Briefing notes and case studies

ProForest has collaborated with the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to develop a package of FSC-endorsed user-friendly information on topics of importance to smallholders and communities. The material is designed to be used by small forest owners associations, NGOs, foresters, local governments, certification bodies, FSC National Initiatives and group certification managers – indeed by anyone working to support community forestry and small forest operations to improve their forest management and to obtain FSC certification.

This PDF contains all briefing notes and case studies as listed below in English. If you want to download the individual notes or case studies, please visit www.proforest.net/smallholders or www.fsc.org/smallholders. On these websites you can also find these materials in Spanish.

Briefing notes
1. Group Certification
2. Environmental Impact Assessment
3. Evaluating and Monitoring Social Impacts
4. High Conservation Value Forests and Biodiversity
5. Simple Monitoring Methodologies

Case studies
Furniture Producing Cooperative in Honduras (COATLAHL)
Formation of a Successful Sustainable Forest Cooperative in Indonesia (KHJL)
Non-Timber Forest Products in Nepal (ANSAB)
FLOPEN Forest Group Certification Scheme in Portugal
Northwest Certified Forestry in the USA

www.fsc.org/smallholders
Group Certification

Group certification is a way for more than one forest operation to be certified under a single FSC certificate. The certificate is held by one organization or person on behalf of a group of forest owners or managers who agree to participate in the group.

Affordable Certification

All the costs involved in certification - such as report-writing, travel costs of auditors, consulting with the public about the forest management - are shared amongst the members. Also the auditors don’t visit every single group member each year - only a sample of members. So the cost per member, is much cheaper than if they applied to have one certificate each.

Group certification also usually means that the group members get support from the group manager, or from each other in complying with the FSC requirements for good forest management.

How does it work?

Each group needs a person or organization that acts as the group manager (sometimes called the group entity). The group manager can be an individual, a company, a cooperative, an NGO - or any other legal entity.

Group members are the individual forest owners or managers. The forests they manage can be of any size, and any type of land ownership (state land, private, communal, concession etc).

Examples of Group Managers: government forestry departments, local NGOs, individual professional foresters, forest-owner associations, community forestry organizations, pulp-manufacturing companies.

Key Responsibilities in Group Certification

Group Manager’s responsibilities:
• Apply for group certification.
• Act as contact point for the certification body.
• Inform the group about their responsibilities.
• Make sure that the FSC forest management requirements are being met by all group members.
• Monitor all of the group members: i.e. check that they are meeting the requirements.
• Keep records: e.g. lists of group members, forest areas, reports.

Some group managers also offer technical services such as inventories, planting, impact assessments, harvesting, marketing and sales of the forest products; however, it is not a requirement. In other groups the group manager simply administers the group scheme.

Group member responsibilities:
• Manage their forests according to the FSC requirements.
• Agree to the rules of the group scheme and agree that the group manager will apply for an FSC certificate on their behalf (e.g. by signing an agreement).

If it’s not appropriate to have the agreement as written documentation - for example, because most people in the group don’t read or write - then the FSC allows other options, such as verbal agreements. In this case the group manager would have to explain why written documents weren’t appropriate and how the members were informed, and consented to the rules.

There is no limit on the size of a group: it can have any number of members, and any size of forest. The group entity must show that they can manage the group size they have, and any planned growth.
Certifying a Group

The group manager has the role of managing the group and monitoring the group members’ forest management. So, FSC group certification requirements put a lot of responsibility on the group manager for checking that all the group members are carrying out good forest management. The certifiers will check that the group manager is doing this properly and has procedures in place to monitor its group. They will also visit a selection of individual group members’ forests to see if they are meeting FSC requirements.

Problems with the capacity of the group management are taken very seriously. If auditors find that the group management is not keeping good records or not monitoring the group properly, they will require improvements (normally called Corrective Action Requests, or CARs), or may suspend or withdraw the group certificate.

If auditors find that an individual member is not complying with FSC requirements for forest management, they recommend that the individual be suspended or expelled from the group or they may issue requests for improvements in management, and in the way the group is monitoring its members.

Groups of Small and Low Intensity Forest Operations

If a group is made up exclusively of operations that qualify as ‘small’ or ‘low intensity managed’ forests (Group of ‘SLIMF’), then FSC allows certification bodies to make some changes to the way they audit, in order to try to reduce costs for such operations.

Depending on whether the certifier raises many ‘corrective actions’ (problems which need correcting), they may be able to offer cheaper audit costs by reducing the number of member operations visited during a field audit, and by replacing some annual field audits with desk audits of documents and systems.

There is no limit on the number of members in a Group of SLIMF.

Where to find more information

Group Certification Resources Online: www.dovetailinc.org/GroupCert.html. A comprehensive set of case studies, handbooks, and policies related to FSC group certification, in English.

Case Studies: www.fsc.org/smallholders. 5 case studies which highlight the various benefits and challenges of group certification.

Specific documents:
- The FSC Policy on Group Certification [FSC-POL-20-001 (1998) EN Group Certification – FSC Guidelines for Certification Bodies]. Aimed at certification bodies, but it is also useful for people setting up groups.

www.fsc.org/smallholders

October 2008
Assessment of environmental impacts

Good forest management should include assessing the possible environmental and social impacts of forestry activities. For information about assessing and monitoring social impacts, see briefing note 3.

Environmental impacts may be:
- **direct impacts** such as removal of trees because of road building, or an effect on insects and birds by chemical pesticides, or
- **indirect impacts** such as increased access to the forest by illegal hunters (poachers) as a result of better access along logging roads;
- **positive impacts** (e.g. a greater diversity of bird species because of a new structure of the forest), or
- **negative impacts** (e.g. pollution of a source of drinking water by chemicals).

The assessment of environmental impacts will need to:
- Find out what the likely impacts are, and how significant they could be.
- Evaluate what level of impact is acceptable.
- Provide solutions for how negative impacts can be kept to these acceptable levels.

Keep it simple

FSC is clear that the scale of an impact assessment should be appropriate to the scale of the operation. So if your operation is small, or has a very low level intensity of harvesting, then your assessment should also be relatively simple.

For a very simple forest operation a large part of the environmental impact assessment may involve just ‘thinking ahead’ about the way things should be done. It may actually help to think negatively!! In other words, “what might have a negative impact?” or “what could go wrong?”. When you’ve anticipated what those things might be it is easier to see how to avoid them happening.

For example, when building a road your experience might tell you that a road might lead to lots of run-off, and erosion along the side of the road in heavy rain, washing away soil. By thinking of this you can identify what needs to be done, and ensure that the road is built with appropriate drainage.

Consult others

If you don’t have the resources to do specific studies, and/or your operation is particularly small, or of low intensity, asking the opinion of others may be a very significant part of your assessment. You should consult with people who are familiar with your type of forest, and the action you are thinking of taking (e.g. road building), about the likely impacts, and the best way to minimize any negative impacts. Useful people to contact include professional foresters who work in your region, and local biologists or ecologists who may be able to provide advice about the best way to minimize the impact on the natural environment. It is not usually appropriate to rely only on the opinion of the contractors who are being hired to do the work (e.g. felling or road building), as they may have a vested interest in the work being done in a particular way.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an assessment of the possible impacts – positive or negative – that a proposed activity or operation may have on the natural environment. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that the forest managers consider environmental impacts and use the results of the assessment to make any necessary changes to their plans, if any possible negative impacts are found.

Relevant parts of the FSC Principles and Criteria

**Principle 6: Environmental Impact**

FSC requires that an assessment of environmental impacts is carried out, and incorporated into the management plan. The assessment should take account of landscape level impacts, as well as on-site impacts of processing, and assessments need to be done before any site-disturbing activities take place. It is emphasised that this assessment should be appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management and the uniqueness of the affected resources (summarized from criterion 6.1).
1. General impact of the whole forest operation

What is the overall, long-term impact of what you are planning? This level of assessment is important if you are planning a new operation (e.g. small plantations or woodlots for an outgrowers scheme). It is also important for groups of forest operations, especially if they are located close together (and therefore resemble a single forest), to consider this level of impact. It is less useful for small / low intensity forestry operations that are already underway. This sort of assessment should consider the total change to the forest ecosystem, on regeneration and water management, and the forest’s capacity to support biodiversity.

An example: a lot of very small woodlots on the sides of a river valley could have a very major impact (positive or negative) on water provision downstream. Before making radical changes to the management or extraction, the woodlot owners and the group manager should consider the downstream consequences.

2. Specific assessments of direct and indirect impact

This sort of assessment is about making sure specific operations don’t have environmentally damaging effects. Some common actions that can have significant impacts, even on small scale or low intensity operations include:

- felling (how and when the trees are brought down)
- skid trails (how and where the logs are brought out of the forest)
- road building (how and where you build roads)
- application of chemicals (e.g. pesticides, herbicides)
- planting (especially of exotic species)
- construction (e.g. processing plants, sawmills, storage, accommodation)
- waste disposal (how and where waste is removed – this includes the waste products of sawmills, and particularly the disposal of containers of fuel, oil, and chemicals).

For small and low intensity operations, a big part of assessing the environmental impact of day-to-day operations is about common sense: it’s about thinking about the consequences of your actions before you do something. However if you are going to carry out a new action, or intervene in a new area, you may need to carry out a more formal assessment.

Making Changes

Take action: take the time to carefully assess negative impacts of operations. But don’t stop there! Take action to minimize or eliminate the impacts. If you identify possible problems, you will need to change the way you do the activity. E.g. changing the way you apply chemicals, or fell trees.

An EIA for small or low intensity operations is not about writing a report labelled “EIA” and filing it away, it’s about anticipating problems and preventing them. This will involve making decisions about the way you carry out your forest operations (e.g. you might decide to change your harvesting plan to build fewer skid trails if you’re worried about damaging a rare forest).

You may also need to influence other people. If your operation relies on external contractors for some forestry activities (e.g. felling and extraction, or road building), then discuss with them your concerns about the environmental impacts of their work. You will need to give them clear instructions about the impacts you want to avoid, and agree with them how they can best do this.

For example: An operation uses contractors for harvesting and agrees that all waste will be removed (anticipating a possible negative impact from used fuel containers left in the forest).
Evaluating and Monitoring Social Impacts

Good forest management needs to take account of the impacts that different forest activities can have – both on the environment and on people.

The FSC Principles and Criteria ask forest managers to take account of ‘social impacts’ when managing the forest. This means incorporating the results of evaluations of social impact into planning and operations, and monitoring social impacts.

Social impacts: People and Communities

To properly manage your forest you need to think beyond the forest itself. You need to consider how your actions affect other people. If the way you manage your forest creates changes to the lives of individuals or communities these changes are ‘social impacts’. Social Impacts can be positive or negative, intentional or unintentional.

FSC expects you to be aware of them, to monitor them, and to try to minimize or eliminate any negative changes.

There are 4 main steps to evaluating and monitoring social impacts:

• agreeing which positive social impacts you want to achieve
• discovering what other social impacts there are and who they affect
• discussing the impacts with those affected
• taking action to eliminate, or reduce negative impacts in the way you manage the forest.

How to monitor and evaluate social impacts

You need to find out:

• who might be affected
• whether and how they are affected
• if you find negative impacts, what can you do to eliminate or reduce these.

You may then need to make the changes to your forest management plan, or the way you work to make sure any negative effects are eliminated or reduced, wherever possible.

What is important is that you implement practical ways – which are appropriate to your situation – to understand what social impacts your forest operations are having, and to take steps to change your practices, if you detect negative social impacts.

Who is likely to be affected?

The type of people or groups who might feel the impacts of initiating or changing a forestry operation will include:

• the workers (in the forest, in processing sites)
• neighbours (adjacent land owners, and also nearby communities, villages)
• any local population which relies on water supplies which originate in the forest or are captured by the forest
• any local population that has traditionally had access to the forest (eg. for hunting, collecting, for spiritual or religious use, for recreation or as an access route to somewhere else).

Make sure you have taken into account all of these groups when considering the social impacts of your operation.
Consultation

Involving all sectors of the community in discussions about forest use, forest access, and the forest business, will help you to discover any negative consequences of forest management activities.

A common challenge is to take into account the use of the forest by the most marginalised sectors of the community such as the elderly, women and immigrants. While they often rely on forests for seasonal collection of products (e.g. firewood, food) they are least likely to take part in the formal decision-making systems of the community.

You should make sure you have consulted with them, and taken their concerns into account when designing your management plan.

Particular attention must be paid to discussing your forest use with indigenous peoples, who are often for — language or cultural reasons — left out of consultation processes. You need to take into account their traditional uses, and special sites within your forest.

No forest operations should take place on indigenous peoples lands, unless you have obtained their free, prior and informed consent.

Expectations for small and low intensity managed forests

Social impact monitoring should be appropriate to the scale, intensity and diversity of the forest operation.

Social impact monitoring should be carried out by operations of all sizes; however small forests, or those operations with only low intensity harvesting, can reasonably be expected to devote less time and resources to this than large or high-intensity operations.

Larger companies might need to use an external company to carry out a social impact assessment (before they begin) or a social impact evaluation (periodically), but it will often be more appropriate for small individual or low-intensity operations to carry out some simple monitoring of social impacts on a regular basis.

In all cases consultation and dialogue is important. You must get views from other people and discuss possible problems with them. Apart from helping to identify what the impacts of your forest operation are, consultation may also help to provide answers about how to reduce or eliminate negative impacts.

Documentation

How much of your social impact monitoring needs to be documented will also probably vary according to scale and intensity and also the context. Usually, certifiers won’t be expecting a small community operation or a group of villagers harvesting nuts or fruits on a small scale to have written reports on social impacts! In some cases it may be more appropriate to show the minutes of community meetings where social impacts were discussed and actions to address them agreed. Alternatively it may be suitable for your situation to prepare a simple table showing groups affected, impacts, and what you have decided to do about it. What’s most important is that you can demonstrate that you’ve been keeping an eye on social issues, and that you’ve turned your observations into practical changes to management and operations where necessary.
What sort of impacts are typical?
You will need to discover for yourself exactly what sort of positive and negative effects your forest use is having on other people. The table below shows some common examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Issue</th>
<th>Examples of positive impacts</th>
<th>Examples of a negative impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Creating jobs locally</td>
<td>Reducing the number of jobs due to new technology in the sawmill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Having access to healthcare because of employment in the forest operation</td>
<td>Accidents in the forest or sawmill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use / access</td>
<td>Protecting the traditional areas of mushrooms or fruit collection from damage by timber harvesting, and allowing collectors access</td>
<td>Local people’s traditional access to the forest being restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution (noise, air etc)</td>
<td>The operation listens to local people and agrees to manage noise and dust from heavy vehicles passing through villages, by introducing a lower speed limit</td>
<td>Use of pesticides or poor disposal of fuel containers pollutes the streams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Good management of water sources and streams improves water quality for local people</td>
<td>Poor water management (e.g. not protecting water sources, or use of water-demanding species in areas of water scarcity) leads to water shortages downstream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community Forestry
Avoid the trap of thinking that just because yours is a community owned or managed forest any changes made to improve forest management will always automatically be ‘good for the community’. While this may often be true, communities are so diverse that you cannot just ‘assume’ that everyone is positively affected. You should check that your well-intentioned changes to the forest management are not having a negative impact on some members of the community. The more people that participate in your activities to monitor and evaluate social impacts, the more useful the results are likely to be, and the better the communication with the people effected.
Group Certification and Social Impacts

Group certification is a way for more than one forest operation to be certified under a single FSC certificate (see ‘Briefing Note 1 Group Certification’ for more information).

Certified groups can be of any size and can be made up of forests of different sizes. There is a great deal of variation among certified groups: they vary in the way they are organized, the size and intensity of operations, the type of forest, how close together the members forests are located, and how much they work together to take collective decisions.

Since there is so much variation different groups will also manage social issues and the monitoring of social impacts in different ways. The group manager, group members and certification bodies will need to look at their particular circumstances and agree how best to evaluate and monitor the social impacts of the forest operations in the group. It is recommended that the group manager records how the monitoring will take place (whether by individual group members, or centrally), so that the responsibility for monitoring and addressing social impacts is clear and well understood by all.

For those groups whose members’ forests are geographically close together – such as those who are all managing parts of a larger forest area, it might be cost-effective to collect social impact information as a group, and to consult neighbours and forest users collectively. For groups with members who are more spread out, it might be better for them to consult their neighbours themselves. Use the method that is most appropriate for your situation.

Definitions

Social impacts (also called effects and consequences) refer to changes to individuals and communities due to actions that alter the way in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize etc. These changes can be intentional or unintentional. They can be positive or negative.

An evaluation of social impacts is usually an analysis of what happened over a particular period of time. It looks back at the social impacts that have occurred as a result of activities carried out.

Monitoring of social impacts is the regular collection of information about social issues. It is a way to see what effects - both positive and negative - the activities of the forest business are having.

Social Impact Assessments (SIA) are more formal analyses of the social impacts of proposed activities. They are a way of considering in advance the possible impacts on the people and communities of a proposed forestry project, operation or policy change. Although the global FSC Principles & Criteria do not require operations to have carried out SIAs, some national FSC standards may specify that they do.

Relevant parts of the FSC Principles and Criteria (partial text only)

Principle 3: Indigenous Peoples’ Rights. The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories and resources shall be recognized and respected. [all 4 criteria of Principle 3 refer to respecting indigenous peoples rights. Therefore where indigenous peoples are found, consultation with them must therefore play a central role in any social impact assessment and monitoring]

Principle 4: Community Relations and Workers Rights

4.4: Management planning and operations shall incorporate the results of evaluations of social impact. Consultations shall be maintained with people and groups (men and women) directly affected by management operations.

Principle 7: Management Plan

7.2 The management plan shall be periodically revised to incorporate the results of monitoring, or new scientific and technical information, as well as to respond to changing environmental, social and economic circumstances.

Principle 8: Monitoring and Assessment

Monitoring shall be conducted – appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management – to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.

8.2 Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum the following indicators:

   d) environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations

10 Plantations

10.8 Appropriate to the scale and diversity of the operation, monitoring of plantations shall include regular assessment of potential on-site and off-site ecological and social impacts [...] Special attention will be paid to social issues of land acquisition for plantations, especially the protection of local rights of ownership, use or access.

more information:

www.fsc.org/smallholders

October 2008
FSC forest management standards include several requirements for the protection of environmental values and services from any negative impacts, and also for managing critically important forest areas, known as High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs).

How to manage biodiversity and High Conservation Values

There are 3 simple steps to protecting biodiversity and critically important forests: identification, management and monitoring:

**STEP 1 IDENTIFY**
Assess your forest for biodiversity and HCVs

**STEP 2 MANAGE**
Make a management plan that includes biodiversity and HCVs

**STEP 3 MONITOR**
Keep checking that you are protecting what you planned to protect

Find out what you’ve got and where it is. Consult with others about this!

Based on what you identified:
- decide your priorities for protection
- identify the main obstacles to doing this
- decide what actions to take
- take those actions!

If necessary, revise your management plan using your monitoring results - and any new scientific information.

Having High Conservation Value Forests doesn’t mean that you have to turn everything into a conservation area! What you choose to do will depend on the critical values you identify, and the sort of forest management you already do.

All forests are valuable... but some have additional critical environmental and social values that require special consideration. These are called High Conservation Value Forests.
Identification

The first step is to be sure of what you’ve got in the forest, and where it is. This includes working out if your forest - or a part of it - has High Conservation Values.

You need to carry out an assessment of the forest. For very small forests, or where the intensity of harvesting and interventions is very low, this assessment should be kept simple. Consultation is an important part of any assessment, especially for identifying High Conservation Values: you will need to consult with local people and experts.

Your assessment should answer the following:

**Species:** Are there any rare, threatened or endangered species (e.g. species that are protected under national laws)? What they are and where are they?

**HCVF:** If there are lots of such species (“significant concentrations”) this forest would probably be considered a HCVF.

**Ecosystems/Habitats:** Are there any special or unusual types of vegetation (e.g. types of forest, wetlands, grasslands)?

**HCVF:** If you have areas of forest that are particularly rare in your country or globally, this forest would probably be considered a HCVF.

**Environmental services:** Are any parts of the forest providing important services to the community, or to others living downstream from the forest area (e.g. protecting drinking water sources, preventing landslides)?

**HCVF:** If these services are critically important, this forest would probably be considered a HCVF.

**Social and cultural values:** Are there communities that are dependent on the forest for any products (e.g. timber, firewood, animals, bark, seeds, etc)? Are there communities for whom the forest has cultural or historical significance (e.g. burial grounds, old village remains, sacred sites)? To answer these questions you will need to involve these local communities, and talk to them about the forest, and the way they use it.

**HCVF:** If these forests are critically important to communities for access to products or for cultural reasons, this forest would probably be considered a HCVF.

Whether or not you classify the forests as High Conservation Value Forests, you need to take the biodiversity, environmental services and social uses of the forest into account when deciding how to manage the forest.

**Definitions**

**Biodiversity:** the variety of nature - the variety (or diversity) of species, of populations and of ecosystems.

**High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF)** are forests of outstanding or critical importance. The significance of these forests is that they support extremely important environmental or social values (High Conservation Values).

**The 6 Types of High Conservation Value Forests**

- **HCV 1** Forest areas that contain globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (this includes: protected areas, rare or threatened species, endemic species, and seasonal concentrations of species)
- **HCV 2** Globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape-level forests
- **HCV 3** Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- **HCV 4** Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (this includes: protection of watersheds, and protection against erosion and destructive fire)
- **HCV 5** Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities
- **HCV 6** Forest areas critical to local communities’ traditional cultural identity

(These six types are an elaboration of FSC’s definition of HCVs, - see glossary of terms in FSC standard FSC-STD-01-001)

To be a High Conservation Value Forest, it is only necessary for the forest to have critically important values in one the categories. It could be that all of your forest is considered to have High Conservation Values, or it might be that only part of your forest has these values, and that’s the part that you’d have to manage in such a way as to protect those values.
Conservation Areas

Some FSC standards make reference to the need to create conservation areas to make sure some species are protected, and/or to make sure that for each type of natural vegetation that is found in your forest there is a protected area. However, for each case you should see if this is really useful or appropriate. Often for small forests the size of any conservation area would be too small to be useful. In the case of many low intensity operations (e.g. where you are only harvesting fruits or nuts) a conservation area may not be necessary to protect the vegetation or biodiversity: you may already be protecting it enough!

For groups of small forests it may make sense to consider conservation at the group level, rather than having individual conservation areas.

Monitoring

You should regularly check what is happening with the biodiversity and/or High Conservation Value Forests - and especially if your management is helping to conserve these.

Monitoring does not need to be complex or expensive. Answer the following:

- What are you going to monitor and why?
- How you are going to do it?
- Who will do it, and how often?
- With whom will you discuss the results, and how will you use them?

A simple monitoring plan can be made with the answers to these questions. (see Briefing Note 5 “Simple Monitoring Methods” in this series, for more help on this topic)

Management

Once you've done some basic identification of important aspects of the forest and its biodiversity, you need to make sure that your management plan protects these. To do this:

Work out what your objectives are: what do you need to conserve or protect? (e.g. we have endangered bird species, so “we want to protect the forest in which they nest”).

Identify any problems for doing this: what are the threats? (e.g. “logging disturbs the birds when they are breeding” and “there are poachers who steal these birds’ eggs”).

Decide what actions to take: what can you do? (e.g. “avoid logging during the nesting season in that part of the forest” and “ask the local wildlife protection service for help to prevent poaching” [you may not be able to control an external threat, but you should at least show that you have taken steps to reduce it].

Take those actions! There’s no point doing assessments, making plans and then not taking any actions. Examples of actions taken to manage biodiversity and protect HCVFs might include:

- Creating a special protected zone around an important cultural site or a wetland area
- Avoiding any disturbance to the forest during the breeding season of a particular species
- Taking measures to reduce illegal hunting of a protected species
- Modifying logging plans to reduce the overall level of disturbance to soil or water.

If some - or all - of your forest is considered to be High Conservation Value Forest it does not automatically mean that you can’t harvest there. It does mean that you may need to take special precautions so as not to damage the value that exists there.

If your operation is very low intensity, it is quite likely that your current activities are not affecting overall biodiversity or HCVs (but you need to check!); in some cases the management of the forest may actually be conserving it better than if there were no management. In these cases you should be able to demonstrate that your activities do not substantially negatively affect the biodiversity and/or HCVs.
The case of group certification

Certified groups are very different: they vary in organization, size, intensity of management, forest type, and how close together the group members are located.

Due to this variation, different groups will manage biodiversity and HCV forests in different ways.

The group manager, group members and certification bodies will need to use their judgement and agree at what level they wish to handle the biodiversity and HCV aspects of their group certification. They should document that decision so that the responsibility for managing biodiversity and HCVs is clear and well understood by all.

There are 3 main types of groups, which will normally have different strategies to manage biodiversity and High Conservation Value Forests.

| An FSC Group of Forest Properties that Resemble a Single Forest | The more the group collectively resembles a single large forest the more appropriate collective action will be, & the more likely that a conservation management plan for the whole area will be more beneficial and cost effective than many small-scale individual actions. For this type of group it is likely that some identification, management and monitoring will be appropriate at a landscape level. In this case greater responsibility for managing values may be taken at the group level - although individual actions and consultations are also needed at the site-level. |
| Small FSC Forest Properties in a Non-Forest Landscape | It is less likely that joint management will be of benefit to any critical values identified. It’s usually more appropriate for each member to make his/her own decisions about managing the environmental values identified. But it may still be appropriate to develop some group-level identification, management or monitoring to reduce costs. |
| Small FSC Forest Properties in a Non-FSC forest landscape | Usually appropriate for each property manager to manage relevant values, but also try to coordinate with other group members to manage broader values collectively and influence non-group neighbours to act responsibly. Actions (or non-actions) of those forest properties which don’t form part of the group may be risks. Group members may not be able to control these threats – but should usually to develop some simple strategy to try to work with the non-group properties to manage the risk. |

FSC Requirements

The FSC expects forest operations to:

- Protect rare, threatened and endangered species (of birds, plants, reptiles etc.).
- Protect the areas in which these species live, feed, and breed (their habitats).
- Control inappropriate hunting or collecting of animals and plants.
- Protect the ‘natural functions’ of the forest.

In other words, make sure that there is still a balance of trees of different ages, including seedlings, and that there is still a natural range of species and types of vegetation present.

(adapted from FSC Principle 6)

FSC is particularly concerned about critically important forests, and expects forest operations to:

- identify whether there are any High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) within their forest management area;
- consult with other people about what these values are and how to manage them;
- manage these forest areas in a way that protects their valuable qualities;
- monitor the use of the forest, and the HCVF areas, in order to see whether they are being protected, as planned.

(adapted from FSC Principle 9)

Where to find more information

Resources Online: Briefing note 5: “Simple Monitoring Methods” www.fsc.org/smallholders

The High Conservation Value Resource Network:  www.hcvnetwork.org

Specific documents: Step by Step guide to Meeting FSC Certification Requirements for the Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity and High Conservation Value Forests – for Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (ProForest/FSC, expected 2009)
Simple monitoring methods

Monitoring is required as part of good forest management. The main reason for monitoring is to improve management. Your monitoring should help you with at least the following:

- **Identifying change**: monitoring helps you learn whether there are any changes e.g. in the plant and animal populations, or in the services the forest provides.
- **Understanding impacts**: monitoring helps you to discover what effects the forest management has on the important areas of forest, on the services that the forest provides (like climate regulation and preventing erosion), and on the lives of people and communities.

This information can then be incorporated into forest management plans and help you make better decisions about forest operations.

**What needs to be monitored?**

Even in small forests, monitoring of the following aspects is essential:

- **Productivity, yield and dynamics of the forest**
  - growth rates of the species being harvested
  - the production (yield)
  - regeneration of the species you are harvesting
- **Conservation measures**
  - monitoring of special protection afforded to rare species or other areas considered to be of ‘High Conservation Value’
- **Environmental and social impacts of the way the forest is being used and managed.**

1) **Monitoring Productivity, yield and dynamics of the forest**

Monitoring needs to show that in practice, the forest is growing and regenerating and that your harvesting levels are sustainable (that you are not harvesting more than the forest can re-grow). If you are harvesting something other than timber on a commercial scale (e.g. extracting resin, collecting bark, seed, leaves etc) you’ll also need to be sure that this extraction is sustainable: that you are not removing more of the product than the forest can reproduce.

In large forests monitoring of forest growth and yield is usually done through the annual measurement of trees in permanent sample plots (PSPs). These provide information about how fast the different tree species are growing, the rates of tree mortality, and how the forest responds to extraction. But for small, low intensity and community operations this is often not feasible.

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**At its simplest, monitoring means** “checking to see what is happening”. Even in very small forests, or in those where you are harvesting little over a large area, some form of ‘checking what is happening’ is needed.

**Relevant parts of the FSC Principles and Criteria**

**Principle 8: Monitoring and Assessment**

FSC states that monitoring is to be conducted, appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management, and done consistently to ensure that the results are useful. The monitoring should assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts (summarized from FSC P&C).

**Principle 7: Management Plan**

The need for monitoring is specifically emphasised in relation to measuring growth and yield, and incorporating this information into the management plan.

**Principle 9: High Conservation Value Forests**

Monitoring forms an important part of managing any High Conservation Value Forests

**Principle 10: Plantations**

Plantation management requires that both on-site and off-site social and environmental impacts should be taken into account

**Definitions**

**To monitor** is to observe a situation for any changes which may occur over time

**Monitoring** is the regular collection of information in order to understand a situation and the impacts of activities over time
If it seems expensive or complicated for your situation to establish your own sampling plots, consider some of these options:

- **Collaborate with your neighbours in the region.** If they have a similar forest type you could share the costs of some simple sample plots.
- **Get help from local research institutions.** Ask if they have done any research on forest growth in your region (or if they’d like to use your forest as a research site).
- **Set up some simple tests of your own.** Make them appropriate to the scale of your operation: e.g. choosing a few locations to measure regeneration after felling (at each location mark out a square on the ground and count how many seedlings of one or two tree species regenerate, in a particular area. Do this every year at the same time and place). Use these tests to understand your forest better, and learn what you need to change to improve how the forest regenerates. While more scientifically accurate data might be ideal, if these experiments are appropriate to the scale of your operation, and you are actually using their results, then they are good monitoring tools!
- **Trust your eye and your experience.** Often you can see what changes are happening to the forest. Sometimes you don’t need plots and surveys to see that some species are regenerating better than others. Act on this!

2) **Monitoring Conservation Measures and Results**

Every operation - even a very small one - should have a simple management plan. If it’s a small forest or one managed with very low harvesting levels, this can be a very simple plan. In some cases this may even be a verbal description - if for example the managers are not able to use written documents.

The management plan should include how you are going to protect the biodiversity of the forest, and protect any High Conservation Values (HCVs) that are found there. You should monitor whether your actions are in practice helping to protect or conserve the biodiversity and HCVs that were identified. In other words check that your planned actions are having the intended conservation effect e.g. has the quality of the water changed?; have numbers of endangered animals increased or decreased? etc.

This monitoring doesn’t have to be complicated and time consuming. Here are some ideas that may be appropriate:

- Instead of monitoring the presence of particular animals, monitor the presence of the habitat (e.g. vegetation, food sources, breeding areas) that the animal needs to survive.
- Or use signs of the animal’s presence (e.g. nests, feeding sites, prints, or waste products), rather than sightings of the animal itself.
- Try fixed point photographs to show the changing condition of a habitat feature e.g. a wetland, lake, or canopy cover.
- Use simple equipment (you don’t need expensive equipment) e.g. water volumes in streams or lakes can be measured with a graduated stick.

For community managed forests: try discussing how to measure the conservation aspects of the forest during a community meeting – or even better while walking through the forest. Even if for most members of your community the concept of ‘monitoring’ or ‘indicators’ is not very familiar – many community members will have good ideas about how to find ways of measuring the health of the forest, that are simple, low cost, and fit in with their regular routines. Use these ideas

For more guidance on conservation monitoring see briefing note 4 ‘Biodiversity and High Conservation Vales’
Monitoring does not need to involve complex science or technology; you can use simple counting, photographs, or the regular observations of people who use the forest over several years. What’s important is that it gives you information that is useful and meaningful to you – and that you use it!

3) Monitoring Environmental and Social Impacts

FSC requirements include monitoring of the environmental and social impact of the forest use. This means understanding any potential negative impacts from any activity associated with the forest management - such as road building, harvesting, collecting forest products, use of chemicals, letting animals use the forest. There are guidance sheets on this topic (briefing notes 2 and 3). The assessment should identify some key concerns - which are the things that need to be monitored. It is vital that actual impacts are monitored to check that they are within acceptable limits.

For community forestry operations, groups of families harvesting forest products, and groups of small individual woodlots where group members are part of the same community, it is advisable to hold regular meetings to discuss the impacts of the forest use and management. At such meetings the results of any monitoring activities should be presented and discussed. Examples include: monitoring the quality of drinking water; monitoring any changes in availability of fruits, seed or animals normally collected in the forest, and monitoring the impact of hunting (illegal and legal). These meetings should be used to develop or modify community-level decisions about norms for access and use of the forest. This is a simple form of actively incorporating the results of monitoring into management actions.

Good Monitoring in Practice

A simple monitoring plan should help you. It should record:

What you are going to monitor, and why.
How you are going to do it.
Who will do the monitoring, and how often.
With whom the results will be discussed, and how the results will be used

Example of A Simple Monitoring Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions to be taken</th>
<th>What to monitor</th>
<th>How it will be monitored</th>
<th>How the responsible people will report on what they find</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protect HCV forest structure (suitable habitat for HCV birds) by low impact logging</td>
<td>Check that low impact logging is actually taking place, according to the management plan.</td>
<td>The forest manager will inspect the harvest area at the end of each week of harvest to ensure that low impact logging has been used, and that damage to surrounding vegetation is minimal.</td>
<td>If low impact logging is not being practiced, the loggers will be warned that they are in breach of contract and asked to implement the practices. The forest manager will report on his findings and any action in the end of year reporting meeting. If necessary changes will be made to the management plan, and re-training may be offered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure key HCV bird species are not negatively affected by low impact logging</td>
<td>Check that the populations of these animals are being maintained or increased by the management measures taken.</td>
<td>The forest manager will set up an annual monitoring programme of 4 key species with the ecology department of the local university, for students to measure the population of these birds and animals in the forest over a 4 year period.</td>
<td>The forest manager will report to the forest owner annually with a summary of the results. They will be used to decide if the low-impact logging is helping to maintain species populations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basic Monitoring Principles

Think of your objectives. Why are you collecting this information? How will you use the results? Don’t collect it if you don’t know the answer! You should choose to monitor a few things that will tell you about any changes you’re concerned about.

For example:
Productivity of the forest: a small forest owner may be concerned about whether a palm is regenerating after commercial harvesting of palm leaves. Their objective would be to check how it is regenerating, and they will use the results to modify the way the palm is harvested (how many leaves per plant, or what time of year).

Social and environmental impacts: a community forestry operation is concerned about whether the water supply of the local village has been affected by expanded timber extraction activities. The objective of their monitoring would be to check whether there has been any change in water supply, and they will discuss the results with the community leaders and village leaders, and - if necessary - make changes to the way they extract timber.

Decide what you can measure. Whatever you are trying to monitor you will need to break this down into measurable values (indicators). For example you can’t measure the ‘biodiversity value’ of the forest, but you can measure the presence of certain habitats, types of vegetation, the number of nests of an animal or bird, the number of times a certain animal is heard or seen. To indicate the forest’s environmental service value you might use forest structure or canopy cover.

Try to find simple indicators for each aspect you are looking at.

Consider scale. Remember that some things may change in small areas but over the forest as a whole remain consistent – so don’t just monitor in one small area.

Collect information regularly. To demonstrate change or no change you need to have information collected over a period of time: monitoring isn’t about measuring something once, just before the auditors arrive!

Pick the right frequency. This could mean every day (e.g. stream flow), every year (e.g. forest structure) or even every five years, but it must be consistent. If you measure something every year, it should be at the same time of year.

Think long-term. Plan to measure over the long-term because short-term fluctuations may not be indicative of long-term changes e.g. forest-dwelling species may move away from an area during logging but come back 2-3 years later. There may be major changes year to year in the abundance of fruits, mushrooms, but over the long-term they may be roughly the same.

Focus on Detecting Change. Monitoring needs to detect change: when you can see that something is changing you are able to evaluate if this is good or bad, and take action if necessary. Monitoring is also often used to demonstrate no change. This may be important to demonstrate that your use of the forest is not having a negative effect on something. For example, you might have several pairs of a rare bird that regularly nest in your forest area. If the number of birds starts to decline, you need to be able to notice this and investigate why. But if the number remains the same each year, you need to show this as well. It provides the evidence that your management is not having a negative effect on that species.

Use the results! The proof of whether your monitoring process is any good, is whether the results have actually been used when taking decisions about forest management, making rules about forest use, or revising the management plan. If you don’t use it, there’s no point collecting it!

Further information

For monitoring biodiversity and High Conservation Value Forests see: Meeting FSC Certification Requirements for the Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity and High Conservation Value Forests: A Step by Step Guide for small and low intensity managed forests (FSC /ProForest, 2008)
The COATLAHL Cooperative in Honduras first obtained FSC certification in 1996. The cooperative holds a group FSC certificate on behalf of 14 small timber-producing community groups, who manage natural broadleaf forests totalling 19,500 ha of natural broadleaf forests. Coatlahl provides marketing and sales services and has a furniture workshop with a certified supply chain. Their main products are sawn timber and solid wood furniture. This case study describes some of the challenges they have faced, and overcome, in order to find markets for their FSC certified products and meet the demands of a trading relationship with an international client.

faced two major challenges: Firstly finding markets that would appreciate their certified products, and secondly, building internal capacity and working capital, to fulfil large international orders and meet clients’ demands for quality assurance, communication and timing.

A cooperative with a history
The Regional Agroforestry Cooperative ‘Colón, Atlántida, Honduras’ Ltda (COATLAHL) was founded in the 1970s and is made up of small timber producing groups based in communities in the Cordillera Nombre de Dios mountain range in Atlántida, in the northern part of Honduras. The highly biodiverse tropical moist forests in which they work are public land, with permissions granted to community forestry groups for management and protection.

Certification Pioneer
COATLAHL is a pioneer in forest certification, having been awarded one of the first ever FSC community forestry certifications in 1996 - financed by the Canadian development agency CIDA. However, as with most pioneers, their journey not been without challenges. Promotional material about certification created expectations of higher prices and market security, but initially they perceived neither. This coincided with a crisis period of financial insolvency and spiralling debt due to a combination of problems including competition from illegal timber extraction and internal policies which obliged them to buy 100% of members’ timber regardless of quality or demand. They decided not to renew its FSC certificate when it expired in 2002.

Finding Markets
Nepenthes helped establish a relationship with a Danish retailer (COOP Danmark) for the sale of furniture made from lesser-known timber species. COOP was attracted by the possibility of selling FSC certified products from rural cooperatives, but was initially unsure of COATLAHL’s ability to meet the requirements of quality and quantity. In 2004 they placed their first order for 2200 wooden doormats, but requested a sample of 50 units upfront. This seemed excessive to COATLAHL, but proved crucial in building client confidence. There have been subsequent orders for a range of products for COOP and the Spanish NGO COPADE has also helped to promote furniture sales in Spain.

Finding national markets has been more challenging; competition from illegal timber remains a severe problem, and most local markets do not appreciate the added conservation values.

A re-birth
However, COATLAHL is not a cooperative which gives up easily. They fought back from the edge of bankruptcy and have been systematically addressing their challenges. Together with the Danish NGO Nepenthes, with funding from the Danish development agency DANIDA, they decided to simultaneously seek FSC re-certification and establish a viable business. They achieved re-certification in 2003, but they still
Training for Improved Production

Having produced only small quantities of furniture previously, the size of their first international order was intimidating to Coatlahl. Training by national and international experts, supported by Rainforest Alliance and Nepenthes, helped develop skills in carpentry, timber drying and furniture production and prepared Coatlahl for mass production.

Client Communication

Through trial and error COATLAHL have built a direct relationship and established a positive track record with their principal client. Initially Nepenthes’ role was crucial as a bridge between the cooperative and the European client: they were able to explain the different realities and expectations on both sides. A crucial step was the visit of a COOP executive to Honduras, where he inspected the product samples and explained product quality requirements, demonstrating which imperfections would trigger rejection. Nepenthes gradually handed over the communication role, and Coatlahl has appointed a single contact person for client communications.

Generating Operating Capital

A huge challenge was to secure sufficient credit to finance the production of their first major order. No advance payment was available, and with no property as collateral, Honduran banks did not consider COATLAHL a suitable client. A long and difficult search finally led them to a government fund for cooperatives which lent them US$28,000, allowing them to finish their production run and pay off the loan within the agreed timeframe. However, when the government fund changed its rules the following year, deeming Coatlahl ineligible, the search for credit had to be renewed. Happily COATLAHL has since obtained bank-managed funding in Honduras and internationally, recently gaining lower risk status from a Danish bank, thanks to their timely repayment of previous loans.

Key lessons learned

> Efficient communication with clients is vital. Delegating communication to one person within the business helps achieve this.
> For a small community operation and an international client to do business a relationship of trust needs to be built. This requires a major commitment from organizations such as NGOs – providing information and allaying doubts.
> Don’t give up! When seeking credit, approach associations and federations for information. There may be funding available, but this information may not be widely publicized.
> Providing detailed, realistic and measurable investment plans and fulfilling loan conditions are crucial when seeking credit.

Remaining Challenges

> Broadening their client base to at least three international clients, and breaking into the national market.
> Investment in improved production processes to increase their wood stock to be able to respond faster to client demands.
> Obtaining higher prices to be able to pass on benefits of certification to their workers. The costs of certification remain challenging, however, they have set up a certification fund to finance recertification and not rely on external funding.

Facts & Figures

Certificate details: SW-FM/COC-024
Area: 19,588.3 ha
Membership: 14 community groups, involving around 180 individual producers. Individual forest plots ranging.
Quantities: Annual turnover community groups ca. US$26,400. Annual turnover COATLAHL cooperative ca. US$157,700 (local timber and furniture sales, furniture export)
Formation of Successful Sustainable Forest Cooperative in Indonesia

This Indonesian case describes the successful formation of a 550 member cooperative, the Koperasi Hutan Jaya Lestari (KHJL), which received FSC group certification in 2005, and supplies teak for use in the international furniture market. 30% of the profit is divided amongst members; the cooperative also lobbies government for reform of unjust forestry laws, distributes government aid related to agriculture and forestry, and is starting a small loan program.

**Background**

In Konawe Selatan District in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, individual families own one or more teak agroforest plots of an average size of less than one hectare. Due to legality restrictions – primarily related to the issue of harvesting and transport permits – most districts in the province have only one or two wood buyers who could therefore gain a monopoly over teak prices. Not being organised into groups meant that individual farmers in the district were obliged to sell their teak for very low prices.

**Organisation**

The cooperative’s primary reason for becoming certified was the strong demand for FSC teak among European and American buyers, and the opportunity to sell wood for a higher price directly to TFT member factories in Java. Another driver was the potential for increased local government recognition of farmers’ forest management abilities.

TFT realized that farmers were managing their teak in a largely sustainable manner, and had a willingness to work toward FSC Certification. They therefore worked with JAUH to organize farmers into a cooperative: 46 villages were helped to form farmer groups and elect representatives to come together as founding members of the cooperative.

**Group formation was the only way to afford FSC certification, obtain the necessary permits and to establish direct links to international markets.**

Previous attempts at cooperatives had failed due to a general lack of understanding among farmers about how these function. JAUH and TFT worked with the Indonesian Cooperative Department to provide training on cooperative structure and management, as well as intensive training and capacity building for the KHJL Leadership Council on business and forest management. TFT and JAUH were commissioned by the members to monitor the work of the KHJL Leadership Council and make recommendations as needed.

**Partnerships**

The farmers partnered with Tropical Forest Trust (TFT) and Jaringan Untuk Hutan (JAUH, Network for Forests). TFT is a member organisation comprised of retail companies in Europe and America that are committed to buying tropical hardwoods from forests that are FSC certified or working toward FSC certification. TFT’s foresters support improved forest management on the ground in the tropics. JAUH is a network of environmental and social NGOs working throughout SE Sulawesi Province, with expertise on community organisation, government advocacy, and media campaigns.

Ponijo, a member of the KHJL, proudly displays his private teak plot.
Training and Starting Up

Using the ProForest Document ‘Group Certification for Forests: a Practical Guide’ as a basis, TFT provided training in FSC Group Certification, and facilitated the formation of a Group Forest Management Plan. JAUH helped establish organizational structures to enable regular and transparent communication within the group.

Through consultation with TFT Members’ factories, a short-term loan was arranged to help the cooperative process and pay for the initial permits necessary for buying and selling wood. This first sale was successful and led to a 25% increase in wood price for the farmers, as well as additional ongoing contracts to sell to TFT member factories to date.

Success

In May 2005, the cooperative received FSC certification for a group of small forest owners, with an initial membership of 196 individuals covering 152 ha, which has now grown to 550 members and an area of 556 ha.

Along with FSC Certification came District and Provincial recognition that these farmers provide a significant amount of teak to the international market, and that their needs should be recognized in regional forestry legislation.

Moreover, the success of this effort, has led to an interest in certification of other smallholder products such as cocoa, cashew nuts, and black pepper, and information regarding other forms of labelling (eg: Fair Trade), and links to markets looking for such certified products.

Lessons Learned

> For these farmers, group formation was the only way to afford FSC certification, obtain the necessary legal permits for wood selling, and link more directly to an international furniture market.

> Working with a regional NGO and a network of buyers giving preference to FSC wood was vital to success and formation of the KHJL as these partners brought key expertise and resources to the group formation process.

> Although group formation is a very involved process, it can provide many benefits in terms of capacity building, access to resources, and information sharing among group members.

> Training in cooperative management is however very important for new groups: knowledge regarding how to form monitoring and management boards, how to calculate profit and divide this appropriately among staff and members, and how to set rules in a transparent, democratic manner are key components to a sustainable, democratic group structure.

Facts & Figures

Certificate details: SW-FSC FM/COC-001511, for group of SLIMFs, issued for square teak logs on 20 May 2005
Area: 152 ha in 2005; 556 in 2008
Membership: 196 members to start (20-05-2005); 550 members (as of 31-05-2008)
Quantities: Annual Output: 350m3; Annual Turnover: approx. US $160,000

The Future

There are a number of challenges and future opportunities for this cooperative:

> Training and capacity building in business management and development, and in marketing and product processing. The former would help develop a long-term vision and strategy for growth. The latter could lead to selling garden furniture components or sawn timber to keep more funds in the community.

> Simple but accurate sampling methods designed for trees on agroforestry plots to monitor growth are needed.

> More awareness raising and discussion with national government is needed to resolve, clarify and simplify legal requirements for wood coming from smallholders.

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more information
www.fsc.org/smallholders
Non-Timber Forest Products Certification in Nepal

This Nepali case describes the alliances for capacity building and marketing which led to the achievement of an FSC group certificate covering more than 24 non-timber forest products (NTFPs) used in making handmade papers, essential oils, Ayurvedic medicines and supplements, and a variety of other herbal medicinal and beauty products for sale in international markets. This certificate - the first for NTFPs in Asia - includes 21 community forest user groups. The income generated from sales and value-added projects is shared between the communities, with poor and marginalised groups benefiting the most, and a portion of the revenue set aside for conservation and restoration activities.

Background

The sub-tropical to temperate forests in two mountain districts (Bajhang and Dolakha) of central and far-western Nepal Himalaya are – like most forests in Nepal – government-owned but managed by local people organised into legally recognised Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs). Presently in Nepal there are 14,387 CFUGs managing about 1.2 million ha of forest.

“...community user groups had little expertise to meet standards, with few service providers: introducing Local Resource Persons was a key strategy for developing capacity for management planning”

National & International Alliances

ANSAB facilitated a multi-stakeholder process leading to the formation of a unique alliance of industry, government, NGOs, communities and forest certifiers which helped put community-forestry based enterprises development, certification and marketing on the national agenda.

This Nepal Non-timber Forest Products Public-Private Marketing Alliance identified FSC certification as a way to link Nepali and foreign NTFP buyers, producers, NGO and government programs assisting the NTFP sector to: a) increase incomes and employment for NTFP producers b) promote sustainable resource management, and c) expand responsible buying practices within industry. The alliance facilitated the development of interim FSC timber and NTFP certification standards, a group certification model, and a huge awareness raising and capacity building effort, to address the problem of lack of knowledge of certification among professionals and relevant stakeholders.

A group certification model was adopted whereby FECOFUN works as a Resource Manager on behalf of the CFUGs in the certified pool. To participate in the scheme, CFUGs apply to FECOFUN, and comply with the forest management guidelines prepared by them. FECOFUN provides capacity building support and monitors the CFUGs.

Strengthening Community Forestry

FECCOFUN is a national federation of forest users which advocates for community forestry user group rights. It supports community NTFP management and sales as a key strategy in enhancing rural livelihoods. They have been supported in this work by ANSAB (Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources) who recognised that the main challenge was to transform user groups into entities with technical capability in sustainable forest management, running economically viable, yet socially just forest enterprises.
Lessons Learnt

> An appropriate model of group certification can incorporate a large number of smallholders: with an expandable system the cost of certification per group comes down as the membership grows.
> A critical mass of products and groups are needed not only to make it cost effective, but also to attract appropriate buyers.
> More national capacity – such as increased numbers of national auditors – also helps to bring certification costs down.
> Forest certification is not appropriate for all groups, and is costly if benefit is not obtained via international marketing.
> Selection of community groups for certification should be based on a number of criteria, including: richness in NTFPs; size of the forest areas and/or potential for expansion; their enterprise-orientation, networking-potential, interest in participation, and willingness to improve forest management, monitoring and auditing systems.

Impacts

Certification has led to a strengthening of conservation efforts. ANSAB has helped to develop guidelines for identifying and protecting rare, threatened and endangered species. CFUGs are trained to map areas set aside for the protection of sensitive wildlife habitat, cultural sites and streams. FECOFUN provides a format for CFUG members to monitor changes in forest conditions.

An additional benefit is the strengthening of democratic institutions resulting in a more equitable society. CFUGs in Dolakha have negotiated settlements with Yak grazers over tenure and territorial issues, and created a micro loan program for poor members. Training has been provided by FECOFUN in transparent accounting, and CFUGs in Bahjang have developed more democratic systems.

Facts & Figures

Certificate details: SW-FM/COC-NTFP001438 for 24 NTFPs issued 22 February 2005
Area: 14,086 ha
Membership: 4695 households organized into 21 CFUGs, ranging from 65 to 544 households, and from 28ha to 1981 ha per group. Additionally eight forest enterprises received FSC Chain of Custody certification, including the Bahjang based “Malika” which produces the first hand-made FSC certified paper in the world, which was used by cosmetics company AVEDA for gift boxes in 2007.

The Future

Among the key challenges for community forestry certification in Nepal are:
> Long term financial support to strengthen the FSC interim national working group, develop FSC standards and national capacity on certification
> Recruitment of additional private sector and NGO members to the alliance membership to contribute promote greater FSC certified sales
> Expansion of the certified group to make the annual audit and five year certification costs sustainable
> Technical support to Nepali NTFP companies to meet international standards for quality, product design, processing and documentation.

Information provided by Bhisma P. Subedi

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www.fsc.org/smallholders
This Portuguese case describes how multiple, small, privately owned forests in the Coimbra Region achieved certification where there was no prior history of application of silvicultural planning or operations and much initial scepticism about certification. FLOPEN (Grupo de Gestão Florestal da FLOPEN) was the first multiple-ownership, micro-properties group scheme to be certified in Portugal. With no national precedent to learn from, challenges have been met through a combination of forming strategic partnerships and the innovative development of management planning tools.

Background

The predominantly temperate and semi-natural forests of the Coimbra Region in Central Portugal are made up of very small properties (typically < 2 ha) which are privately owned. With years of forest properties being bought, sold and divided through inheritance, information held centrally is often outdated and incorrect. This in turn has resulted in: 1) a general lack of silvicultural planning & intervention, and 2) the degradation of both landscape level natural features (eg: riparian corridors and native habitats) and a functional infrastructure for controlling forest fires. Overall the region suffers from low productivity and low market values for raw material.

Initial Challenges

Although FLOPEN group members were committed to FSC certification, it was simply not possible to comply with all the Principles & Criteria on such small scale operations, particularly the requirements for establishing conservation areas. As this was the first group scheme to be certified in Portugal, there was a great deal of scepticism that it “couldn’t be done” on multiple-ownership micro-properties and there was no national precedent to learn from or simulate.

There was also some resistance to certification in the face of the transparency requirements for Chain of Custody certification. Timber was usually sold standing to a forest contractor who then resold it to mills on delivery. The forest owners were never aware of prices that the traders were obtaining from mills, or how these compared with prices they were setting for their raw material. Furthermore, many contractors were not FSC-certified and were breaking the chain of custody.

Achieving Group Certification

In conjunction with SA Woodmark, the certification body, it was decided that certification should be achieved at the group level (allowed under FSC-STD-20-007, section 3.3.5 for groups of SLIMFs). Group structure was based on the already close collaboration between the group Manager (FLOPEN) and members. FLOPEN inventoried and mapped all members’ properties to gather the baseline data for management planning. Management options were then discussed with and defined by the members, according to their objectives.

“we have showed our members that they earn more by being in the group than not in the group, not only in terms of sales but also in having a close technical collaboration which raises the profitability of the forest management activities”

João Ribiera, Executive Director, FLOPEN
Lessons Learnt

> “Thinking and acting as one entity” - it has been proven to, and accepted by, FLOPEN members that there is more profitability, both in sales and in technical ability, by being in the group rather than by acting individually.

> To promote functionality it is fundamental to design systems and plan activities based on what is appropriate for members of the group - this was achieved through a long process of consultation and capacity building.

> Regular communication from group members with the Group Manager is essential and should be implemented as best practice. FLOPEN uses a 3-monthly activity report from members as the main tool for conducting monitoring.

Facts & Figures

Certificate details: SA-FM/COC-001764, for group of SLIMFs, issued for eucalyptus & pine round-wood on 19 October 2007

Area: 774 ha

Membership: 44 members each with multiple FMUs ranging from 0.06 – 50 ha; 85% of properties <2 ha & 8% <5 ha

Quantities: Annual Turnover US $380,000; 50,000 m3

The Future

Some of the remaining challenges for FLOPEN are:

> Educating group members on how to expand in a sustainably, economically and technically viable way, without affecting production rates or conservation needs.

> Overcoming the lack of technical input from relevant stakeholders (eg: local NGOS, the state conservation authority etc) regarding HCVs, which has led to developing partnerships with students to help identify potential HCVs, and the properties where they might be found.

> Developing management prescriptions for the protection and enhancement of identified HCVs using country-specific methodologies developed by the Portuguese National Initiative and the experience of existing FSC certified companies.

Creating new Systems & Partnerships

Certification pushed FLOPEN into devising new systems and tools that worked for them. This included creating the CERNE database, which enables the scheduling of operational activities, and compiling GPS mapping data. These tools enable articulated silvicultural operations and conservation activities, and allowed the members to share both mechanical & technical resources and, therefore, costs.

Partnerships were also established: SATIVA (SA Woodmark Mediterranean Programme) carried out a participatory pre-assessment during which members learnt to assess and improve their own levels of compliance, and later led a study tour to the UK to visit several already FSC-certified group schemes to discuss organisational models with other group managers; a Portuguese forest company, SILVICAIMA (SA-FM/COC-1512), introduced the Proforest HCVF Toolkit to the group and provided initial training on how this methodology was implemented for their own certification and how it could be adapted to FLOPEN’s situation.

Impacts

With respect to markets, FLOPEN is now able to negotiate better prices with the mills for larger volumes of FSC-certified timber and pass this directly to the group members, removing some of the power from the timber traders gained via their closed negotiations with the mills. Forest contractors sell their harvesting & transport services to the FLOPEN group members in open bidding sessions. Contractors have to prove that they are in compliance with legal health & safety requirements in order to qualify to work in FLOPEN’s certified forests, and their operational performance is monitored by the group members to ensure that FSC standards are maintained on site.

The most important lesson learned is to understand how the group members behave socially and then design appropriate systems.
Northwest Certified Forestry in the USA

This US case is an example of a successful group FSC forest management model designed to support family forest owners and small forests generally access a growing market for certified products. The group, run by Northwest Certified Forestry (a program of the Northwest Natural Resource Group), has grown from an initial 7 members in 2005 to 80 members in 2008, and has expanded from the State of Washington to neighbouring Oregon. Northwest Certified Forestry has worked hard to make certification as simple and affordable as possible for its members. They offer a suite of services designed to help landowners manage their forests for ecological and economic diversity, including: marketing assistance for certified products, help with identifying financial aid programs, and more recently, ecosystem service market development (eg: carbon credits).

Background

Originally founded in 1992, The Northwest Natural Resource Group (NNRG) aims to "promote innovative forest management strategies that improve the health of forest and freshwater ecosystems while increasing economic development in rural communities" throughout the Pacific Northwest of the US.

As a core part of this mission, and through its Northwest Certified Forestry (NCF) program for small landowners, NNRG supports the growth of a profitable, sustainable, and environmentally sound timber industry. Through its membership of landowners, and the active support of staff in developing new supply chains, NCF is creating a growing network of landowners, manufacturers and distributors that specialize in locally produced forest products certified to FSC standards.

Accessible & Affordable Certification

NCF is building a community of landowners and individuals who are pursuing innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to forest management. NCF uses a group certification model to provide low cost certification services, and has made the process of becoming FSC certified as simple as possible.

Currently, 80 landowners are members of the group which totals more than 21,000 acres (8500 ha) of certified forestland: members average 272 acres in size, with a median size of 48 acres. The program is open to many types of landowners in Washington and Oregon including: family forests, small forestry companies, tribes, conservation groups and public agencies.

"FSC offers us an opportunity to distinguish our products in the marketplace and NCF group certification cut our costs by more than half." Richard Pine, O’Neill Pine Company

NCF provides a suite of services that enable small landowners to take a more proactive approach to managing their woodlands and marketing their forest products. NNRG and its NCF program have been active in developing national support networks to help assist with overcoming the challenges of pursuing FSC certification. NNRG was one of seven organizations that formed the FSC Family Forests Alliance (www.familyforestsalliance.org) in 2006: this works at a national level to assist group managers, and to implement strategies and priorities for advancing family forest certification. NNRG also participates in the Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities Partnership (HFHC), a program managed by Sustainable Northwest. HFHC maintains a group CoC certificate that currently has 15 members offering lumber, flooring, cabinets, windows, doors, furniture and other FSC-certified products.
Lessons Learnt

> For group certificates to work efficiently and effectively, it has been important to develop documents that identify the purposes of the group and to create a list of member services with tangible outcomes that benefit a large number of member landowners. Various examples of documents developed for these purposes are available through the NNRG website.

> It is vital to maintain frequent communications among group members - via field days, newsletters and other events – as these are essential for maintaining linkages and reporting progress towards outcomes. In-person meetings are also important to develop relationships among geographically dispersed members.

> There are challenges related to serving a large geographic area (two American states), and NNRG has responded by establishing satellite offices to serve specific areas and building contract auditor networks in areas too distant from staff.

> For operations to run smoothly, it is valuable to identify an individual who will be responsible for coordinating activities and tracking the group certificate, and can also serve as a single point of contact for group members and potential supporters or funders.

> Although there is growing demand for FSC-certified products, the region suffers from a lack of supply because most of the large public and private landowners have not had their forests certified. This has resulted in relatively few sawmills getting certified because of supply concerns. This has been addressed by NNRG’s efforts to educate and advocate for greater participation in forest certification throughout the region, and this year the Washington State Department of Natural Resources achieved FSC certification for a portion (145,000 acres) of their state-managed lands.

The Future

Northwest Certified Forestry recently completed a strategic planning process to address goals and milestones for the continued growth of the certification program.

> The primary remaining challenge is to grow the group to a size that is economically viable and self-sustaining, and NNRG aims to grow the size of the NCF group to roughly 500 members by 2012.

> To maintain management of such a large number of group members, NNRG is developing database software and member management systems that will support record keeping needs and auditing requirements.

> Creating more landowner value, diversification of program revenue, and increased operational efficiency are all critical for the program’s continuing success.

Facts & Figures

**Certificate details:** SA-FM/COC-1394, for group of SLIMFs, issued for round wood, sawlogs, pulpwood, firewood, sawn wood, timbers, furniture, flooring, and mouldings on 7 January 2005

**Area:** 1109 ha in 2005, 8500 ha in 2008

**Membership:** 7 members in 2005, 80 members in 2008

**Quantities:** 4 million board feet

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“NCF is one of the best models I’ve seen for connecting small landowners to markets and services.”
Joe Kane, Executive Director, Nisqually Land Trust

NCF member John Hendrikson of Wild Thyme Farm.