintaining a significant proportion of the previous legislation, has caused the introduction of numerous new elements pertaining to tree and forest tenure, management and utilization at the community and individual levels. The new legislation has been specially tailored to regulate the process of getting community forest ownership and to secure the corresponding ownership rights. It also outlines the obligations of the Government and those of the communities and it includes provisions for conflict resolutions and tax incentives as well. This legislation will form a very strong basis on which community forestry and private forestry will be able to expand.

The proposed new law has been presented to a workshop of farmers who had the opportunity to comment on it and to make proposals for the introduction and/or elimination of certain elements. As a third step in this participatory legislative review and revision process, the department again presented the revised proposals to a two day national workshop of multi-disciplinary policy-making personnel in July 1996. The comments of this workshop were included in the draft that has been submitted to the government for its consideration. Its enactment by Parliament is expected shortly.

It has been found necessary to follow a long process of public participation in the review and revision process of the policy and laws in order to avert any future significant negative developments that may hamper the development and expansion of community and private forestry in The Gambia. The consultation reaffirmed the need to devolve authority for forest management to the local communities as the public appreciation of the proposed changes and introductions was amply demonstrated by the participants during that process.
IV.2 The growing importance of community forestry in The Gambia

Already over 6000 ha of forest have been brought under active community management since the introduction of the programme in 1990. Applications have been received for the management of over 7000 ha additional area. There are 45 established community forests while over 50 are awaiting approval. More than 300 villages are now involved in community forestry in The Gambia. Applications from new villages are received in large numbers. The rippling effect of community forestry is considerably higher than previously expected. While in the past forestland was considered as marginal land reserves, people are now considering them from a different perspective.

Due to the importance of community forestry, a visible trend in the reduction of bush fires is taking place. The absence of fire is certainly the best criteria to measure the success of forest management. Fire prevention and control is extremely difficult in absence of proper alternatives. Community forestry constitutes such a valuable alternative for the rural population. Similarly, illegal exploitation within community forest is successfully eradicated because every villager is willing to protect 'his forest'. The improved control over forest resources and particularly over firewood exploitation will help to change the status of wood being more or less a free access resource. As a matter of fact, large amounts of wood are still not unaccounted for. In the near future community forestry should lead to a much improved control system of exploitation and therefore the true value of forest products will be gradually introduced, thus creating more incentive to manage a valuable resource.

Another significant development has been observed among the cattle herders who, at the initial stage, did not support the concept of community forestry management. They feared that forest management would exclude their cattle from the forest. They were further of the opinion that fire was beneficial to the production of fresh grass regrowth. After about three years of forest management their attitude changed radically due to the improved health condition of their cattle. Furthermore the absence of fire has considerably increased the amount of available fodder within and outside the forest. Herders who in the previous years
use to migrate into the region of Casamance in Senegal are now staying on their community land. Consequently farmers are now benefiting from the presence of these cattle during the dry season through the intake of manure on their fields.

The protection of the forest cover has reversed the trend towards the degradation of natural resources. Through community forestry management the resource base is gradually building up again with wide ranging beneficial effects.

VI The lessons learned

The rural population is environmentally aware:

One of the most important lessons learnt by The Gambia during the past six years of implementing community forestry is that communities are very aware of the economical and environmental consequences of deforestation and are therefore prepared and willing to participate in forestry activities, provided the government creates the right environment for their participation. Once confidence is established, a responsible and dynamic development process, geared toward a sustainable management of natural resources, takes place within and among the participating communities.

Suitable institutional environment initiates self-development:

A recent study has shown that among the first villages to have participated in community forestry, the forest committees have built up confidence in managing their forest. As a result the communities have decided to use the same mechanisms to manage other natural resources such as farmland and pasture.

Similarly, with the growing number of villages involved in community forestry, the responsible committees are now organizing themselves to form regional associations to rationalize their operations and to strengthen their position during negotiations. They also have the aim to further promote community forestry on their own. These associations will be able to maintain the linkages between the rural population and the Government.
Towards Pluralistic Forestry

Once the proper legal and institutional environment is provided, the population continues to build up capacity without external support because it responds to its vital needs.

**The importance of clear ownership rights over natural resources**

Natural resources can be managed by the population if and only if their ownership status is clearly established and understood. For forest resources that are managed on a comparatively long-term basis, the ownership rights should not be limited in time by the government. The ownership should be permanent on the condition that the owning communities are not depleting their forests.

In the process of community based natural resource management, all types of monetary or material compensation for work done should be avoided as they will be perceived as a "salary", thus giving the impression to the villagers that they are implementing an activity supervised by an outsider rather than work they have decided upon and for which they have understood the necessity. Actually, the absence of compensation strengthens their sense of ownership and creates strong ties between the villages and their forest.

During community forestry implementation and contrary to what is often believed, it has been found that the communities did not see the forest primarily as a source of revenue. Access to forest ownership is their first motivation because they fully understand the importance of preserving the forest to meet their own needs and to secure their future without interference from outsiders.

**The Gambian experience can be replicated in other countries if the political will is there:**

The Gambian experience in community forestry is already interesting villagers, organizations and administrations of the neighbouring countries such as Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Exchanges with villagers of these respective countries have already taken place and have created a mutual interest for the development of a common concept. Indeed, forest protection and management in a given country, even successful, cannot be done in isolation. It is necessary to harmonize the
forest policies of these countries in order to prevent the existing trend of gradual deforestation. In that respect The Gambia Government has shown that with sufficient political will and courage, the empowerment of the local communities can lead to a much improved forest management, and on its side the population has proved that they can be entrusted with such responsibilities.

The later aspect has relevance beyond the Sub-region. It shows that the origin of the problem has often been misunderstood. While it is true that forest degradation results from demographic growth, poverty, poor education it is basically a problem of institutions inhibiting constructive actions due to the lack of security of tenure and benefit for communities or individuals to manage natural resources which belong to the state.

While six years experience is too short to draw any decisive conclusions with regard to adopting community forestry as the policy instrument for achieving the policy objective of keeping 30% of the total land area under forest cover and managing 75% percent of this, we in The Gambia are convinced that it is the only objective course of action under the present socio-economic conditions towards a sustainable management and utilization of the forest resources.