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Developing Capacities to Sustainably Manage Tropical Forests in the Peruvian Amazon – Communal Land-Use Planning and the Focal Model

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Abstract

Protected areas in the biodiverse Peruvian Amazonian region, are increasingly threatened by human expansion and land-use changes. In order to confront this development, the internationally financed NGO CIMA supports pilot communities in the buffer zone of the natural park “Cordillera Azul” with the development of micro-land use plans, community norms, technical assistance and the organisation of community projects, such as reforestation. Besides, other NGOs and governmental programmes also operate in the region offering payments for the conservation of community forests. By looking at pilot communities in the sectors Chazuta and Shamboyacu, this project analysed the effectiveness of this capacity building at improving sustainable land-use management and limiting deforestation. Based on a mixed-method approach using information from document analyses, qualitative interviews and satellite image analysis three levels of effectiveness were assessed: political output, social outcome and ecological impact.

As political output we assessed the extent to which institutions in the communities are developed, approved and part of local resource management. Based on Elinor Oström’s eight criteria for resource use management, the implementation of those instruments in regulating the use of territory and the conversion of forest area is evaluated as social outcome. Due to trust towards the NGO and leadership within the community, many of the analysed communities had significantly advanced with the establishment of those political tools in their community and connected them to habits such as conservation of forests on mountain ranges and around water sheds. The institutionalisation of those community rules helped stabilising the community’s land-use as well as the reduction of conflicts within and among the communities. The analysis of satellite images confirmed that those advances led to reduced deforestation and land-use change, particularly in areas that communities designated for conservation. Crucial for the effectiveness in reducing ecological impacts of the resource management was the generation of a sense of ownership among the communities. Economic incentives and regulatory mechanisms only worked, if the mechanisms were proactively incorporated into the community practises.

Keywords: Biodiversity, buffer zone, capacity building, deforestation, institutional development, land-use planning, protected area