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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Identification of Gaps in the Community Forestry within the REDD+ Project in the Peruvian Amazon

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Abstract

Conservation concessions (CC) within the REDD+ project have been promoted as mechanisms to protect the primary forest from anthropogenic disturbances in the Peruvian Amazon. However, economic activities by human settlements located in buffer zones of those concessions, have affected the common forest resources given to these groups. Therefore, with a view to determining the effects of the forest utilisation on the communal land governed by the indigenous community of Gran Pajatén located in the buffer zone of the CC Montecristo (San Martín, Peru), different workshops (Focus group approach) were implemented with members of this community and environmental authorities. Outcomes highlighted two components that were discussed: 1) a social component, with respect to general information about economic activities of the people living in the buffer zone; 2) a forest component, related to forest management in the communal land. Results obtained confirmed that management plans implemented in the communal forest are based only on selective logging through inaccurate practices of motor-manual operations. However, they admitted that when the forest is logged, most of the time they do not care about the understory, focusing only on harvesting targeted timber species which can be cut, according to the agreement with the community. This agreement states: “It can be harvested up to two trees per person of the community, and only can be done with the purpose of self-consumption, for instance, fuelwood, construction of their houses, or improvements in their farms”. Nevertheless, they cannot control activities by illegal loggers who extract the wood anonymously, which is a complex situation because those practices are carried out in remote areas, and sometimes is made by people of the same community or neighbouring communities. Furthermore, the information collected with these meetings and workshop with the community showed that although they promote some species through tree nurseries in their farms, they concentrate on a set of timber species with more economic interest or those that can represent some benefit to their agroforestry systems (AFS) with cocoa crops. Thus, the findings from this case study have confirmed poor practical knowledge by the community about sustainable forest management.

Keywords: Buffer zone, conservation concession, forest utilisation, illegal logging, indigenous community, Peruvian Amazon, REDD+