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**Bolivia Country Analysis
of Tropical Forests and
Biological Diversity**

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6.0 Community Forestry Development

The phrase “community forestry development” is rather ambiguous. What does it really mean? By defining each word in this phrase, a practical definition can be constructed.

- **The Community:** Ethnic groups that have a long tradition of making decisions by consensus. Men, women and children participate in forming this consensus.
- **The Forest:** Trees have provided communities with medicine, food, forage and wood for a long time, while also protecting them and their source of water. Most communities would like to see this continue.
- **Development:** This widens the range of options for people, offering to improve educational opportunities, health and medical attention, water for drinking and irrigation, agriculture and forestry practices, shelter and employment. It embraces the total spectrum of human options, from physical surroundings to economic and political freedoms.

In synthesis, community forestry development refers to the activities involved in community management of renewable natural resources. These activities share the objective of improving the social, economic and emotional conditions of the rural communities, based on their own realities and seen from their own perspective, with the wise use and sustainable management of natural resources.⁷²

The Team visited three community forestry development programs supported by USAID: the Management, Conservation and Utilization of Natural Resources in the Tropics of Cochabamba Project in Chapar Jatun Sach’a, the BOLFOR Project in Santa Cruz and Project Concern International in the high valleys in the Department of Cochabamba. The social, economic and environmental condition of each project differ substantially, nevertheless all of these projects have made notable advances in reaching community forestry development goals. Stakeholders interviewed by the Team strongly support these projects and would applaud a decision by USAID to continue its support of community forestry development.

6.1 The Jatun Sach’a

This project was originally financed by USAID-AD, UNDCP and VIMDESALT and is now fully funded by USAID. Its official aim is to “control the supply of narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances” and it does this by helping farmers implement licit development activities. It has successfully organized colonists to design and implement integrated forest management and agroforestry development activities.

Jatun Sach’a is a very advanced and progressive project. Project personnel have successfully assisted farmers in establishing associations dedicated to implementing a multitude of licit development alternatives that generate real income in the short, medium and long term. These development alternatives include forest management, commercialization of wood and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), integrated management of farm plots through the promotion of a variety of crops, the implementation of agroforestry practices, silvipastoral systems, and fast growing tree plantations.

There are many reasons why this project is successful, and although ARD was not contracted to evaluate this project or any of the other field activities financed by USAID, members of the Team felt compelled to comment on the dedication and strict adherence of project staff to the basic principles of participatory development: transparency, respect and equality. Briefly stated, the project seeks to help farmers become self-reliant. To achieve this aim, project personnel implement, with care and dedication, participatory methodologies assisting farmers to:

⁷² This definition comes from the book *Pioneering Change* written by C. Jordan, M. Andrade, A. Añasco, and C. Herz. Chapter II. 2002. It stresses the fact that forests are used to improve the livelihoods of rural people.

- Reflect on their situation;
- Look for solutions to their needs;
- Form community development committees;
- Use participatory decision-making methodologies;
- Assume ownership of project activities;
- Successfully solicit additional external support;
- Plan and implement projects;
- Increase cooperation, solidarity and cohesion;
- Stimulate individual commitment to the group; and
- Develop an entrepreneurial spirit.

Due to their participatory spirit, project personnel have gained farmers' admiration, trust and respect, farmers strongly support project goals, and thus vigorously participate in the execution of project activities. This is a sure formula for success in any community development program. ARD Team members would like to congratulate all project staff for their hard work and dedication. Congratulations also go to those who have mustered and continue to gain the political and financial support for this innovative development project.

The Project Directors have concluded that this is a crucial time for the project, and they have started to elaborate an "exit strategy" aimed at promoting the sustainability of the extension methodologies and productive systems being implemented. To aid this process, three elements are suggested for possible inclusion in this exit strategy.

The first is networking. This simply means empowering local development organizations to execute extension programs that promote and expand on licit productive alternatives started by the project in a sustainable and effective manner. Fortunately, the project has contacted a number of local organizations, but coordination between these organizations is still weak. Here too, incentive programs and extension methodologies varied considerably from one organization to the other. As a result, farmers received mixed messages, which confused and disorientated them. Basically, the problem was a lack of communication, compounded by mixed definitions of participatory development. Through networking, it would be possible to build up common development strategies, determine roles and responsibilities, and design and implement common extension procedures. If properly done, networking would build constructive alliances, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of all entities involved, including those farmer-driven organizations.

A few of Jatun Sach'a's key personnel should visit other development programs more experienced in networking, such as the community forestry development programs conducted by FAO and the Canadian/Ecuadorian Foundation in Ecuador.

Secondly, a detailed analysis of the project should be conducted to determine lessons learned. For the last five years, the project has been caught up in a whirlwind of activities, and it seems that project personnel have had little time to reflect on the methodologies, technologies and other development tools they have created. Such knowledge is of utmost importance to schools, universities and to current, as well as future, development programs. Of special interest is the project's extension system. Truly participatory, the methodologies and technologies used here promote self-reliance rather than dependency. In short, the project has a lot to offer, but for this information to be assimilated by others, it must be properly packaged and distributed.

The project should expand its reach two-fold, for two reasons. First, the demand by colonists for project services has increased dramatically in the last two years. Having learned of the benefits generated by the project from their neighbors, new potential participants visit the project office daily to present requests for assistance. To not satisfy this demand would be extremely counter-productive to alternative development goals set in the region. Secondly, there are still many other hard core problems in the Tropics of Cochabamba in which the project can help. For example, the Carrasco National Park is being invaded by new colonists, some of whom are growing coca. If this park is to be preserved, urgent steps are necessary. One possible measure is the creation of a protective buffer zone in which the project could help farmer colonists establish licit productive activities in much the same way it has in valley. Integrated farm management, however, can not in itself prevent further encroachment and illicit activities in the park, unless, of course, it is accompanied by effective education and enforcement measures.

Once again, Jatun Sach'a is an outstanding project. It has successfully prepared farmers to improve their livelihoods through the implementation of forestry, agroforestry and other alternative development opportunities, keeping coca off their lands. Continued political and financial support to the project will produce a multitude of impressive benefits, for the people, Chapare's tropical forests and the Bolivian nation.

6.2 The BOLFOR Project

BOLFOR's main goal is the sustainable management of tropical forests in the Department of Santa Cruz. In its second phase, this project has developed an impressive array of management tools and institutional strategies that have successfully supported the application of Bolivia's Forestry Law. Project staff can also be proud of their advances in certification, fire control, and forest research, among others.

Seeking to implement forest management plans for ASLs and TCOs, the project has chosen to work with a number of indigenous groups (*Chiquitanos, Guarayos, Yuqui-Yuracaré, Tacanas, Araonas, and Yaminaguas-Machineri*), and is in the process of establishing several community forest and non-timber forest enterprises. Although very important to these communities, these enterprises do not satisfy community needs of health, food security, organization and leadership.

As the BOLFOR project is scheduled to terminate at the end of 2003, the ARD Team recommends that new project dealing exclusively with community forestry be implemented. Because of its focus on human development, this project would differ greatly from BOLFOR. On the other hand, the technologies developed and lessons learned in BOLFOR, could greatly facilitate project implementation. Ideas for the new project are presented in Box 2, on the following page.

6.3 PL-480/Title II, USAID's Food Security Program

Title II funds have been heavily invested for food security in the Andes. Support has been focused on increasing agricultural productivity, food for education, maternal and child health, community water and basic sanitation. In 2002 a new DAP was adopted that focuses Title II funds on three areas: rural incomes (agriculture), health (maternal health, child health, community water and sanitation) and natural resource management. The percentages of Title II funding for these programs are 39 percent, 42 percent, and 14 percent respectively with four percent overhead.⁷³ The addition of natural resource management into the Title II program opens the door for true integrated resource management and community development. To successfully integrate natural resource management into projects, it is necessary to work closely with communities to develop community forestry projects focused on their local micro-watershed. Furthermore, community workshops should be held to identify issues and priorities. Projects should then start by focusing on those issues. Finally, the health SO

⁷³ Personal communication with Daniel Sanchez-Bustamante, USAID/Bolivia.

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should coordinate with the Environment SO and recommendations for successful community forestry projects outlined later in this document.

Box 2: Community Forestry Development in Santa Cruz

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The objectives of this suggested project are given below.

General Objective: To improve the livelihoods of indigenous communities through the sustainable management of tropical forest and farm lands.

Strategic Objective 1: traditional community organizations strengthened for development.

Strategic Objective 2: food security for the community based on integrated farm and wildlife management programs and home garden.

Strategic Objective 3: community forestry wood-based enterprises up and running smoothly.

Strategic Objective 4: community forestry non-wood forest product enterprises up and running smoothly.

Strategic Objective 5: tropical forests sustainably managed for wood and non-wood forest products

To accomplish these strategic objectives it would be necessary to implement a rather large participatory extension program. The sustainability and cost/benefit ratio of extension could be improved through outsourcing of major activities. These activities include:

- Training of extensionists and community leaders in participatory development strategies.
- Developing training and promotional materials.
- Increasing farmers' participation and analysis in the planning of natural resource programs.
- Improving participatory methodologies to help communities bring about democratic and self-reliant development.
- Improving productive technologies promoted to increase the environmental and economic benefits to farmers.
- Further developing community forestry and related enterprises to improve the farmers' income.
- Increasing women's participation and the benefits they receive from community forestry development.
- Promoting the preparation and training of community leaders in natural resource management.
- Assisting in modernizing the educational curricula of universities interested in community forestry development.
- Promoting alliances between development agencies for the advancement of community forestry development.
- Implementing awareness programs to promote the understanding and benefits of community forestry development.
- Ensuring modifications in national, regional and local rural development policies to favor community management of natural resources.

Such a project could be implemented in three phases of five years each: Phase I--- the development and validation of participatory methodologies and productive systems, Phase II---the expansion and consolidation of community development work programs, and Phase III---networking and institutionalization of community forestry development extension programs. Funding for this project is estimated at between US \$ 25-30 million over a period of 15 years.

One example of how Title II could be used for community forestry is illustrated in the following example from PCI. PCI received Title II funds to implement an integrated community forestry project in the high-valley community of San Miguel consisting of 150 families in the Department of Cochabamba. This indigenous community is located next to Tunari National Park. The project was initiated in a rather sparse *Polylepis* forest to help protect an endemic bird species and other animals, to protect the watershed, and to provide a continuous supply of *Polylepis* for its medicinal properties. The project helped to start a community tree nursery for *Polylepis*, built a community water system and a stable irrigation system, and implemented agroforestry systems. The community was trained on every aspect of the management of the tree nursery and on the planting

of trees. School children received education about their environment. The community forestry development program stressed the importance of watershed management and restoration for a continuous water supply. Watershed management and restoration also has the effect of preserving the endemic bird species and minimizing the flooding of Vinto, a community in the lower part of the watershed.

Although PCI has not received funding to continue the San Miguel project, the integrated nature of the project has allowed the community to continue managing the tree nursery and the planting of trees. This project is successful for several reasons. First, the community traditionally practices participatory decision making and came to a consensus that watershed protection is a community priority. Second, Title II funds provided an incentive to the community for work and helped purchase supplies needed for the water system, irrigation system, and tree nursery. Third, local leaders were in charge of the project. Fourth, education activities were conducted in the school. Finally, the community was able to see the benefits of their efforts. The community is hoping to increase their income and food security by selling fruit from the agroforestry systems implemented and by selling trees from the tree nursery to PCI or other communities. The community is also hoping to be able to generate income from ecotourism activities in the National Park.

USAID/Bolivia should prioritize community forestry development programs in its strategic development plan. Prioritization would allow USAID to focus on key issues affecting the sustainability of these programs. These key issues are discussed below and are not exclusive to community forestry development, but are directly related to rural development activities in general.

6.4 Key Issues Affecting Community Forestry Development

- **Strong Community Leadership.** Successful community forestry development projects require strong local leadership that helps educate and unite the community around community forestry development objectives. This leadership can either be a strong local personality, a local NGO, or an existing local community group. Perhaps the most important aspect of strong community leadership is that it creates sustainable projects. An example of this is illustrated by the TCO Santa Maria in Santa Cruz. The community indicated that sustainable forest management was introduced by one local person and that the entire community agreed that it would be to their present and future benefit to form a TCO to sustainably manage their forest. They indicated that one difference between their community and other communities that do not sustainably manage their forests was the fact that they had a strong local leader.⁷⁴
- **Public Involvement and Participation.** This issue has to do with involving the entire community in the development, implementation, and evaluation of community forestry development projects. This implies that men, women, and children are involved in all aspects of any project. It also implies that outside organizations provide opportunities for the community to express themselves and they should listen to what the community really wants. Advanced participatory methods should be created for all aspects of community forestry development projects. For example, many comments from various communities indicated that money from community projects should be used to improve public works like water systems, health posts, and education. Other things that various communities said they want from community forestry development projects include jobs, the continued existence of wildlife, a source of medicinal plants, a place to educate their children and finally, that the forest would continue into the future.⁷⁵ Using participatory methods allows community desires and needs to be incorporated into community forestry development activities. A recent evaluation of the DDCP project indicated that the DDCP participatory model could be applied to the forestry management issue.
- **Policy and Incentives.** This issue has to do with the need to have policy and incentives in place for community buy-in and participation in community forestry development projects. The following is a list of

⁷⁴ Information received by community members during field visit to the Santa Maria TCO in Santa Cruz.

⁷⁵ Information received by community members during field visits to TCOs and ASLs in Santa Cruz.

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policy changes and incentives that USAID should focus on to help in the implementation of community forestry development projects.⁷⁶

- Prioritize local community management and control of natural resources.
 - Support Bolivian public institutions with the creation of laws and regulations that favor participatory development and community forestry programs.
 - Support local organizations that use participatory development programs.
 - Support the incorporation of participatory concepts and methodologies in university programs.
- Networking and Coordination. For any successful community forestry development program the NGOs, *Superintendencia Forestal*, Municipalities, ASLs, TCOs, local community groups (Mother's Clubs, agricultural cooperatives, schools, etc.) all need to work together. Networking and collaboration should center around common objectives. Once common objectives are agreed upon, roles and responsibilities need to be assigned to each group. There should then be regular meetings to see what things everyone is doing, how they are doing it, and problems they are having so they can be solved by the group. Networking also includes sharing relevant information with each group and using existing projects to show others how similar objectives can be achieved. For example, Forest Management Plans need to be integrated with national, regional, municipal and community development plans, as well as integrated with protected area plans.
 - Institution Building. There can be no sustainable development without sustainable institutions. As has been shown, community forestry requires the involvement of government institutions, NGOs, universities and farmer organizations. There have been many attempts in the last two decades to improve the effectiveness of these organizations in negotiating, supporting and implementing community forestry projects and rural development in general. In the 1980s, for example, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) trained the staff of local institutions throughout the Andes in the methodology known as Planning by Objectives. Other agencies have offered training in the methodologies called Strategic Planning and Community Participation. Community forestry projects themselves have trained people in participatory methodologies and productive technologies related to community management of natural resources. Although these activities have helped, they have not been sufficient. Strong local development organizations are still rare.

USAID has a critical role to play in strengthening local institutions for development. The institutional sustainability triangle can be used to help local development organizations become self-reliant in the operation of community forestry extension programs. The three sides of this triangle can be described as follows:

- **Orientation** encapsulates the broad direction of the organization.
 - **Capacity** refers to its particular technical or managerial strengths.
 - **Credibility** reflects the validity and transparency of the organization's efforts, as seen by its clients.
 - Finally, **Human Resources** lie at the center of the sustainability triangle. The worth of an organization is the direct product of its human resources and their problem-solving abilities.
- Integrated Resource Management. This issue recognizes the fact that community forestry development projects are really integrated community projects that involve forestry. That is, these projects are not just about managing trees, they are about sustainable management of communities. All community forestry development projects should incorporate education, training, and one or more of the following aspects.

⁷⁶ Information taken from Chapter VIII in *Construyendo Cambios: Desarrollo Forestal Comunitario en los Andes, Una propuesta de manejo participativo de los recursos naturales renovables para el Nuevo Milenio*.

- Fish and wildlife. Using forestry practices to manage fish and wildlife for the benefit of local communities. Viable wildlife populations increase a community's sense of place, provide subsistence hunting and fishing, and provide ecotourism opportunities.
 - Agroforestry. Using Agroforestry techniques, communities will be able to produce food in a sustainable manner while protecting and restoring water and soil resources. Under some circumstances, credit for the carbon stored within the trees and soil of these systems may be traded on international markets.
 - Integrated Farm Management. This involves sustainable management of livestock, agroforestry, micro-watershed management, composting, and reforestation.
 - Water Projects. These projects include both drinking water and irrigation projects. The focus should be on watershed management and incorporation of forestry activities that protect and restore the local watershed.
 - Road Construction. Road construction should incorporate forestry activities to minimize damage to water quality and reduce road maintenance costs.
 - Health. These projects include sanitation, nutrition, disease prevention, and health posts and could be coupled with agroforestry projects, home gardens, and watershed management by using Title II funds.
- Equity. Community forestry development considers equity as a goal of human development. It promotes equity among human groups that have formerly been differentiated on the basis of age, wealth, sex and culture. Certain forms of inequity have played a leading role in undermining social cohesiveness. Cultural inequity, for example, has impeded the free and just development of many local cultures. Economic inequity has excluded many rural farm communities from actively participating in the national economy. Gender inequity is still common in Andean Countries. To meet new circumstances successfully, such as globalization and economic growth, and to develop the full potential of women as well as men change is necessary.
 - Gender. Equality of the sexes is fundamental to development. Community forestry consciously attempts to promote greater equality between men and women by removing barriers of discrimination. Women are, therefore, given special opportunities to increase their skills and participate as equals in the development process. The objective of gender equality gives community forestry a human as well as an economic development goal. Community forestry is changing the established community power structure. Although community forestry promotes equality of men and women, it recognizes that they may have different roles. Thus community forestry development plans include both men and women, but according to the roles they assign themselves.

The methodologies for working towards gender equality developed in community forestry help women express their natural creativity. They do not, however, attempt to divide the sexes, but rather to unify them by making their strengths complementary. The gender focus goes beyond the division of labor to make gender equality understood in all facets of daily life. From gender equality emerges an innate human respect for human rights and equity.
 - Marketing, Financing and Business management. Communities often do not have the expertise needed to successfully manage forestry related businesses, market their products, and find financial assistance. Marketing for NTFPs, all aspects of local business management, improvement of the utilization of waste wood (*disperdicios*) both in the forest and at the sawmill need assistance. For example, there have been some contract problems between lumber companies and the TCOs, including late payments for wood delivered, which has caused problems with several community groups. Furthermore, it should be noted that there has been some progress in the breaking of several monopolies in various aspects of timber harvesting. For example in Yotaú, a group entered the market and offered far better prices for wood products, thus changing the local market. Also there have been changes in the railroad tie market in the Chiquitania.
 - Sustainable Management of Small Forested Areas While there has been much of work accomplished on sustainable management of large forested areas, little support has been given to small tracts of land (<200ha). Generally, TCOs and ASLs are located between 30 and 120 kilometers from the communities that

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are managing these lands.⁷⁷ Sustainable management of small forested areas should be incorporated into integrated resource management activities both at the municipal and farm levels. During field visits in the Department of Santa Cruz, several local people expressed a desire for assistance in the sustainable management of small areas.

- Sustainable Management of Large Forested Areas Support for sustainable management of large, not easily accessed tracts of land with small community groups (ASLs and TCOs) should continue. Also, the condition of the land being managed by these community groups should be taken into account when designing community forestry development projects. For example, during the field visit to Santa Cruz, much ASL and TCO land was previously under concessions to private timber companies and has been previously cut over or high graded. This has an impact on the amount and type of wood that can be harvested and directly impacts the amount of money that can be generated.
- Land Tenure This issue has to do with the lack of clear land tenure that causes many conflicts inside and outside of communities. Colonists without land title, overlapping forestry concessions and unclear land ownership are all part of this problem. INRA is working with land tenure problems, but the job is immense. Innovative ways of handling these problems should be found. Out-sourcing land tenure dealings could be one option. WCS has found that by involving interested groups in the field work, they have significantly lowered costs of clearing land titles. This type of collaborative work should be explored.
- Result Oriented Projects. Projects should focus on results and be centered on local resources, forests, local farms, municipal and private protected areas. Community forestry development projects should focus on communities that have the greatest chance for sustainability and success. By focusing on a few projects and achieving success, projects can be started in other communities and successful communities can help. This strategy builds upon the results achieved by one community and replicates it in other communities.

⁷⁷ Information received from community members during interviews with various TCOs and ASLs in Santa Cruz.