PRISMA

Programa Salvadoreño de Investigación sobre Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente
Salvadoran Research Program on Development and Environment

Association of Forest Communities of Petén, Guatemala:

Context, accomplishments and challenges

Layout : Leonor González
Graphic Design : gpremper diseño/Leonor González
Photographs : Ileana Gómez
ACOFOP, ACICAFOC
Editing : Sandra Rodríguez
Translation : Susan C. Greenblatt

www.prisma.org.sv prisma@prisma.org.sv
3a. Calle Poniente No. 3760, Colonia Escalón, San Salvador
Tels.: (503) 2 298 6852, (503) 2 298 6853, (503) 2 224 3700; Fax: (503) 2 2237209
Dirección Postal: Apartado 01-440, San Salvador, El Salvador, C. A.
International Mailing Address: VIP No. 992, P.O. Box 52-5364, Miami FLA 33152, U.S.A.

Association of Forest Communities of Petén, Guatemala:

Context, accomplishments and challenges

Ileana Gómez and V. Ernesto Méndez

Methodology and acknowledgements

This publication is a collaborative effort by PRISMA in the project "Learning to Build Accompaniment Models for Grassroots Forestry Organizations in Brazil and Central America," supported by the Ford Foundation and executed by the Center for International Forest Research (CIFOR) and the Asociación Coordinadora Indígena Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria Centroamericana (ACICAFOC).

The context analysis of the case of the Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén (ACOFOP) combined a literature review of secondary sources and field work in Petén (March and October 2004). This included participation in workshops for community leaders and self-systematizers, and interviews with Erick Cuellar of the ACOFOP technical team, Richard Grant and Aldo Rodas of Alianza para un Mundo Justo, Luis Romero of the Centro Maya and Héctor Rosado, Director of the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CONAP) in Petén. The paper was enriched by information provided at international workshops and exchange visits held in San Salvador (May 2004, methodological workshop) and Petén (October 2004).

Peter Taylor (Department of Sociology, Colorado State University, United States) was in charge of methodological assistance and also carefully reviewed draft versions, making extremely useful suggestions that resulted in sounder research findings. The contents of the draft prior to this report were much clearer and better structured thanks to suggestions made by Deborah Barry (Program Officer for Development and Environment, Ford Foundation for México and Central America); Rubén Pasos (Project Coordinator); Marcedonio Cortave, Apolinario Córdova, Erick Cuellar, Walter Aroche, Carlos Kursel and Marío Rivas (ACOFOP); and Virgilio Reyes (FLACSO Guatemala).

For their unflagging collaboration, contributions and information throughout the preparation of this paper, we would especially like to thank Marcedonio Cortave, Executive Director of ACOFOP, along with the ACOFOP Technical and Administrative Team.

Table of contents

Acronyms

ACICAFOC	Asociación Coordinadora Indígena Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria
ACOFOP	Asociación de Comunidades Forestales de Petén
BCIE	Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo
CALAS	Centro de Acción Legal, Ambiental y Social de Guatemala
CATIE	Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza
CCAD	Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo
CGIAR	Grupo Consultivo Internacional de Investigación en Agricultura
CI	Conservación Internacional
CIR	Iniciativa Cristiana Romero
CONAP	Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas
CONCOFOP	Consejo Consultivo de Comunidades Forestales de Petén
DED	Servicio Alemán para el Desarrollo
FARES	Fundación para la Investigación Antropológica y los Estudios Ambientales (por sus siglas en inglés)
FORESCOM	Empresa Forestal Comunitaria
FSC	Consejo Mundial de Manejo Forestal (por sus siglas en inglés)
FYDEP	Fomento y Desarrollo del Petén
GHF	Fondo Patrimonial Global (por sus siglas en inglés)
HELVETAS	Cooperación Suiza para el Desarrollo
ICCO	Organización Inter-eclesiática para la Cooperación al Desarrollo
INAB	Instituto Nacional de Bosques
INTA	Instituto de Transformación Agraria
ITTO	Organización Internacional de Maderas Tropicales
KFW	Grupo Bancario KfW
MAG	Ministerio de Ganadería y Agricultura
ONG	Organización no-gubernamental
PDS	Programa de Desarrollo Sostenible
PPP	Plan Puebla Panamá
PROSELVA	Programa para la Protección del Bosque Tropical de Petén
RBM	Reserva de la Biosfera Maya
RUTA	Regional Unit for Technical Assistance
SEGEPLAN	Secretaría de Planificación Económica
SIGAP	Sistema Guatemalteco de Areas Protegidas
TLC	Tratado de Libre Comercio
SUCHILMA	Sindicato Unico de Chicleros y Laborantes de Madera
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
ONU	Organización de las Naciones Unidas
UICN	Unión Internacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza
UNESCO	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Ciencia, la Educación y la Cultura
USAID	Agencia de Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional
WWF	Fondo Mundial para la Naturaleza

Summary

The Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in the Petén covers 2,112,940 hectares (ha) of northern Guatemala along the border with Mexico and Belize. The MBR is part of the Mayan Jungle, shared by these countries. In the MBR, 445,804 ha are managed by community forest concessions, which in just a few years have developed a forest management model that is having a positive impact on natural resource conservation and community livelihoods.

Reducing the impact of forest fires and ending illegal lumbering and the encroachment of new settlements are the primary social and environmental accomplishments of community management. As a result, families are reorganizing and improving their livelihood strategies, integrating the forest as their primary natural asset. In addition, community concessions have made successful inroads in the certified wood market and are taking the first steps to organize around its commercialization.

The history of how the community forest concessions developed is enmeshed in the changing social and political dynamics of a territory that played several different roles during the past century. The isolated, unknown jungle, dominated by the extraction of chicle and precious wood, became a receiving zone for internal migrants in the mid-20th century, with intense pressure on the agricultural frontier and serious national security problems from illegal trafficking in flora, fauna, archeological resources, undocumented migrants and illegal drugs. This trend was in contrast to the conservation initiatives that resulted in the establishment of the MBR in 1990.

The creation of the MBR led to a restructuring of local institutions under the direction of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP); this centered on land use regulation, which is especially strict for the protected areas and extraction zones.

Urgent efforts to conserve the Petén's natural resources, the signing of the Peace Accords and pressure from local residents organized in the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP) who were fighting for access to land and forest concessions, enabled the communities to become concession-holders for 445,804 ha of woodlands.

International cooperation agencies have played an important role in managing the MBR, using different strategies and contributions that have evolved over time. One of the most important cooperation agency actors has been the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), not only for its financial support, but also because of its involvement in designing the institutional management structure. As CONAP's primary counterpart, USAID focused mainly on conservation technical assistance, provided by international conservation NGOs, which worked with local NGOs that formed specifically to implement these projects. The most significant advances made under this model related to technical training, which included forest management and commercialization. However, the NGOs adopted a leadership and technical assistance style that failed at developing community capacity for integrated forest management and organizational and business administration. By 2001, this model had run its course and a new phase began in

which the communities had to develop their production and commercialization capacities more autonomously.

Another form of cooperation, more focused on strengthening community capacity, has coexisted alongside this model, providing valuable input for the development of community concessions and ACOFOP. Different donor agencies have provided direct support to ACOFOP and its organizations for strengthening their organizing and advocacy skills and capacity at the Central American and international level. This has helped ACOFOP to become the leading organization for community forest concession management.

These models have each made very different, yet complementary, contributions. Each type of cooperation has facilitated the development of components that are crucial to the success of the community concessions and ACOFOP, though these are now facing new and more complex challenges for themselves and for the type of cooperation they need. The current challenges transcend the specific space occupied by the concessions and their management model. ACOFOP has set its sights on Petén as a territory ripe for political action, needed for addressing economic integration and free trade proposals, including the Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP) and the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA); the tourism development proposal by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – Mundo Maya Sustainable Development Program; and the Cuenca Mirador Park conservation proposal. At the same time, the institutional framework for community forest management needs a revamping that focuses on its territorial role, and that can assume an ecosystem or environmental services perspective that would ensure recognition of the true ecological and social value of community concessions.

Introduction

One of the greatest environmental challenges tropical countries face is to construct development models that combat rural poverty while preserving natural resources (Scherr et al., 2004). Accordingly, the loss and degradation of tropical forests is currently one of the international community's major conservation concerns (Guariguata and Kattan, 2002). This deterioration has many causes, and as with other environmental problems, they are related to social, ecological and economic processes that are based at the local level and extend to a global scale (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001).

Recently, experiences have been documented where communities have developed ways of managing the forest that sustain their livelihoods and conserve the woodland. There are publications about processes in India (Poffenberger and McGean, 1998), Cameroon (Jum et al., 2003) and Mexico (Bray et al., 2003), to mention a few. All of these cases show that peasant and indigenous communities can make rational use of forest resources and conserve them.

However, the question remains as to just how sustainable these types of strategies are for the future and how the forest communities will face important present-day challenges. These challenges include the communities' capacity to commercialize their products, a resurging "conservation wave" that is vying for managed forests to turn them into protected areas, and the weakness of the institutional and community management models for responding to newly-proposed economic integration and free trade and the impact of tourist developments.

Given these major issues, it is of the utmost importance to systematize successful community forest management experiences that currently face the dilemma of having to confront the abovementioned challenges. Through this analysis, not only can the context and factors affecting these processes be better understood, but solutions and actions to ensure that the community strategies work well can also be explored.

Even though the experience of the community forest concessions in the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) has been widely described (Gretzinger, 1999; Reyna Contreras et al., 1999; Varios, 2000; Finger-Stich, 2003), there has been no up-to-date systematization of the process. This paper is an attempt to fill part of this gap, through a historical analysis of the social, economic and political context in which the concessions operate. This systematization will help provide a clearer understanding of the experience, origins and role of the concession-holding communities, and extract lessons that can be useful for the people in the Petén and in other communities engaged in similar efforts. Finally, this analysis will hopefully aid international cooperation agencies and governmental sustainable development efforts.

Stages in the development of the community forest concessions

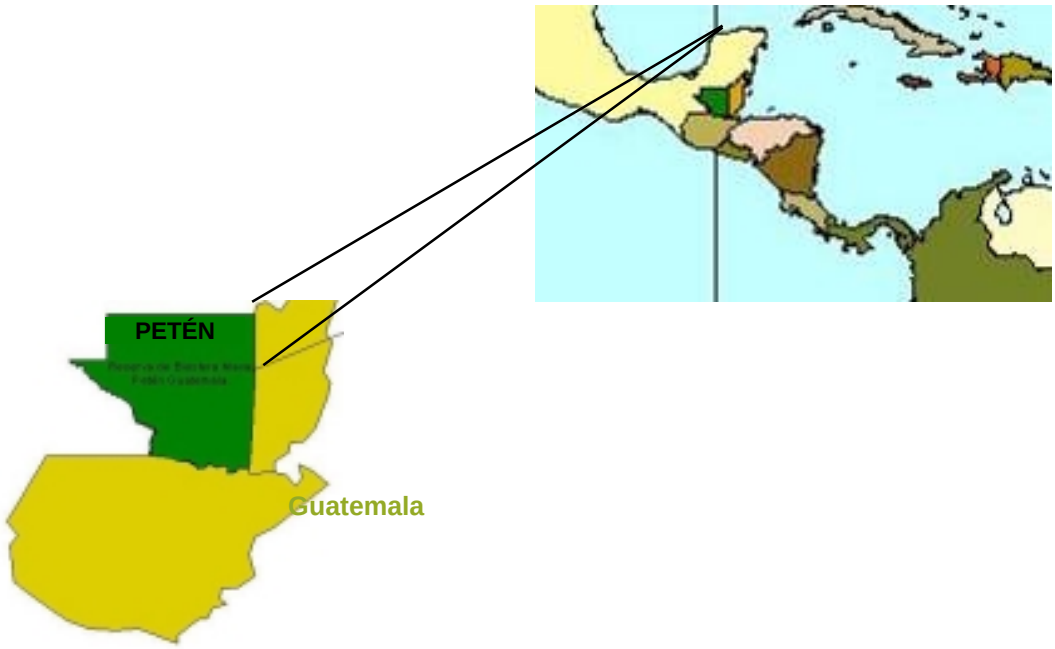
S

Location and ecology

The department of Petén is located in northern Guatemala; its boundaries are the border with Belize to the east, the border with Mexico to the north and west, and, internally, the departments of Alta Verapaz and Izabal to the south (Map 1). It is the largest department of Guatemala, covering 35,854 km^2. Lacking roads and covered with jungle, Petén was extremely isolated until the 1960s.

According to the official census, 366,735 people were living in Petén in 2002 (INE, 2002), most of them migrants from other departments. Half of the population is female and young and are Maya Indians from the Kekchi, Itzá and Mopán ethnic groups, living primarily in rural areas. This large territory is made up of at least two broad ecological zones – tropical moist forests and tropical wet forests – with variations in precipitation and seasonality (Universidad Rafael Landívar, 1984). Petén is known worldwide for its huge biological diversity and cultural wealth, with some 1,400 known plant species and approximately 450 animal species, including birds (Elías et al., 1997).

Map 1
Location of Petén in Guatemala.



Source: Modified from http://www.propeten.org/mapas.htm. Consulted 30 June 2004.

Petén (1954-1989): Assuming a new territorial role

This stage involved historical processes that brought about the institutional and environmental transformation of the Petén. The evolution of the Petén's territorial role coincided with its gradual integration into Guatemala's social and political life.

The once isolated, unknown jungle, which traditionally served for the extraction of chicle (*Manilkara spp.*) – beginning at the end of the 19th century – and other non-wood products (Schwartz, 2000), rapidly turned into a migrant-receiving area in the mid-20th century. Added to this was intense pressure on the agricultural frontier and serious national security problems due to the proliferation of activities related to organized crime, drug trafficking and the movement of undocumented migrants. This trend was in contrast to the conservation initiatives that resulted in the establishment of the MBR in 1990.

Until the 1950s, the Petén had been a territory effectively cut off from Guatemala's productive life. Its ecological wealth had fueled extractive activities, such as chicle tapping, illegal lumbering of precious wood and the indiscriminate hunting of wild animals such as lizards and turtles (Elías et al., 1997). Lacking the presence of government institutions to regulate development patterns in the region, the first human settlements began to grow up around the hunting of wild animals. It was at this time that communities including Carmelita and Uaxactún were founded, populated primarily by extractors and small farmers.

The Petén's territorial role began to change in 1954, turning it into what Elías et al. (1997) call "the escape valve for Guatemala's agrarian problems" by becoming the main supply of government land for poor, landless peasant and indigenous populations. This agrarian colonization policy was successfully promoted by the government during the time of military rule (1954-1986), and as a result, the Petén's population increased from approximately 25,000 inhabitants in the 1960s to an estimated 730,000 in 1999 (Shriar, 2001; Sundberg, 2003). The consequence of this was serious social conflict and ecological impact from cutting down the forest to grow subsistence crops and create cattle pastures.

The rural colonization policy was an attempt to control the conflicts caused by the demand for land in socially vulnerable regions, including the Verapaz region, the highlands and the Pacific coast. With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Enterprise for the Promotion and Development of El Petén (FYDEP) was created in 1959. This autonomous agency served as the only governmental entity in Petén from 1959 to 1987. FYDEP's objectives included the following (Schwartz, 2000):

- Integrate Petén into the nation, in light of its great historical isolation;
- Promote the colonization and economic development of the region through the sale of land;
- Harvest precious wood;
- Increase the production of basic grains in Guatemala.

According to Elías et al. (1997), FYDEP sold a total of 1,980,000 ha to 39,000 beneficiaries. Schwartz (2000: 30-32) and Elías et al. (1997) hold that FYDEP, charged with the task of selling land, gave preference to large plots for the middle- and upper-class mestizo population. Thus, the rural colonization policy led to strong pressure on the forests of southern Petén, since one of the requirements for obtaining a plot was to clear the forest and prepare the land for

planting. This practice caused a dramatic shift in land use, which led to the establishment of precarious human settlements on land that did not have the potential for long-term, sustained farming.

n addition, FYDEP was assigned to "plant" cooperatives along the banks of the Pasión and Usumacinta rivers to keep Mexico from building a hydroelectric plant.[1] During this period, oil exploration also began in an area between what are now two large national parks – Laguna del Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón.

The dynamics of production in Petén were closely linked to extractive activities at different scales, complemented by extensive livestock production and subsistence agriculture. Foreign companies and Guatemalan private companies controlled the extraction of chicle, timber and oil, whereas small local groups were involved in harvesting and commercializing xate palm and allspice, illegal logging, subsistence agriculture and extensive livestock production. The power groups of the moment included chicle companies, the petroleum industry, loggers, landowners and the military, which enjoyed great autonomy in the absence of government regulation. In addition, a large organized labor force was growing up around chicle production.

By the late 1980s, the agrarian colonization policy was beginning to run out of steam, while at the same time international conservation tendencies were coming to the forefront. Organizations such as Conservation International (CI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Rodale Institute and CARE International (Sundberg, 1998) started to exert pressure to stem the loss of biodiversity from settlement patterns and uncontrolled extraction. Together with international cooperation agencies, including USAID, which had supported rural colonization, they launched an offensive to protect Petén forestland. Adding to plans for building a highway to Petén, which would facilitate access by human groups to the territory, were conservationist concerns to protect the Petén jungle, which provided the initial driving force for establishing the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

During this period, several guerrilla corridors ran through areas of the Petén. Added to this, was a strong presence by the army, the state institution that historically had had the greatest coverage, resources and presence in the territory (MINUGUA, 2004b). During the war, the army had large military bases in the region, including the Centro de Adiestramiento y Operaciones Especiales Kaibil, the training center for the Guatemalan army's elite counterinsurgency forces, known as Kaibiles. Additionally, thousands of men were organized into civil patrols, which took orders from the army.

The militarization of Petén created an environment conducive to a proliferation of accusations and vengeance among local residents, especially from the stiff competition between colonizers for access to land. Thirteen massacres took place during the war years, including the one known as the Dos Erres Massacre in La Libertad in 1982, where a Kaibil commando unit murdered 350 residents, including children, accusing them of belonging to the guerrilla forces (Amnesty International, 2002).

Because of the violence, thousands of families abandoned their communities and fled into the jungle; fearing continued persecution, many went to Mexico as refugees, staying there for some 10 years. This situation in general led to a further breakdown in governance across the

[1] The establishment of these cooperatives was motivated by the Guatemalan government's desire to prevent Mexico from building a hydroelectric plant on its side of the Usumacinta River and to prevent the immigration of Mexican peasants (Schwartz, 2000).

country and to increasing pressure to seek solutions to the social causes of the conflict.

Establishment of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (1989-1994)

In the 1970s, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established the Man and the Biosphere Program, which set up the World Network of Biosphere Reserves [2] (UNESCO, 1996). Central America, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, defined a regional conservation policy based on the environmental agenda developed at the Earth Summit. Using this framework, biosphere reserves have been established in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Complementary to these policies, other plans are being developed to ensure the future of woodlands lying outside the reserve areas.[3]

It is during this period that Petén went from being Guatemala's agricultural frontier to being a conservation zone of international interest. According to Klein (2000), the international community and the Guatemalan government were very concerned with conserving the Petén's jungle areas, leading to an institutional overhaul that began with dismantling FYDEP and establishing new government institutions.

In 1989, the National Council on Protected Areas (CONAP)[4] was established as the coordinating agency for the Guatemalan System of Protected Areas (SIGAP). In this framework, and with USAID support, CONAP established the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in 1990, through Decree 5-90 (Klein, 2000; Soza, 2003). The MBR covers 2,112,940 ha and has led to a new distribution of the uses of the territory (UNESCO, 2002).

Thus, CONAP became the most important government body in Petén. The new institutional structure was centered on regulating land use, with a strong focus on the protected areas and extraction zones. In order to control pressure on the land and conflicts from the eviction of inhabitants from the protected zones, the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation (INTA) inherited FYDEP's land transfer functions, although with much less authority and fewer resources (Elías et al., 1997).

According to CONAP (1996:15-16), these were the objectives for management of the MBR:

- Conserve the archeological and natural wealth of the MBR, so that they can provide opportunities for sustainable development to the country's present and future generations;
- Safeguard the different tropical ecosystems in the MBR;
- Develop sustainable use of the existing natural and cultural resources in order to provide long-term development options;
- Provide sustainable economic activities within the MBR and surrounding region, in order to improve community living conditions ;
- Conserve the esthetic value of the MBR for the purpose of promoting tourism in a natural environment.

CONAP became the governing body charged with enforcing regulations and the Master Plan

[2] Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof, internationally recognized as such. They are intended to fulfill three complementary functions: conservation, sustainable economic and human development, and logistical support for research and education (UNESCO, 1996).

[3] These include the Forestry Action Plan for Central America (PAFCA) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Maya Forestry Action Plan and the Madeleña Regional Program of CATIE (Pasos, in preparation).

[4] CONAP is a public entity that reports directly to the president of Guatemala. (Decreto Legislativo 4-89, y sus reformas).

for the Maya Biosphere Reserve. For this purpose, CONAP set up its main office in Flores, Petén, enabling it to be closely involved in zoning, management and monitoring.

Using the prevailing conservation categories of the time and observing the conditions for belonging to the biosphere reserves network, CONAP zoned the MBR with the objective of encouraging and executing "activities and programs conducive to preventing negative effects on the natural resources in the Maya Biosphere Reserve" (CONAP, 1996:17). Following is a description taken from CONAP (1996:17) of each of the three zones that were established for this purpose (see Map 2):

1) **Core Zones (CZ).** "These are strict conservation areas that make up the heart of the MBR. They are strictly protected wild and archeological areas that are kept free of human intervention. Demarcation of the strict conservation zones shall be done in the field, this being a priority activity; likewise, CONAP will define a management strategy for the purpose of interconnecting the CZs, in order to improve fulfillment of the objectives for the MBR."

2) **Multiple Use Zones (MUZ).** "These are areas that function as a buffer for the core zones and are intended for a variety of sustainable activities and uses, in accordance with their resource potential. They constitute approximately 50% of the Maya Biosphere Reserve and are devoted to the sustainable extraction of xate palm (*Chamaedorea spp.*), allspice (*Pimienta dioica*), chicle (*Manilkara spp.*), wicker (*Philodendron spp.*) and other wild plants, seeds, wood and fauna, and contain restricted areas for carrying out traditional activities and the utilization of non-renewable resources under strict controls. The MUZ includes the Special Use areas and Cultural and Archeological Preservation areas."

3) **Buffer Zone (BZ).** "The primary objective of the Buffer Zone (BZ) is to relieve pressure on the MBR through the stabilization of appropriate uses of the land and natural resources in the area adjacent to the MBR. In this zone, the neighboring communities will be oriented through environmental education and rural extension programs about sustainable ways to use the land that do not depend on the exploitation of the MBR's natural resources, and thereby, permit their conservation. CONAP will collaborate with public and private organizations to provide the services and infrastructure necessary in the BZ in order to satisfy the basic needs of the rural population settled in the zone. Attention will be given to seeking a solution to land tenure, in a way that will provide greater security for the occupants and will reduce pressure on the MBR."

Map 2
Zoning of the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

This land use plan allows for the controlled use and extraction of forest resources in the multiple use and buffer zones. However, this zoning does not take into account the existence of human settlements or the complex social, political and economic dynamics of Petén. Instead, a restrictive policy was enacted that indefinitely suspended all extractive activities, pending the development of an acceptable master plan to regulate the use and management of the natural resources.

The result was that the stiff restrictions over the protected areas led to serious conflicts with the population because it included the imposition of guards and confiscation of timber and firewood, clashing with the social pressure for access to the land. Matters became even more complicated with the wave of internal migration in the 1990s caused by several factors, including the economic crisis and the return of persons displaced by the armed conflict (Elías et al., 1997).

This new wave of migration set off "*agarradas*" or illegal land invasions, which led to serious clashes with government authorities. Conflicts also arose with the communities that had remained in the reserve. This is when CONAP realized how difficult it is to manage a reserve that has people inside. Strong pressure from people who rejected the imposition of this ex-

clusionary model led to serious outbreaks of violence; CONAP specialists were targeted, including the burning of automobiles and guard posts and even kidnappings (Cuellar, 2004).

In support of the MBR's management, the government of Guatemala signed an agreement with USAID to create the Maya Biosphere Project, opening the door to the involvement of many conservation-minded NGOs. These include CI, TNC, UICN and CARE, which are implementing project components for environmental education, enterprise development and park protection. Later on, other international organizations got involved, including the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) and the Rodale Institute. Another group of national NGOs was created to work as partners with the international conservation NGOs; these include Naturaleza para la Vida (NPV), the Asociación Centro Maya, and others (Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ, 2000).

The making of the Community Forest Concessions (1994-1996)

Of the 2,112,940 ha in the MBR, 445,804 are being managed by community forest concessions. The communities that became concession-holders vary widely in their ethnic origin, composition and development. At a minimum, the following types of settlements can be distinguished:

- "Petenero" communities; these have their origins in extractive activities, becoming established in the region during the chicle era between the 1920s and 1950s (e.g. Carmelita, Uaxactún and Melchor de Mencos);
- Peasants of indigenous and mestizo extraction in search of access to land for farming and livestock, from the 1960s to the present (Elías et al., 1997);
- Indigenous communities from different ethnic groups,[5] that were displaced during the war and then returned in the mid-1990s (Elías et al., 1997).

Some of the communities that became concessions contain a mix of these groups, making them quite heterogeneous, including different types of land tenure. Many of the communities got land through FYDEP programs; others are settlements founded by repatriated people and demobilized combatants from the armed conflict, and other communities started with "*agarradas*.".

The establishment of the multiple use zone in the MBR raised the expectations of the different social groups in the territory, especially loggers, soldiers, communities and migrants.

Therefore, how was it decided that the MUZ would be an area managed by community forest concessions? This is not an easy question to answer; however, there were four key contextual factors that influenced the formation of the community forest concessions:

- The signing of the Peace Accords contributed to the visibility, international aid and development of community management processes during the administration of president Álvaro Arzú (1996-2000);
- Given the crisis of having an ungovernable region, where there were conflicts with peasant communities, CONAP was open to alternatives for the communities in an effort to help resolve these problems;

[5] Principalmente Qeqchi, Mopan, Itza, Canjobal, Jacalteco, Mam, Quiche, Chuj, Katchiquel, Pocomchi.

- The community concessions were one of the most viable options, given the conservation objectives of the time. The urgency of the situation and efforts to preserve the Petén's natural resources by CONAP, USAID and international conservation NGOs led them to reject concessions to industrial logging operations as an option;
- The growing pressure from organized communities fighting for land tenure and access to forest concessions.

These elements lead us to examine in detail the historic juncture at which the MBR was created. In the early 1990s, the region had reached the point where it was ungovernable; at the same time, the centralized model of the FYDEP had become outdated and the territory lacked alternatives for developing. The agrarian situation was worsening with unfettered encroachment on the agricultural frontier, intense land speculation and continuing conflicts over access to land.

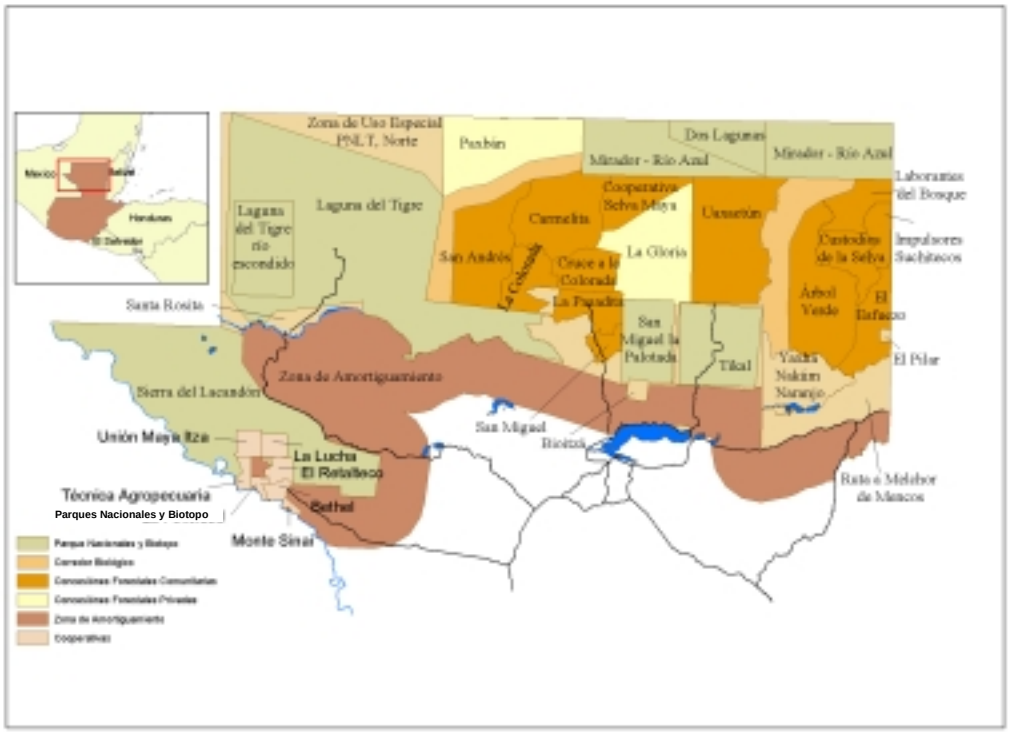
In the department's agricultural zones, there was strong pressure from powerful groups demanding control of the land (MINUGUA, 2004b). Meanwhile, the illegal extraction of timber and other products continued unpunished, along with looting of archeological sites. On top of this, there was insecurity due to the proliferation of transit routes for undocumented migrants, contraband and drug trafficking. Despite the strong presence of the army, the government did not appear to be capable of responding to any of these problems, which increased societal demands for access to land and for more attention to be paid to the territory. This discontent manifested itself in roadblocks, public protests and takeovers of oil refineries (Elías et al., 1997).

During this time, with the territory ungovernable, Guatemala was going through one of the most transcendental moments in its recent political history with the signing of the Peace Accords in December 1996. Pressure for human rights contributed to the stipulations accepted by the Guatemalan government during the talks leading up to the Accords, and access to the use of natural resources became one of the government's commitments for their fulfillment. A deadline was set to grant natural resource management concessions by 1999 to small- and medium-size groups of organized peasants on 100,000 ha in multiple use areas for the purposes of sustainable forest management, protected areas, ecotourism and other activities compatible with the sustainable use of natural resources (MINUGUA, 2004a).

Furthermore, the government needed to create the necessary social conditions for the reintegration of people displaced by the war, in addition to ensuring a stable society as the guarantor of the development of an incipient democracy.

With regard to conservation interests, the MBR was a key component for securing the natural parks model in the Central American region. However, land from the MUZ needed to be allocated, since the industrial sector would not stop pushing to obtain concessions. CONAP and its main partners (international conservation organizations and USAID) refused to give concessions to industrial logging outfits since there were indications that they would destroy the forest if they were granted access. This framed a rationale against the loggers that was not necessarily pro-community. Giving the concessions to the communities was turning into a "lesser evil" for conservation interests.

Map 3
Location of Community Concessions in the Multiple Use Zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve



As will be seen further on, during this point in time organized communities already existed that were fighting for access to natural resources in the Multiple Use Zone and were putting pressure on CONAP. CONAP eventually accepted the idea of community concessions, seeing them perhaps as the only alternative to the industrial loggers. However, both the private sector and the government doubted the communities were capable of managing the forest, given that there had been no prior experience in Petén to demonstrate the viability of organized communities managing forests. The logging companies took advantage of this doubt, discrediting the community groups and proposing that the forest concessions be of an industrial nature, which would exclude the community groups, limiting them to providing a labor force for the industries.

Despite this resistance, CONAP established the community concessions and by 2000 it had allocated a considerable percentage of the Multiple Use Zone as concessions to community organizations along with two industrial concessions (Map 3) (Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ, 2000).[6] The concessions are granted through 25-year renewable contracts; they permit the rational use of wood, the extraction of non-wood products such as xate palm leaf and chicle, and tourism. However, the land continues to be owned by the government.

Obtaining forest certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was a requirement

[6] The only industrial concessions that stayed were the BAREM and Comercial GIBOR companies.

set by CONAP for retaining the forest concession. CONAP supports forest certification because it ensures strict control over forest management, which is consistent with its conservation objectives. However, for the communities, certification by itself does not ensure better markets and higher prices for the wood, especially with the more valuable species (Nittler and Tschinkel, 2005).

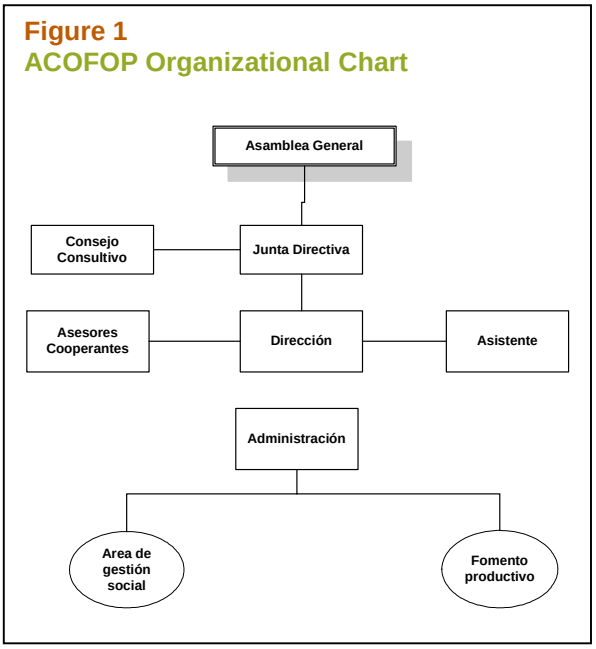
Origin and development of ACOFOP (1996-2004)

Community organizing has been crucial to the process of negotiating access to the concessions and subsequent community forest management. Much of the organizing ability shown by ACOFOP has its history in the chicle tappers union organization, the Union of Chicle Tappers and Wood Workers (SUCHILMA). However, several of the strongest community leaders are not linked to the trade union; rather they came out of community protests demanding access to forest resources (timber, firewood and non-wood products). These protests arose mainly in the communities that remained inside the protected zones once the MBR was declared in 1990, and they were in reaction to the threat that the government was possibly going to grant the concessions to the private sector.

In 1995, some of the community leaders who had been participating in the negotiations over the zoning of the MBR proposed forming a common front to defend their rights as potential beneficiaries of the forest concessions. They formed the Consultative Council of Forest Communities of Petén (CONCOFOP[7]), which was supported by SUCHILMA. CONCOFOP became the coordinator of the community organizations demanding access to concessions even though it did not have legal status. When it became a legally registered association, the name was changed to the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP).

ACOFOP began as a not-for-profit secondary-level organization, originally made up of 22 organizations from 30 communities located in the Multiple Use Zone and the Buffer Zone. Its organizational structure consists of a General Assembly as the highest authority, comprised of the active associates; a nine-member Board of Directors made up of the legal representatives of the community organizations and led by a President, who is also ACOFOP's legal representative; and the Executive Director, in charge of administration and management (Cortave, 2003) (see Figure 1). The organization's primary strategic goal is to promote the socioeconomic development of the forest communities through sustainable use of the forest. This objective is put into practice through the organization's two main divisions: Community Development, which attends to strengthening social and human capital and advocacy work; and Produc-

Figure 1
ACOFOP Organizational Chart



[7] Este se forma con representantes de las comunidades de Uaxactun, Carmelita, Bethel, un grupo de extractivistas del barrio Suchitán de Melchor de Mencos y nueve comunidades del municipio de Flores.

tion Promotion, in charge of the work related to forest management and biodiversity.

One of ACOFOP's strong points has been its capacity to be involved in national networks and Central American organizing groups. ACOFOP participated in the formation and development of the Central American Indigenous and Peasant Coordinator of Communal Agroforestry (ACICAFOC) (Cortave, 2003). ACICAFOC is a community-based organization that brings together different kinds of small and medium-size agroforestry, indigenous and peasant farmer producer groups from Central America that are working for natural resource access, use and management (ACICAFOC, 2005).

Negotiating the concessions

Community access to the forest concessions involved a long process in which ACOFOP needed ample bargaining power in its dealings with the government, environmental organizations and industrialists. Despite the commitments set forth in the Peace Accords, the government was highly skeptical of the community organizations. Furthermore, the timber industry argued that the communities did not have technical, administrative and business capacity or were not sufficiently organized for managing the concessions.

Legally, the existing regulatory framework for adjudicating the forest concessions limited the community organizations' expectations for access. Facing this adverse scenario, ACOFOP focused the debate over community rights on forest resource access and management, proposing community forest concessions as an alternative to the logging industry's extraction model.

This debate has brought out different perspectives on natural resource access and management. On the one hand, the strict conservation perspective sought to displace the population groups living in the reserve, which was seen as serving scientific conservation objectives. On the other, the lumbermen wanted access to the resources in order to continue large-scale logging. Finally, the communities wanted to ensure their access to land and to the forest in order to consolidate their livelihoods.

ACOFOP successfully swayed the decisions made by CONAP, which came up with a model that is more accessible to the communities and at the same time takes into consideration the commitments assumed by the central government. A consultation process was held that led to a new regulation: "Policies on granting concessions for the use and management of renewable natural resources in the multiple use zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve." This regulation requires the communities to have an NGO to provide them with technical assistance and to ensure proper use of the resources. It also needs to consider the integrated management of the concession areas so that the communities can utilize the resources in accordance with their management plans. Conversely, the industrial concessions are limited to being strictly forest-related (Cortave, 2003). Finally, after 10 years, ACOFOP won the adjudication of 12 community concessions.

Table 1
ACOFOP Community Forest Concessions: General Characteristics and Level of Development

Organization	Size of Managed Forest (ha)	No. of Members	Ha per Member	Characteristics
More Advanced Organizations				
Sociedad Civil Organización, Manejo y Conservación Uaxactun (OMYC)	83, 558	244	373	**Area granted in concession** • More land and biodiversity (77% of the ACOFOP community concession land) • In La Técnica and UMI, the management areas are owned by the coop. **Institutional development and social capital** • Greater internal cohesion, trade association activity and presence in ACOFOP • Greater political advocacy capacity • Institutional trend toward rotating leadership • Recent specialization of functions and differentiation between trade association and entrepreneurial roles **Human capital** • Higher human capital level (80% of members are literate) **Livelihood strategies** • Diversification of livelihood strategies: forest management is the principal strategy (70%), in combination with agricultural and livestock activities and management of non-wood products • Initial steps toward community enterprise management
Sociedad Civil Árbol Verde	64,973	364	178.49	
Cooperativa Carmelita	53,797	122	440.95	
Asociación Forestal Integral San Andrés (AFISAP)	51,939.84	174	298.50	
Sociedad Civil El Esfuerzo	25, 386.48	39	650.94	
Sociedad Civil Custodios de la Selva (CUSTOSEL)	21, 176.74	96	220.59	
Sociedad Civil Laborantes del Bosque	19, 390	78	248.59	
Sociedad Civil Impulsores Suchitecos	12, 117	27	448.77	
Cooperativa Unión Maya Itza	5, 923	138	42.92	
Cooperativa La Técnica	4,607	43	107.14	
Sub-total in hectares	**342,865.06 ha (77%)**			
Underdeveloped Organizations				
Asociación Forestal La Colorada	27,067	39	694.02	**Area granted in concession** • 23% of ACOFOP community concession land **Institutional development and social capital** • Breakdown of the group, conflicts, cronyism, favoritism • Centralization of leadership • No differentiation between trade association and entrepreneurial roles • Little presence in ACOFOP **Human capital** • Low human capital levels (over 40% of members illiterate) **Livelihood strategies** • Greater dependence on agriculture and livestock (80%) • Low level of forest management knowledge • Low enterprise management capacity
Sociedad Civil Selva Maya del Norte	24,708	102	242.24	
Asociación Forestal Cruce a la Colorada	20, 469	65	313.90	
Asociación de Productores La Pasadita	18, 817	110	171.06	
Asociación Forestal San Miguel La Palotada	7,039	30	243.63	
Cooperativa La Lucha	3,931	52	75.60	
Cooperativa Los Laureles	2,970	57	52.1	
Cooperativa La Felicidad	1,341	20	67.05	
Cooperativa Monte Sinaí	1,048	22	47.63	
Asociación civil del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (ACIMARNAL)	358	428	0.83	
Cooperativa Nuevos Horizontes	900	107	8.41	
Red de difusores agroforestales	Private Parcels	10	nd	
Sub-total in hectares	**108,684 (23%)**			
OTHER: Sociedad Civil Amigos del Bosque	To be determined		ND	Community Forest Concession in process of adjudication

Source: Prepared by author; based on ACOFOP, 2003 updated by ACOFOP, 2005.

During the negotiating stage, many of the ACOFOP organizations still did not have the legal status that would have enabled them to seek a concession. Therefore, one of the other things that ACOFOP did was to aid several of the organizations in legalizing their status, channeling technical, financial and human resources so that they could qualify to become legally constituted as associations, civil societies or cooperatives.

The groups in ACOFOP

ACOFOP's main strong points have been its ability to organize, to lobby and to represent the interests of the community organizations. It

must be remembered that these organizations come from different backgrounds with different livelihood strategies consistent with their history of living in the territory. This history explains the way they manage resources, their degree of development and their relationship with outside actors (see Table 1).

"Petenero" Communities

The oldest communities are in the municipalities of San Andrés and Melchor de Mencos and Uaxactún in the municipality of Flores, which originated as settlements along the routes for extracting chicle, timber, allspice and xate palm. These communities identify themselves as "Peteneros," given their longer residence in the region.

In the municipality of San Andrés, Carmelita was founded as a community in 1925 as a receiving center from which chicle was sent to Barrios Port by air. Between 1976 and 1978, industrial logging operations began and in the 1980s, xate palm leaf collection started increasing (SmartWood Program 2003d). Cooperativa Carmelita and Sociedad Civil Selva Maya del Norte are located in this area.

In the 1940s, what is now the city of Melchor de Mencos was still a chicle settlement with many Mexicans living there. There were no overland routes to the rest of Guatemala, nor control over cross-border traffic with Belize, which aided the illegal trade in wood, non-wood species and other products.

Forest utilization in this area began in the late 19th century with English companies logging primarily mahogany and cedar. From the 1960s to the 1980s, logging was done by local companies. By the 1990s, due to the lack of effective government, illicit logging by Belizean and Mexican companies was completely out of control. Many of the residents of Melchor participated in these activities, which paradoxically gave them a good knowledge of the forest and its resources. People with this common background make up the organizations Impulsores Suchitecos, Laborantes del Bosque, El Esfuerzo and Custodios de la Selva.

The community of Uaxactún, in the municipality of Flores, is in the Classic Maya city of the same name, located between the great Maya cities of Tikal and Calakmul. It was originally a chicle camp, where the inhabitants also harvested xate palm and allspice.

Uaxactún developed as a chicle community that has maintained a harmonious relationship with nature and a certain degree of independence from regional society. The community was highly identified with the forest, making it difficult to adopt forest management because this meant adhering to greater control and accepting the utilization of timber, which they considered a threat to the utilization of non-wood products. However, harvesting of wood was accepted as a strategy for dealing with the growing depletion of non-wood products and is done in only a part of the concession area (SmartWood Program, 2003b).

Its location in an area of great archeological importance has also led to its involvement in archeological and tourism activities. The Uaxactún Management and Conservation Organization (OMYC), which continues to be involved in these activities, recognizes that the community has still not developed a timber utilization culture (ACICAFOC et al., 2004).

Communities arising from peasant land colonization dynamics

The potential for extraction activities combined with the rural colonization policy led communities to form along the road to Carmelita – San Andrés, Cruce a Dos Aguadas, La Pasadita and

San Miguel La Palotada – whose livelihoods are based on the extraction of non-wood forest products such as xate[8] chicle and allspice, which they combine with subsistence agriculture and small-scale cattle ranching. This is the setting for the formation of the following forest associations – La Colorada, Cruce a la Colorada, La Pasadita, San Andrés and San Miguel La Palotada.

A similar history gave rise to nine communities in the municipality of Flores, which belong to the Sociedad Civil Árbol Verde.[9] Started 50 years ago as chicle camps, they were later inhabited by peasants who migrated from around the country. The residents have different occupations; primarily they are farmers and small-scale cattle ranchers, carpenters, wood artisans and public employees (SmartWood Program, 2003c).

In the last four years, following their obtaining of the concession, Árbol Verde has developed impressively in its forest management, commercialization and the development of a forest culture integrated into traditional livelihoods.

Several cooperatives were formed in the municipality of La Libertad—La Técnica, Monte Sinaí, La Felicidad, Los Laureles and La Lucha. Their members were originally landless indigenous people and mestizos from the country's highlands, south and east. The Petén was valued by them for its good land for farming and cattle raising. In addition, the founding of some of these communities was encouraged by the government's strategy to colonize the banks of the Usumacinta River and counteract Mexican attempts to install hydroelectric plants that threatened to flood Guatemalan land.

In the 1970s, serious conflicts with other settlers arose over access to land. When the war worsened, many peasants' names were turned in to the army accusing them of being agitators and guerrillas. The inhabitants of cooperatives such as La Técnica and Bethel suffered grave human rights violations, including the massacres in Dos Erres and Los Josefinos in the 1980s (MINUGUA, 2004). Whole families, including children and the elderly, fled the cooperatives into the jungle, eventually ending up in Mexico where they lived as refugees for 10 years.

Communities formed as a result of war and uprooting

The war's end led to new types of settlements and access to land, including groups of repatriated refugees and settlements started by demobilized combatants.

The Unión Maya-Itzá (UMI) is a farming cooperative that began with the repatriation of ethnic groups displaced by the conflict that spent over a decade living as refugees in southern Mexico. In 1995, the government, through the National Fund for Peace (FONAPAZ), granted La Quetzal farm to 225 families from different ethnic groups, natives of Huehuetenango, Alta and Baja Verapaz, Quiché and Petén. The settlement, located to the southeast of the Sierra del Lacandón National Park, was founded in a jungle area with no overland access route or infrastructure.

The UMI is a Private Management Unit where the families have developed a strong sense of community life, achieving notable improvements in the community, including transport services and small community stores. When

[8] En la zona existen 5 especies diferentes de palma. Actualmente esta actividad beneficia a unas 4.000 familias de Petén y las labores se realizan durante todo el año. Un chatero extrae un promedio de 650 gruesas por mes (la gruesa es igual a 90 palmas). La extracción de xate esta regulada por el CONAP. www.acicafoc.net/pymescomunitarias/arbolverde.php

[9] Ixlú, El Remate, Macanche, El Zapote, Las Viñas, El Naranjo, El Caoba, El Porvenir y El Zocotzal.

they first arrived, they were not familiar with forest living or the potential types of production. The Peteneros were the ones who showed them how to extract xate, which is currently one of their main sources of income (SmartWood Program, 2003a; Aldana and Matías, 2004).

Finally, the community of demobilized excombatants in the Cooperativa Nuevo Horizonte, in the municipality of Santa Ana, is made up of 107 families and has made significant strides in organizing and developing the cooperative for traditional crop farming, cattle raising and crop diversification. This cooperative functions as a Private Management Unit and is one of the ACOFOP organizations (MINUGUA, 2004b).

The origin of the communities is important for understanding how they have evolved in managing their concessions and in their relationships with the conservation NGOs that have been in the forefront of the establishment and management of the MBR. According to Sundberg (2003), conservation NGOs have characterized the Peteneros as being the group that makes appropriate use of the forest. In their conservationist discourse, they hold up the Peteneros as models for sustainable practices, which other immigrant groups supposedly do not use. This last statement is highly questionable, since many of the forest management and farming practices are common to Peteneros and more recent arrivals, since these population groups have been sharing their experiences and practices with resource management.

Furthermore, their origins and livelihood strategies affected how the communities responded to the formation of the concessions. For the Melchor de Mencos groups – Impulsores Suchitecos, Laborantes del Bosque, Custodios de la Selva and El Esfuerzo – the concession enabled them to legalize their logging operations, at which they were already proficient (Reyna et al., 1999). The oldest extractor communities, such as Uaxactún and Carmelita, had long experience in the region and they were very familiar with the territory and with the plant and animal species that live there. Although this does not necessarily translate into "better" forest management, it does signify valuable information for developing the management plans. Even so, in the beginning, forest management was so new and unknown that it aroused people's suspicions.

Conversely, for the communities arising out of rural colonization dynamics, forest management activities were not linked to their livelihood strategies, which were more related to agriculture or the extraction of non-wood products. In general, it has been more difficult for these groups to adapt to the scope and implications of forest management. Additionally, the new settlements formed by repatriates were essentially counting on their organizing ability to recreate their community life in an unknown, rustic setting.

These differences were not taken into account when deciding upon the characteristics of the management plans and types of accompaniment needed. The technical support package was essentially homogenous for all the concession-holding groups.[10] Likewise, the territories in the concessions were just as diverse in terms of the characteristics of the woodlands, the quality of the species and the size of the concessions. However, even using this homogeneous model, the overall management of the concessions has had considerable social and environmental success, which will be discussed below.

[10] The community organizations incorporated into three different types of organizations: cooperatives, civil societies and producer associations. The NGOs in charge of accompanying the communities, as well as their organizational and historical characteristics, greatly influenced how they chose to incorporate.

Categorization of the ACOFOP member groups

ACOFOP has very strong organizing and lobbying capabilities and ably represents the interests of the community organizations. It also works on strengthening community management through training sessions, exchange visits, legal aid, production training, product commercialization, technical assistance and certification (Kurzel and Müller, 2004). However, despite the general success of the experience, the organizations still display different levels of development.

In addition to differences in community origin, there are other factors that explain the differing degrees of progress made in community management of the forest. Even though this classification may change as the organizations change, there is a group of organizations that are more advanced and a group that exhibits a series of weaknesses and that needs to strengthen their institutional framework. The following classification is the result of self-evaluations done by ACOFOP and is based on a combination of these variables: a) size of the concession's landholdings, b) level of social capital and institutional development, c) level of human capital, and d) relationship of the communities to forest management as a livelihood strategy (see Table 1).

More advanced groups

Generally, these organizations have the largest concession areas with the greatest biodiversity; they manage approximately 70% of the community concession area and engage in livelihood strategies closely related to forest management. These include most of the Petenero communities, which have a longer relationship with the forest, and also the Sociedad Civil Árbol Verde, founded by highly-organized migrant peasant-farming communities.

Certainly, social capital is a critical element for the success of community forest management and provides the foundation on which the organizations and ACOFOP develop as institutions. For example, in the case of the Unión Maya Itzá, despite having a small tract of forest, they maintain strong social cohesion, which contributes significantly to strengthening community management and residents' social welfare.

Furthermore, these groups actively participate in ACOFOP and have made significant achievements in developing their institutional arrangements and managing their production. They have invested in raising their members' level of human capital and, in terms of their organizational development, have greater internal cohesion and rotation of leadership. With these elements in their favor, they have begun a process of specializing functions and differentiating trade association and business roles.

Underdeveloped groups

In other organizations, the members need to adapt better to community forest management and improve their level of institutional development. They currently show little knowledge of forest management and their livelihood strategies still depend, for the most part, on subsistence agriculture. These are concessions formed by migrant peasant communities and settlements and include the groups with the fewest hectares of forest.

These factors are relevant, but do not appear to be determinants of their weaknesses. Several of these groups have similar-size concessions to the successful groups and the case of Árbol Verde shows that peasant migrants can successfully tackle the challenge of forest management.

In addition to internalizing and accepting forest management, another critical element is the need to strengthen social and human capital. Infighting, leadership through cronyism and a low level of participation in ACOFOP is common among these groups. Members continue to have low social capital and as a consequence they have difficulties in their organizational arrangements, which have not managed to differentiate between trade association and business roles.

Funding and Cooperation for Community Forest Concessions

International Cooperation Funding and Influence in Petén

Donor and international cooperation agencies have had a strong influence over conservation and development processes in Petén and in the making of the MBR. Donor community strategies and input have been varied and have been evolving over time. In this section we present information about the main donor organizations, the type of activities they fund and their evolution in the recent history of Petén. Further on, we specifically discuss the role of funding with relation to the different models for technical and institutional cooperation. It should be noted that this analysis about cooperation is only representative for the case of Petén, and cannot be generalized to other sites. However, it does provide information about cooperation agencies that could be useful for other studies.

Based on different sources, we estimate that between 1989 and 2003 there has been a direct investment of US$92 million for projects in the MBR zone from USAID, the IDB, the KFW of Germany and matching funds from the government of Guatemala (CCAD-RUTA, 2000; Klein, 2000 and Chemonics-BIOFOR, 2003). Furthermore, the Ford Foundation invested a total of US$470,000 between 1999 and 2004 (Barry, 2004) and the Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation of Holland (ICCO) contributed US$600,000 between 2000 and 2005. In both cases, this aid went directly to ACOFOP. It should be clarified that these figures are incomplete and underestimate the total investment in the region, since we know that other donors and foundations have funded projects in the region. However, reliable documentation has not been found on the amounts invested by these other organizations (see Table 2).

Table 2
Principal cooperation assistance projects in the MBR and forest concessions

Project	Agency	Years	Amount
Principal Projects from Official Cooperation Agencies			
Maya Biosphere Project	USAID/CONTRAPARTES	1990-2002	US$45 million
Sustainable Development Project	BID	1998-2002	US$ 22 million
PROSELVA	KFW	1998-2000	US$ 30.8 million
CENTRO MAYA	USAID	1998	US$ 135,000
CATIE/CONAP	USAID	1998	US$ 1 million
OLAFO (End Phase)	Países Escandinavos	1999	US$ 82,000
BIOFOR	USAID	2002-2004	US$ 8.9 million
Main Agreements with ACOFOP for Community Development			
N/A	FORD FOUNDATION	1999-2004	US$ 470,000
N/A	ICCO	2000-2005	US$ 600,000

Source: Prepared by author, based on CCAD-RUTA, with data from Ford Foundation and ACOFOP.

USAID Involvement in the Conservation and Development of Petén [11]

USAID has been one of the most important actors involved in funding cooperation projects and activities in Petén. USAID support to the Petén region began when FYDEP was being formed, in the mid-1950s (Elías et al., 1997). At that time, financial aid was directed toward setting up the Petén's first institutional structure, for the purpose of turning this territory into a receiving area for peasant groups and for increasing basic grain production.

In the late 1980's, the focus of the Guatemalan government and aid from international cooperation agencies shifted toward natural resource conservation. This is when the idea for what would become the MBR began to germinate. Since then, USAID has become the main partner of international conservation agencies, such as CI, TNC and WWF, for designing and implementing the MBR. With USAID funding and the conservation agencies' approach, CONAP was formed and other key partners were recruited, such as CATIE, for managing the forest reserve. USAID's investment for this purpose totaled US$31.2 million between 1990 and 2001 (Klein, 2000). The initial contribution made by USAID and its partners was focused on conservation technical assistance. CONAP and national and international conservation NGOs received funding directly for working with community-based organizations. The funding was not aimed at developing or providing training in financial and administrative management for the communities or for ACOFOP.

[11] The USAID data is more detailed than that of other donors because it was available from the reports of Chemonics, the main executing agency for USAID funding for Petén. Also quite useful was the "Inventory of Environmental Projects in Central America – National Report for Guatemala," done by CCAD and RUTA (CCAD-RUTA, 2000).

In 2002, USAID financial aid shifted once again toward direct development of the community forest concessions. This was done through the Biodiversity and Sustainable Forestry (BIOFOR) project, which focused on strengthening the administrative and financial capacity of the concessions through the creation of the "Community Forestry Concessions Enterprise" (FORESCOM), for which USAID contributed US$8.9 million in the 2002-2004 period (Chemonics-BIOFOR, 2003). Even though the idea for FORESCOM came from ACOFOP and it developed under their organizational wing, it was administered by BIOFOR project staff and was designed to operate with considerable resources.

Although it should be acknowledged that this shift in USAID investment meant that funding became more oriented toward community-building and self-management, this project also had its limitations. In the project's final phase, in early 2004, ACOFOP was facing the challenge of having to assume the high costs of a FORESCOM that had developed with substantial financial resources. The community-based organizations realized they could not cover the costs of an arrangement of this magnitude and they had to restructure it to make it economically viable given their conditions.

In total, USAID invested at least US$40 million in Petén between 1990 and 2004. From ACOFOP's point of view, this funding helped the concession-holders to acquire technical knowledge and strengthen their community-based enterprise initiatives. However, the majority of these funds were not assigned directly to the community-based organizations or to ACOFOP, but rather to national and international NGOs. Therefore, the impact of USAID's investment on community-building and self-management processes has been modest in rela-

tion to its total investment in the MBR and Petén.

Contributions from other International Agencies

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) financed the Sustainable Development Program for Petén (SDP) between 1998 and 2002, through a US$22 million loan to the Guatemalan government (CCAD-RUTA, 2000). This was executed by the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAGA), CONAP and other Guatemalan organizations. The SDP sought to contribute to regularizing land tenure in the MBR buffer zone, contribute to the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources and the preservation of archeological sites, and contribute to the institutional strengthening of government bodies and municipalities. This project was executed through governmental and international institutions. As with the initial USAID projects, it contributed indirectly to community-based processes. The focus on the municipalities was extremely important to tenuous local-level governance in Petén. However, we were not able to find specific information about the project's achievements in this area.

Another large project, carried out between 1998 and 2000, was the Protection of the Petén Tropical Forest Program (PROSELVA). The activity had a total cost of US$30.8 million and was funded by KFW (US$14.8 million) and the government of Guatemala (US$16 million) (CCAD-RUTA, 2000). PROSELVA was executed by Guatemalan governmental institutions, including CONAP, the National Forestry Institute (INAB), the Institute for Agrarian Transformation (INTA), and the Secretariat for Economic Planning (SEGEPLAN). Its principal objectives were the integrated development of the protected zones in southern Petén and the promotion of development projects to improve quality of life for the region's population (CCAD-RUTA, 2000).

Other, smaller-scale investments in this period are the Centro Maya projects (USAID – US$135,000), the CATIE/CONAP Project (USAID – US$1 million), and the final phase of the OLAFO project (Scandinavian countries – US$82,000) (CCAD-RUTA, 2000).

Contributions from International Foundations

Several international foundations have provided direct funding for the community concession process and for ACOFOP. These include the Ford Foundation, ICCO and Helvetas (Swiss cooperation agency). The main difference between this type of aid and that discussed in the preceding section is that these donors decided that their investment would go directly to the incipient community-based institutions. Therefore, although the amounts have been smaller, this contribution has significantly strengthened the institutional framework of the concessions, and in particular, ACOFOP. For example, the Ford Foundation contribution (US$470,000) over four years was invested entirely in directly strengthening ACOFOP as an institution and developing its capacity (Barry, 2004).

Synthesis

This information on donors and financing shows that international cooperation agencies made substantial investments in the Petén during the past decade. Furthermore, these funds were primarily channeled through governmental and international institutions, as well as national conservation NGOs. A modest portion of the funding went directly into the hands of the concession-holding communities and their organizations. With the exception of the aid from international foundations, this input did not

have a sizeable impact on concession-holding community processes for institutional strengthening and self-management. The investments by large donors (USAID, KFW and the IDB) do appear to have strengthened the governmental institutions and conservation organizations in Petén. At the same time, these donations led to the development of significant knowledge and technical capacity around forest management that were adopted by both community-based organizations and governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Cooperation models for Community Forest Concessions

The regulations established by CONAP [12] for granting forest concessions required a series of steps that included the concession-holding community entering into an agreement to work with an NGO that would provide technical assistance, along with the preparation of a number of technical instruments on forest management.[13]

These requirements set the standards for creating a model for official cooperation that revolved around the NGOs' technical capacities to ensure observance of the forest management regulations. The inexperience of the concession-holding groups would be addressed under this model by having an NGO capable of dealing with these regulations. Certainly, the communities were unskilled at the technical level, but they were sufficiently organized to be able to assume the challenge of forest management. The official model took this into account very late in the process. At the same time, ACOFOP's organizing capacity and ties with national and international networks made it possible for them to obtain cooperation aid aimed at developing their institutional capacities as the representative of the community-based forest organizations.

In this section, we discuss the evolution of the official cooperation model and present an assessment of another type of cooperation that is more focused on strengthening the community-based institutional framework. The confluence of both models has been fundamental to the development of the community forest management experience.

The official cooperation model based on technical aid

Since the Reserve was set up, USAID has been CONAP's main cooperating partner, playing a strategic role in financial support and in the institutional design for the management of the MBR. In the case of the community forest concessions, the official cooperation model responded to the CONAP regulations, under which the communities needed an NGO that would provide technical assistance and ensure proper use of the resources. A technical cooperation model was designed in which the international NGOs and their national counterparts appear as the guarantors of the conservation and management of the forest granted in concession to the forest communities.

The official cooperation model went through two distinct phases between 1992 and 2004:

- During the first phase (1993-2000), the region was managed through the intervention of international conservation-minded

[12] CONAP, 1998: "Policies on granting concessions for the use and management of renewable natural resources in the Multiple Use Zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. Resolution of the Executive Secretariat of the National Council on Protected Areas."

[13] To obtain authorization for resource management, the concessions must have a General Management Plan, Environmental Impact Assessment, Socio-Economic Assessments, Annual Operating Plans and certification of good management by an international agency accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council. Currently, this task is done by SmartWood (Cortave, 2004).

NGOs working with local NGOs that formed specifically to implement the management projects;

- In the second phase (2001-2004), the model shifted and USAID began channeling aid through the BIOFOR project, executed by Chemonics International.

The rationale for the design of this cooperation model is based on the idea of building a technically-competent institutional framework that is heavily involved in the process of forest management and, consequently, in the cycle of forest utilization. It was felt that the communities were made up of unskilled people with little capacity for assuming an active role in forest management. From this viewpoint, the NGOs would ensure observance of the technical regulations.

In general, the most significant advances made with this model were in technical training, which included forest management and commercialization. Although these accomplishments were positive, knowledge transfer under this model was extremely top-down. The work methods and ways of relating between the NGOs and the population have been strongly criticized for being paternalistic and not allowing communities to develop and use skills for integrated forest management, administration and enterprise management (Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ, 2000).

The NGOs assumed a leadership role in the process and, more than assistants or facilitators, they became service-provision enterprises. Furthermore, the relationship between the communities and the NGOs was unbalanced from the start, since the NGOs handled and administered the funds without promoting community-based institution-building and self-management. Cuellar (2004) and Chemonics-BIOFOR (2000) refer to the paternalistic and subsidy-based nature of this type of relationship between the NGOs and communities, since the NGOs were encouraging dependant relationships in order to justify their existence and continue to receive donor funding.

According to Cortave (2004), the case of San Miguel La Palotada, the first community concession granted in 1994, demonstrates the limits of this initial perspective on community management. On 7,039 ha of forest, CATIE implemented a forest management plan that was meant to be a pilot project from which other communities could learn. Although it has served for opening the way for the execution of other concessions, it was done through a highly subsidized model and in a small territory with low forestry potential.

With a huge injection of financial and technical resources in a small area with low lumber production, the result has been a model that is unsustainable in the long run. Furthermore, during the 11 years under this model, feedback was insufficient for supporting the development of local capacities. Therefore, Cortave (2004) considers this to be the least successful of the community forest concessions.

This model enabled the NGOs to end up supplanting the community's role in decision-making venues, competing with community boards of directors and limiting access to crucial information. By controlling decision-making, the NGOs also controlled the commercialization of the wood, and in this way became intermediary companies for the commercialization and sale of services. Thus, the communities did not develop their commercial capacities in due time, since they were not actively involved in negotiating the sale price for their wood. This situation stirred up conflict among the NGOs, communities and ACOFOP. The excessive power acquired by the NGOs came to a head when they started pressuring the community-based groups to grant them exclusive rights

over the management and commercialization of the wood as a condition for maintaining the concession and technical support.

In some cases, the community organizations felt pressured by their accompanying NGOs because they had to sign exclusivity agreements for technical assistance as part of the assistance approach, which far from facilitating community capacity-building was instead aimed at making them heavily dependent on the NGOs. This situation logically led to rejection and confrontation between the community groups and the NGOs.

ACOFOP denounced this problem at the international level, arguing that it is ineffective to have a model in which NGOs have access to financial resources and in exchange provide only minimal services and information that do not meet community needs (Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ, 2000). The pressure from ACOFOP, which included international campaigns publicized over the Internet, managed to get the concession regulations changed so that the communities can operate without this style of accompaniment.

Despite these deficiencies, the communities value the technical training on forest management they have received, through which they have developed and internalized the knowledge needed for preparing and implementing the management and annual operating plans required by CONAP. This also involved the community-based groups adapting to ecological perspectives and discourses. In addition, the model encouraged community members to form their own organizations, which was a requirement for obtaining a concession at a time when many of the communities had no prior experience, or rather, had not created the synergies necessary for creating an organization on their own initiative.

In 2001, the model was changed and USAID began channeling assistance to the community forest concessions through the BIOFOR Project, implemented by Chemonics International. At this point, a strategy was devised for the 2001-2004 period that targeted activities to the sustainability of the concessions, based on strengthening their business capacity. Its objectives were centered on reducing the subsidies, strengthening business management and reducing the number of accompanying institutions, leaving only the Asociación Centro Maya, in charge of forest stewardship, and ACOFOP (Chemonics-BIOFOR, 2003).

At present, a considerable number of national NGOs are still working (Centro Maya, ProPetén, Naturaleza para la Vida, etc.) that were formed through the USAID-funded MBR project (Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ, 2000), as well as international organizations (e.g. Just World Partners) and cooperation projects such as BIOFOR.

Many of the NGOs formed through MBR cooperation assistance have turned into providers of technical services for community and private forest concessions. This relationship can be satisfactory for both parties if there is transparency in the roles and responsibilities of each one. In practice, however, many of the relationships between community-based organizations and NGOs are tense, due to the friction that was created when the community groups questioned and changed the accompaniment model.

Cooperation focused on community building

Another cooperation model has existed alongside the official cooperation model, one that is more focused on strengthening community capacities, contributing valuable input for the de-

velopment of the institutional capacities of community groups and ACOFOP. In general, this model has involved a large number of actors in a complex and changing dynamic, which has certain important principles and characteristics in common. Following is a summary of some of the institutions and individuals that have been involved in this cooperation process:

- **Donor Agencies**: According to ACOFOP (2002), these include the Agricultural Frontier Project, the Ford Foundation, the Romero Christian Initiative (CIR), the Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), the German Development Service (DED), and Helvetas (Swiss cooperation agency). Funding from these agencies has been aimed at developing and strengthening ACOFOP, aiding long-term self-management.
- Central American Indigenous and Peasant Coordinator of Community Agroforestry (ACICAFOC): Although this is not a cooperating agency, ACICAFOC has supported ACOFOP's institutional strengthening process and has helped with strategic networking nationally and internationally. At the same time, the ACOFOP experience has been used by ACICAFOC around Central America and in countries outside the region as a successful community forestry model, for the purpose of encouraging similar processes that promote the inclusion of peasant and indigenous communities in natural resource management.

Providing far more modest funding that the official cooperation agencies, these cooperation organizations became "accompanying organizations," adapting to the needs and evolution of the community-based organizations. Although "accompaniment" is still a recent term used in diverse ways, in this particular case we understand "accompaniment" to be the process by which both cooperation agencies and communities walk side by side, promoting common ideas and challenges about the consolidation of community forest management. In effect, this type of cooperation has enabled ACOFOP and its organizations to develop their organizing abilities and capacity for political advocacy around Central America and internationally. It has also positioned ACOFOP as an interlocutor and focal point in the Petén with the government of Guatemala.

This model is based on the ability to build social relationships at the regional and international level, which permits building internal capacities at the same time that it provides input and resources in terms of access to information, ties to relevant world processes or events and financial aid. In this way, ACOFOP can publicize its experience while continually seeking resources and assistance. This involves, then, a cooperation model that is more flexible, horizontal and closer to the people and their processes. By not being project driven, this type of cooperation keeps a long-term perspective on support for processes. Therefore, it has the advantage of forming more horizontal ties and establishing trusting relationships with ACOFOP.

Another characteristic of this type of cooperation is that it is not based on maintaining a permanent presence in the territory, but rather on the possibility of forming relationships over strategic issues and channeling support that will respond to the stages in the evolution of the experience.

As opposed to conventional projects that tend to invest in and maintain their own permanent infrastructure and staff during the implementation of the intervention, this type works through strategic actors that often are located outside the territory, although they maintain close ties and intervene constantly during cru-

cial moments.[14] Their absence from daily organizational management gives the local actors greater space and opportunity for self-learning. Therefore, they have been crucial to ACOFOP's institutional development, and also in supporting its transition by increasing the organization's degree of local capacity and self-management.

This type of cooperation has always existed alongside the official model. Strengthening ACOFOP's institutional capacity has contributed to it becoming an active interlocutor with the actors from the official model (CONAP, USAID, NGOs), questioning and reworking the conditions imposed by that model.

The principles of this community-building cooperation model can be summarized as follows:

- It is committed to strengthening the political governance of its partners;
- It is focused on the institutional development of community organizations and on human capital formation, through building local capacities (it only contributes what the local actors are not able to do);
- It is committed to local actors learning, which is why it prefers that they take the lead in activities, even if they make mistakes;
- It avoids paternalism and creating dependence on the outside;
- It is long term;
- It is dynamic and makes use of a complex network of support and contacts;
- It focuses on self-management processes and not on short-term projects;
- It invests in trusting relationships with local actors.

[14] These include specialists in rural development, community forestry, participation and leadership.

Lessons for cooperation assistance that strengthens sustainable natural resource management and local livelihoods

The two cooperation models discussed in this chapter provide important lessons about how to undertake processes that can successfully integrate rational natural resource management with strengthening community livelihoods and institutions. The contributions and limitations of each of these models are discussed below.

Official cooperation has been effective in mobilizing considerable financial resources and in providing technical assistance on community management of forest concessions. However, this model had serious deficiencies—it created dependency on the outside and appropriated the management and administration processes that should have been handled by the communities, not by the cooperation agencies or executing NGOs.

In contrast, cooperation focused on community building has been successful in improving democratic processes for developing effective community-based institutions. In addition, this model successfully aided ACOFOP's national and international positioning and management capacities. However, this type of cooperation does not attempt to mobilize the magnitude of financial, political and technical resources that characterize the official model. This mobilization of resources was essential, not only because it resulted in significant financial investment, but also because it attracted and recruited important institutions in the technical areas of ecology and natural resource management.

The foregoing having been said, the analysis indicates that each type of cooperation contributed components that were crucial to the development process and the success of the community concessions and ACOFOP. In this case, the agencies working with the official model invested in governmental institutions and technical NGOs, while "unofficial" cooperation invested in local organizations. The former were focused on technical assistance and research, while the latter focused on local institution building.

The contributions of each of the models turns out to be very different, and therefore, also complementary. The role played by the community-building model demonstrates that it is possible to guide the communities in a management process that can successful negotiate with the official accompaniment model but that, by itself, lacks sufficient financial and technical resources for successfully mobilizing initiatives of the magnitude of forest concessions.

The paternalistic nature and unsustainable results of experiences based solely on the official model have been documented and strongly criticized.

Devising cooperation strategies that integrate these two types of accompaniment and technical assistance could provide a successful option for supporting sustainable processes that link development and conservation. However, this would require that each cooperation agency recognize a priori its role and interests and actively seek a complementary relationship with other donors.

The social and environmental impact of community management in the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR)

This chapter analyzes the impact made by natural resource management and conservation, changes in livelihood strategies and stronger community organizations. It is important to critically evaluate the management of the forest by the community concessions, since to a large extent the recognition and credibility of the community-based model depends on it.

So far, there have been considerable positive social and environmental effects from community management – a reduced impact from forest fires, the end of illegal lumbering and fewer new illegal settlements. In addition, community organizing has led to successful inroads into the certified wood market and the reorganization and improvement of the livelihood strategies of community families. Also of great importance is that community members have come to see the "healthy," well-kept forest as their primary natural asset. However, it must also be demonstrated that this management is sustainable both in social and ecological terms, to provide important input for justifying and ensuring that the concessions can continue in community hands.

Natural Resource Conservation and Management

Thus far, three important indicators show that the community concessions are managing the forest well (Kurzel and Müller, 2004; Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ, 2000):

- The certification of 338,333 ha of forest administered by community concessions, under sustainable management, through the Forest Stewardship Council's SmartWood© Seal.[15]
- A considerable reduction in forest fires in the community concessions compared with the buffer zone and some national parks (Laguna del Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón).
- Stabilization of the agricultural frontier.

Wood is the most important forest product in the Petén. The Petén forests have ecological characteristics that are more favorable for harvesting wood than other woodland ecosystems. The Petén forests are abundant in mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), in comparison with other tropical forests, such as the Amazon (Carrera and Pinelo, 1995). In point of fact, in 2004, mahogany was the most abundant species harvested and the most sold.[16] This makes logging very profitable, even when low impact practices are used. However, it should be noted that Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ (2000) contradict this affirmation and state that in the Petén forests, "[t]he number of tree species of commercial value is low, and there are few individuals (p. A-I-1)." In addition, the moderate average rainfall in the Petén (approximately 2,000 mm per year) makes communication and transportation easier in the forest year round.

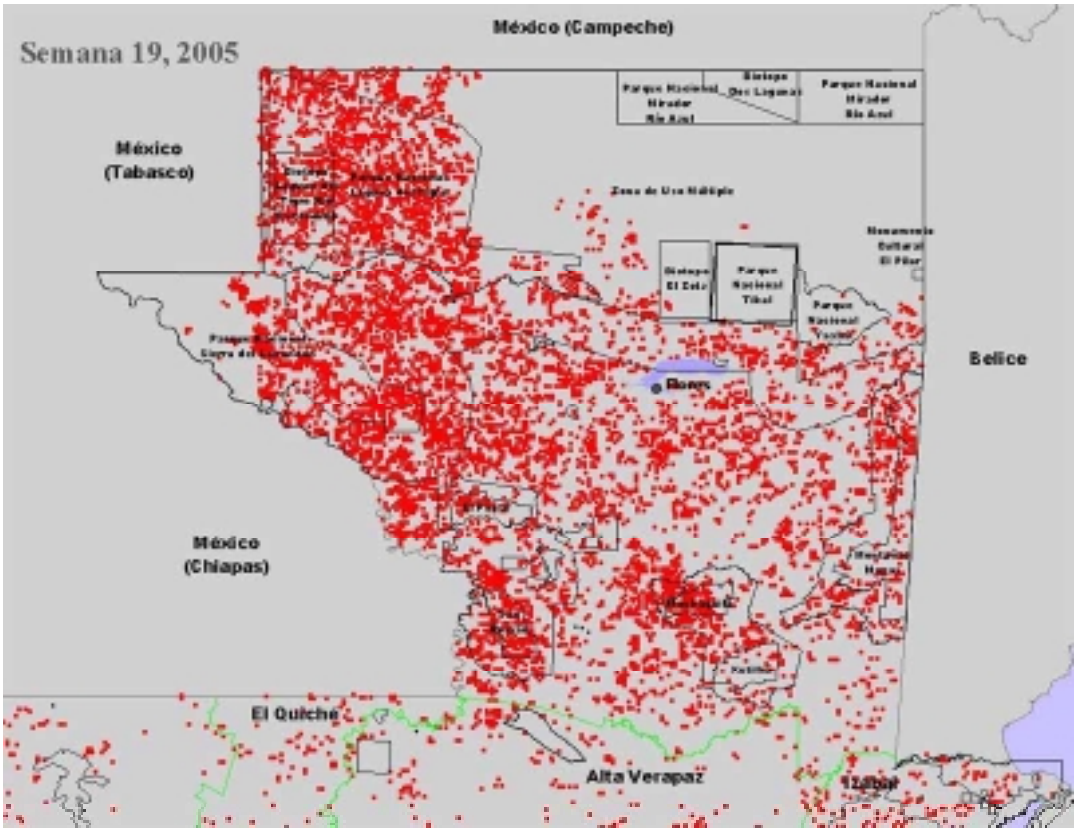
Under the CONAP regulations, the community concession-holders have responded well to the challenge of sustainable forest management. At

[15] Information current as of July 2005.

[16] According to Nittler and Tschinkel (2005), of a projected total harvest volume of 17,898 m^3 for 2004, over half was mahogany, while "santa maría," a semi-precious species, was the second most plentiful in the harvest, with over 2,600 m^3.

Map 4

Forest Fires in the Petén in 2005



Source: CONAP-CEMEC, 2005

the time when the concessions were established, many of the communities were lacking the necessary knowledge for managing the forest according to these criteria. They needed the technical assistance of the accompanying NGOs to learn how to harvest, monitor and manage the forest (Cuellar, 2004).

This period of technical knowledge-building, together with the consolidation of the organizations' social capital,[17] built the foundation for successful community forest management from a social and ecological perspective. In just a few years, the communities have acquired the capacity for fieldwork, creating a technical model for forest management that ensures the long-term sustainability and conservation of the forest (Nittler and Tschinkel, 2005). According to Cortave (2004), the communities currently manage almost 450,000 ha of natural woodland, of which 338,333 are certified by the FSC. In order for their management to be successful, in addition to strengthening technical forest management, the communities continue to invest heavily in protecting and guarding the man-

[17] El capital social es entendido como las capacidades organizativas en una localidad y las habilidades de las comunidades para asegurar recursos (conocimiento, acción colectiva, acceso a mercados, etc.) como resultado de su membresía a redes sociales y otras estructuras sociales – juega un papel vital para lograr procesos de gestión territorial y favorecer la acción colectiva y el acceso y control de los recursos naturales.

aged areas, including firefighting. This protection strategy has stabilized the agricultural frontier, preventing, for the most part, the encroachment of people unrelated to the concessions, looting of archeological sites, illegal logging, animal poaching and other destructive actions.[18]

Forest management has also had positive effects on conservation. Since the MBR was established, it has been under constant environmental monitoring, which has revealed, using satellite images, fewer fires and a downward trend in deforestation rates in the concessioned areas (Nittler and Tschinkel, 2005) (see Map 4). There are considerable differences between the national parks and the MUZ, where the community concessions are. While in the Laguna del Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón National Parks and in the Laguna del Tigre Biotope, deforestation rates increased considerably between 2003 and 2004,[19] primarily due to illegal land invasions, in the MUZ, deforestation has fallen by 36% in the same period (CEMEC/CONAP et al., 2004). Furthermore, recent biological studies show the low ecological impact of wood extraction on wildlife. Far from affecting its presence in the management areas, forestry practices have increased the wealth of species through increasing habitat heterogeneity, for example, in the case of birds, beetles and butterflies (Radachowsky et al., 2004).

Changing livelihood strategies

Forest management has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the conservation of the forest and its natural resources, but in the case of the community concessions, it has also strengthened the existing livelihood strategies of the people living in and around the reserve zones, creating new opportunities for development through self-management. The communities in the MBR have a wide variety of livelihood strategies, ranging from agriculture to tourism. These livelihoods have been documented in studies on agricultural management (Shriar, 2001), ecotourism supported by NGOs (Langholz, 1999), management of non-wood forest products (Gould et al., 1998), and low-intensity logging (Gretzinger, 1999; Castiglione et al., 2000; Reyes, 2000; Nittler and Tschinkel, 2004).

The new NGOs created with MBR funding developed and disseminated information about occupations in sustainable agriculture, ecotourism and low-impact logging. The large number of organizations and the resources invested have led to changes in livelihood strategies, even when these have not been the results expected by the supporting institutions. For example, Shriar (2001) observed that agricultural intensification practices[20] are related to variables such as the availability of jobs and markets, which in the case of the MBR, are being modified by the development of tourism. Farmers living along the "Tikal Route," for example, have become less interested in agriculture because their income is more closely linked to non-farming employment in tourism around Tikal National Park or urban jobs in the city of Flores/Santa Elena. This population is close to both sites, making it easy for community members to commute. This dynamic contrasts with other sites studied that are farther from these

[18] The cost of protection is approximately US$136,000 per year. In 2003, US$140,000 was invested in preventing and fighting forest fires (Cortave, 2004).

[19] Between 2003 and 2004, both the Laguna del Tigre National Park and Biotope had record deforestation, with 5,537 ha and 901.6 ha respectively, the highest in the MBR with the exception of the Buffer Zone. The Sierra del Lacandón National Park continued to have increased deforestation rates, with 1,690 ha during the same period (CEMEC/CONAP et al., 2004).

[20] Shriar defines agricultural intensification as those farming practices that result in "higher production per unit area, per unit time, of desired outputs" (Shriar, 2001:31).

options, where farmers have invested in different means for agricultural intensification.

In the concessions in general, forest management, emphasizing the harvesting of wood such as mahogany and cedar, and on a smaller scale, non-wood products including xate, chicle and allspice, has substantially changed livelihood strategies. The economy and life of the communities now revolve around implementation of forest management plans, which have become the dynamic linchpin of an effective strategy to fight poverty and the territory's socially disadvantaged position. In turn, these achievements are contributing to the conservation and protection of the MBR's natural resources.

The community concessions are also a source of secure work for their members. According to estimates, some 100,000 jobs are created annually, with wages that are above the country's average.[21] However, the substantive changes in livelihood strategies go beyond permanent access to work. Control of the concessions by community organizations has contributed to building human and social capital, invigorating organizing capacity and considerably increasing local capacity and know-how.

Community involvement in forest management has led to the development of an entire new array of technical, specialized knowledge, ranging from the use of technical equipment and computers to business skills for negotiating purchase and sale agreements (Cortave, 2004). Furthermore, the acceptance of communal forest management has contributed to improving organizing capacities, developing new skills for decision-making, democratic participation, oversight and accountability.

This new social dynamic taken as a whole ensures more sustainable use of natural resources. The valuable natural capital in the concessions is one of their primary assets and along these lines the human and social capacities being put to work in the concessions have significantly contributed to conserving this biodiversity. Social valorization of the forest has been possible because the forest has become integrated into the livelihood strategies of these communities, not as resources that are other people's or off limits, but rather as part of their patrimony.

Building organized communities

Throughout these years, ACOFOP has developed a structure for second-level community representation that has assumed different roles for the purpose of constructing and strengthening the community-based model for forest resource management. In the previous sections, we mentioned that in the first years of this experience, ACOFOP engaged in basic community development in order to strengthen local leadership, motivating communities to organize around the process of negotiating the concessions. This required, in turn, lobbying local actors and the government. This is when ACOFOP became highly recognized and influential in the communities, and earned international notice and credibility (Pasos, 2002).

ACOFOP's ability to enlist support has preserved the forest cover and the concession process, by taking a critical attitude toward the role of the NGOs. Many of these see ACOFOP as a competitor to their role as service providers and question the organization's capacity to provide technical assistance, build business skills and coordinate commercialization of their products (Grant and Rodas, 2004; Romero, 2004).

[21] El salario mínimo en Guatemala es de unos US$ 4.00 diarios, mientras que en las comunidades oscila entre US$ 7.00 y US$ 10.00 (Cortave, 2004)

It is true that the demands of the process, the social needs of the communities and the dynamic social and political context have led ACOFOP to assume different roles. From being a trade association, it has remodeled itself and now works in two main areas: 1) community development, which includes advocacy, training, gender, legal aid and capacity-building training in production methods; and 2) the commercialization of products, technical assistance and certification (Kurzel and Müller, 2004).

The community institutional framework is quite new and needs constant, committed accompaniment. We already mentioned that the official model does not pay attention to internal training and is incapable of promoting a stronger community institutional framework. Furthermore, the collapse of the official technical accompaniment model has given way to a new phase in which the communities have to develop their production and commercialization capacities more autonomously. These two areas of action have been assumed by ACOFOP, making it the primary group accompanying its member organizations.

At this phase of the concession process, ACOFOP is a key actor in community natural resource management, which goes beyond ensuring successful production and technically effective forest management. It also means becoming integrally involved in community life, as an active agent in the construction of the institutional framework around which community forest management operates.

To sum up, community management has had positive results, improving environmental conditions and livelihood strategies for the concession-holders; so much so, that community organizations have won a number of prestigious international awards. These include the President's Environmental Medal in Guatemala, the United Nations Equator Prize, and the Innovation Marketplace Award of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). However, as we discuss in the next chapter, it is also necessary to document the achievements of forest management to make a strong case for its ecological viability. In doing so, ACOFOP needs to expand its partnerships with researchers and cooperation agencies that can help them gather the evidence needed to sustain these arguments.

Challenges facing community forest management

This final section discusses the main challenges facing ACOFOP and the community forest concessions. First, we identify circumstances in the social, economic and political context that influence forest management and demand the construction of a territorial perspective. Then, we discuss other current challenges related to the development of a community institutional framework, including the first steps toward commercialization, a more strategic relationship with the municipalities and other local actors, and, finally, reframing the relationships with technical assistance organizations.

Developing a territorial perspective

The methodology followed in forming the MBR defined distinct management models for areas differentiated according to strict natural resource management criteria. Conservation was the overriding objective of land use planning, which was used to assign the different types of management required for natural areas, the MUZ where the forest concessions are, and the buffer zone.

These divisions hid from view the Petén's territorial complexity regarding the factors that have historically driven the territory and its cultural characteristics. In addition to having valuable natural and archeological resources, Petén has been a receiving area for landless peasants and indigenous peoples, at a high social and environmental cost. These circumstances were not taken into account when the MBR was formed, which is why its institutional framework is unable to respond to growing social conflict caused by pressure on the land and more recent problems with trafficking in undocumented migrants, contraband and illegal drugs.

The different models used for the technical cooperation provided to the concessions have focused their activities on managing the forest in order to harvest its wood. As the process advances, this focus is showing great limitations as it confronts current challenges transcending the territorial space of the concessions and their management methods. ACOFOP has set its sights on Petén as a territory ripe for political action, needed for addressing economic integration and free trade proposals, including the Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP) (see Box 1) and the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA); the tourism development proposal by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – Mundo Maya Sustainable Development Program; and the Cuenca Mirador Park expansion proposal. At the same time, the institutional framework for community forest management needs a revamping that focuses on its territorial role, and that can assume an ecosystem or environmental services perspective that would ensure recognition of the true ecological and social value of community concessions.

For ACOFOP, the idea of territory is new, even if the technical assistance models are beginning to include a territorial perspective in the Central American region. If we think of "the Petén region," its potential and what it means for the country's development, the concessions play a critical role; not only for guaranteeing the sustainable use of the forest, but also for the potential in the communities for taking on more inte-

Box 1
The Puebla-Panama Plan

The Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP) is a regional development initiative involving the seven Central American countries (Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama) and nine states in southeastern Mexico (Campeche, Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz and Yucatan). Its goal is to strengthen the potential of the human and ecological resources in the Mesoamerican region in order to overcome the region's economic and social underdevelopment (BCIE, et al., 2001).

The PPP's development strategy is based on utilizing the Mesoamerican region's natural resources (water, minerals, hydroelectric power and biodiversity) and comparative advantages (geographic location and cheap labor) to remedy the infrastructure deficit and reduce high poverty rates and vulnerability to natural disasters. In order to reach these objectives, the PPP proposes an extremely ambitious public investment program, the most important components of which are the logistical corridor (US$3.547 billion) and electric interconnection (US$337 million) (UNDP, 2003).

ACOFOP and other Guatemalan grassroots organizations frame the PPP in the context of neoliberal policies, which assume that opening up the market and making multi-million-dollar investments in macro-projects should stimulate the economy by intensively exploiting the region's natural resources. This could have a significant impact on protected ecosystems, natural resources and the rural way of life. The promotion of extractive industries, such as petroleum, natural gas, minerals and wood; the development of logistical corridors and export assembly factories (maquilas); the promotion of mega tourism projects; and the construction of hydroelectric plants could lead to deforestation, contamination of the land and the loss of biodiversity. It could also have a negative impact on rural livelihoods and traditional cultures. The change in land use could cause an increase in land prices and speculation by large companies seeking profitable investments, displacing subsistence agriculture and even community forest production systems (Valenzuela, 2002a and 2002b).

grated management. An integrated approach should include tourism and the protection of archeological goods, which would facilitate the possibility to negotiate better proposals, such as in the Cuenca Mirador case. This means expanding the forest management approach, in order to enable the diversification of livelihoods and include the valorization of environmental services.

We shall delve further into these elements in the following section.

Cultura conservation and community vs. the Cuenca Mirador Park proposal

The Foundation for Anthropological Research and Environmental Studies (FARES), with support from the Global Heritage Fund (GHF), has developed a proposal for expanding Cuenca Mirador Park. The principal author is Dr. Richard Hansen, founder of FARES and an archeologist specializing in the Preclassic Maya period.

The proposal is a plan to protect 2,170 km^2, in a zone that includes part of the Mirador-Río Azul National Park and the Naachtún-Dos Lagunas Biotope, along with land from six community forest concessions[22] and part of the private concession in La Gloria. According to Dr. Hansen, the primary objective of the Cuenca Mirador project is to protect the territory it would cover, which would involve halting the forest management activities that are sustaining the livelihoods of the community concessions.

[22] The affected community concessions are Cooperativa Selva Maya, Cooperativa Carmelita, Asociación Forestal Integral Cruce la Colorada, Sociedad Civil Uaxactún, Asociación de Productores La Pasadita and Asociación Forestal Integral San Andrés Petén.

The FARES-GHF partnership believes that the Mirador Basin ("*cuenca*" in Spanish) is in urgent need of protection because illegal hunting, logging and looting of archeological sites is currently threatening to destroy the area's biodiversity and Mayan ruins. To offset the loss of the communities' primary economic activity, the Mirador project proposes involving the people living in the basin in private "sustainable eco-tourism" initiatives and monetary compensation to cease logging operations (FARES and GBH, 2004).

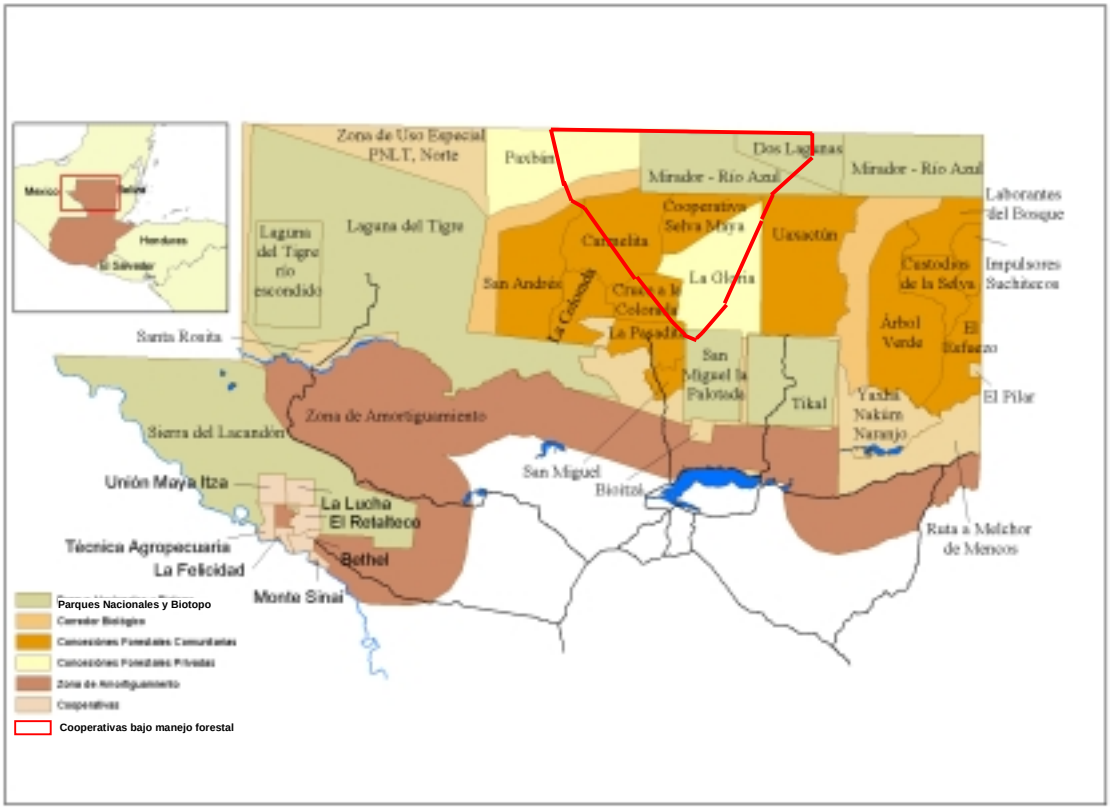
The justification for the project points to a critical scenario with illegal activities and looting of archeological sites, and proposes the total protection of the area and the establishment of a system for monitoring and enforcing the restrictions using park rangers and other security measures. Additionally, the Cuenca Mirador project plans to invest a large amount of money in archeological and biological scientific research, together with a lesser amount to train local residents in tourism.

The Cuenca Mirador proposal has substantial political and financial backing. On the financial side, the project, together with GHF, set up the Maya Conservation Trust, which is expected to reach US$10 million. In the political arena, it convinced then-President Portillo to sign governmental decree 129-2002, which declared the creation of the *Mirador Basin Special Archeological Zone* (see Map 5). In 2002, ACOFOP filed a complaint in court claiming that the community concessions' constitutional rights were being violated. In 2003, the Guatemalan Center for Legal, Environmental and Social Action (CALAS) filed an appeal, claiming that the governmental decree was unconstitutional, in support of the struggle of the community-based groups. This resulted in a stay in enforcement of the governmental decree during the administration of President Oscar Berger. However, in addition to the legal strategies, ACOFOP used its negotiating skills with the current Guatemalan administration, winning the repeal of governmental decree 129-2002 in May 2005.

Despite its initial political headway, the Cuenca Mirador project appears to have severe limitations on its ability to be successfully implemented:

- It has been a top-down initiative; there has been no consultation at all with the community concession-holders and other residents in the zone or their organizations;
- Those who are promoting Cuenca Mirador have ignored the great strides made by the community concessions in conserving and guarding the forest, in stark contrast with conditions in the protected zones, such as Laguna del Tigre and Sierra del Lacandón parks;
- The Cuenca Mirador proposal ignores the long history of failures characterizing conservation projects that use the "uninhabited protected areas" approach, and likewise, does not recognize the accumulated successes of a number of community forest management strategies around the world (Poffenberger and McGean, 1998; Bray et al., 2003);

Map 5
Cuenca Mirador Project Zone (red outline on map), showing the existing concessions and parks that would be affected



Source: CEMEC-CONAP

- Tourism as a strategy for socioeconomic development carries great risks with regard to whether the communities will truly benefit, especially the poorest ones.

It is important to stress that the communities have been the true protectors of the forest in the last decade, and that they have the right to participate on an equal footing in decisions that could lead to the implementation of a project of this magnitude. Up until this point, the Cuenca Mirador initiative has been operating in isolation and has not sought any contact with the affected concessions or ACOFOP.

Opportunities in the Cuenca Mirador threat

Despite its limitations, the Cuenca Mirador project has sparked interest in new ways for integrating community concessions in a horizontal, transparent alliance that could strengthen environmental and cultural conservation efforts in the Maya jungle. It is unrealistic to think of the future of the zone without community-based management, given the progress and territorial control that it has consolidated (Pasos, 2004). Accordingly, an initiative such as Cuenca Mirador should be seen as an opportunity to develop a new proposal that would take into account community-based conservation and

cultural resources, in order to demonstrate that not only are the communities capable of managing the forest, but they are also able to assume the management of cultural resources, which they are already in fact protecting (see Box 2).

However, this would mean opening up discussions about this kind of project to the community concession-holders, with options that let them continue to manage and protect the forest while meeting the objective of protecting archeological resources. For example, they could minimize forestry activities where there are archeological sites with ecotourism potential. This way, projects could be developed that involve concession-holders from the outset in innovative forest management strategies.

Developing capacities for tourism and the management of cultural goods in the concessions is critical. This would open up a new range of possibilities for diversifying livelihoods and for community organizations to finally play an important role in an enterprise that so far is being controlled by private operators, leading to intense pressure to change how the land in the MBR is used.

It is difficult for a private venture to control a territory by itself without the active involvement and leadership of the communities. Not only is conservation of the natural resources and archeological heritage at stake in the Mirador case, but also the autonomy and development of the concessions. Therefore, ACOFOP needs to develop an alternative proposal based on new partnerships, which could attract investments seeking to capitalize on the added value of forest management and community participation. This requires building new kinds of capacities as part of developing a more integrated management model that links forest management, conservation and the preservation of cultural goods.

Box 2
Conservation, Tourism and Archeological Research

Based on criticism of the impact that logging operations have on archeological sites inside the concession areas, USAID commissioned an evaluation team to visit several of the concessions to observe how they were implementing measures designed to mitigate damage to the archeological sites. The summary of the mission's evaluation reads as follows, in part:

"The co-administration agreements between the community forest concessions of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) and CONAP put equal weight on the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources. The way the system currently operates, much of the financial and technical aid is targeted at natural resource administration, with considerably less attention being paid to the administration of cultural resources. It was evident from our observations that the concessions are making good faith efforts to protect the archeological sites from damage resulting from logging operations and are attempting to adhere to the mitigation measures established in the planning and environmental impact documents, but their capacity is limited.

"In order to improve the current structure, we recommend a system to administer cultural resource planning and monitoring comparable to the system for forest stewardship. Close coordination among professional administrators of natural resources, of cultural resources and from the communities would provide a major opportunity for advancing in the protection of sites, development of tourism and archeological research."

Taken from Kunen and Roney, 2004.

There are initiatives that are based on existing human ecosystems and community strategies; these have greater potential for being accepted by the communities and for ensuring that the benefits are primarily for them. This is the case with Maya agroforestry in the MBR, which has integrated tourist activities through cultural and ecological attractions (Langholz, 1999). Several operators already advertise visits that include "Maya Agroforestry."[23] This kind of tourism could serve as a counterproposal to private tourism initiatives like Cuenca Mirador, in which private outside companies design the tour packages and the communities participate in them.

Diversifying livelihoods

The diversification of livelihoods is another key element in creating a more integrated management model. Since the communities have been managing the forest concessions, positive results have been achieved in the conservation of natural resources and in improving community living conditions. However, the most successful communities have been those that historically have been more involved in harvesting wood.

The concessions have great natural potential because of their scenic beauty and wildlife, inside one of the most important tourist attractions along the Mayan Route. However, these elements have not been given the same weight as forest management. For example, extraction of non-wood products and handicraft production is still in an incipient phase and has not developed to the same extent as forest management. Except for xate, non-wood products have not become part of more diversified livelihood strategies that could complement pure forest management. Furthermore, for some farming communities, forestry activities will continue to be unfamiliar or seen as worthless, unless they can be tied to their livelihoods.

Efforts to integrate conservation into livelihood development objectives have advanced greatly in the last decade. Specifically, agroforestry systems in tropical forest areas have demonstrated great potential for meeting conservation objectives together with the socioeconomic development of rural communities (Buck et al. 1999; Huxley, 1999; Schroth et al., 2004). Because of their integrated objectives for environmental conservation and the socioeconomic well-being of their members, community concessions can take advantage of this accumulation of knowledge and experience and strengthen agroforestry strategies that could be to their benefit. This could lead to advances in those communities that have limited forest resources and less of a vocation for forest management.

In Petén, studies have been done that provide input for the further development of agroforestry systems in the community concessions (Gillespie et al., 1993; Shriar, 2001; Ferguson et al., 2003). These productive, yet ecologically viable systems can also be integrated into other socioeconomic activities such as ecological and scientific tourism.

Ecosystem services: The missing approach in the MBR

Despite being one of the world's most well known areas for its natural and cultural wealth, the ecosystem services approach is missing in the primary strategies of the MBR. Because of its characteristics, the MBR represents an important site for the provision, conservation and possible compensation for ecosystem services.

According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, ecosystem services are "the benefits people obtain from ecosystems," which include provisioning, regulating, cultural services and

[23] See for example: www.ecotourism- adventure.com/ eco-projects /agroforestry.htm

supporting services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2003). The environmental or ecosystem services approach has created high expectations in researchers, donors and development practitioners, which is opening up management opportunity for territories with characteristics like the Petén (Rosa et al., 2003).

According to the framework for environmental services developed by Fundación PRISMA (Rosa et al., 2003), these types of activities could serve to give greater value and recognition to the ecological and community management actions of the community concessions. For example, the role of the concessions in biodiversity conservation has not been visible, even though it may have been documented already in some studies (see, for example, the CATIE collection on "Forest Management in the Maya Biosphere Reserve"). Likewise, landscapes for recreation, eco-tourism and carbon sequestration could be designated as environmental services.

ACOFOP is in a position to adopt an ecosystem or environmental services perspective, which would help gain recognition for the ecological and social value of the community concessions. Integrating a broad perspective on the valorization of environmental services at the local, national and global scales (Rosa et al., 2003) can provide ammunition for the community concessions to use in defending their activities in the face of threats like the Cuenca Mirador project. This perspective has not yet been adapted to ACOFOP's experience and emphasis needs to be placed on the value of the services, such as biodiversity use and conservation, carbon sequestration and biogeochemical cycle regulation, that result from community protection and management. This added value for local and global communities should be highlighted from a perspective that values the contribution of environmental services to human beings and to ecosystem conservation.

Redefining the community institutional framework

The intense momentum in ACOFOP led to a shift from its original role of community building and political governance with local actors. The work strategy, the types of internal organization and mechanisms for forging ties with the communities were not keeping pace with the new demands of the concession process and the territorial challenges already mentioned. Furthermore, national and international advocacy work demanded a huge investment of the leaders' time. Although this work has led to ACOFOP's credibility and recognition by heavyweights such as SICA-CCAD, the United Nations, World Bank etc., the communities do not have a clear idea of the importance of maintaining an international presence, which has led to a great deal of distrust and the perception that their leaders are becoming disconnected from the most immediate problems.

At times, ACOFOP's internal operating structure has lagged behind the evolving demands of its grassroots organizations. ACOFOP is assuming this challenge and has entered a new phase of defining its priorities for working for and with the communities, developing a model for systematic communication and contact that cuts across the different organizational levels. These include the community level and the first- and second-level member organizations. This is making it possible to respond in the different ways needed, both to requests for training and technical accompaniment and to the need to have political representation. Another key element is the fostering of consolidation of new leadership inside the member organizations and at the general coordination level so that the responsibilities for representing the organization do not always fall on the same leaders.

Recently, ACOFOP has been going through a transition, changing its strategy and internal structure to adapt to the new demands of the process. It is redefining both its political representation role and its role in community building and technical training. Both dimensions require building new capacities and leadership within the organization, as well as the need to define means for relating to the member organizations and their communities.

The community commercialization challenge

The formation of the Community Forestry Concessions Enterprise (FORESCOM), supported since its creation by the BIOFOR project and other institutions, responds to a deeply felt need by the communities to have greater control over commercialization of the wood.

When the concession process began, one of the main challenges was the commercialization of the forest products resulting from forest management. At that time, the community organizations did not have the commercial experience necessary for selling their forest products and neither did the NGOs that were providing technical assistance. This meant that most of the community groups sold the products from their first wood crops at low prices, normally to intermediaries, with no added value whatsoever.

ACOFOP began taking steps to strengthen community-group capacity in the commercial area. In 2001, ACOFOP set up a Commercial Liaison Office for forest products in their offices to provide technical assistance to the communities for trading wood and other services. Thus, the conditions were being created for setting up a community forest enterprise, which would have the objectives of unifying commercial aspects in the communities and assuming the responsibility for forest stewardship and certification, among other services.

Furthermore, CONAP promoted a strategy of making the process self-sustaining, urged on by USAID, which had also developed its plan to phase out the technical assistance it had been providing to the communities through the NGOs. At this juncture, the conditions became ripe for the formation of FORESCOM as a means of ensuring implementation of the self-sufficiency strategy being promoted by CONAP and other technical assistance institutions, as well as by USAID's exit strategy.

In effect, one of the main objectives of the BIOFOR project was to build the organizations' business management abilities, seeking to reduce subsidies and to attain the economic sustainability of the community forest concessions. According to BIOFOR, their ability for long-term survival depends on three factors: 1) their organizational capacity, which includes separating the role of the community leaders from management of the business, creating mechanisms for conflict resolution, clearly setting rules and by-laws, transparency, and balancing a long-range perspective with the urgent need for immediate profits; 2) running the business in a way that facilitates making strategic decisions about production and investment; and 3) diversifying production, which should include the use and commercialization of non-wood species (Chemonics-BIOFOR, 2003).

With the objective of making the commercialization process self-sufficient, CONAP, ACOFOP and the assistance organizations promoted the idea of having the community organizations assume the costs of both forest stewardship and of technical assistance in general. These activities are being assumed to a large extent by FORESCOM, with support from ACOFOP, CONAP, Rainforest Alliance and BIOFOR.

Although the steps taken have been significant, broader skills and a better understanding of

market dynamics still need to be developed to improve commercialization. Each community enterprise also has to develop mechanisms for dealing with the inevitable tensions between social demands and the demands of the business world (Taylor, 2004).

So far, the need to balance investment between the social area and the enterprise area has not run into any major contradictions, nor has it caused any serious conflicts between the community-based organizations; but, as the process moves along, it can be expected that this dilemma will arise. When that moment does arrive, a solid institutional framework, participatory strategic plans and democratic leadership that includes different community sectors, especially women and young people, needs to be in place. Thus, they need to develop a model for themselves that can meet the goals of both the enterprise and the community.

Toward community enterprise management

ACOFOP is making the transition from its phase as a representative trade association to a more complex phase where it is assuming complete responsibility for strategic planning and accompaniment of the community management process, which involves strengthening its capacities for commercialization and developing its business role. This has required ACOFOP to continue developing new skills having to do with creating a community institutional framework that can assume coordination of the technical, production and commercialization areas.

As was already mentioned, ACOFOP had been developing its own organizational structure for the commercialization of wood, which culminated in the formation of FORESCOM. Furthermore, some of the organizations in ACOFOP began to develop their own capacity for commercialization and diversification of their products, making improvements in the processing and quality of the wood. Six communities were able to use the profits from the wood to invest in improvements in production facilities. Thus, they went from selling standing timber to their own logging operation, setting up small sawmills to process the wood obtained in accordance with their operating plans. The communities have also made inroads into new lines of production, such as carpentry, hardwood processing and improving the appearance of their products. Better product quality, together with access to the certified-wood market, has enabled them to sell at a higher price and to export certified wood to the international market (Cortave, 2004). In addition, the profitability and stature of the concessions has qualified them to borrow from regional (Central American Bank for Economic Integration—BCIE / CABEI) and national (BANCAFE) banks.

When FORESCOM was formed in 2003, it was part of the BIOFOR project and had a very costly institutional structure that ended up being difficult to sustain once that project ended. Despite this, the ACOFOP organizations took on FORESCOM as their business arm, reorganizing it from its original design and adapting it to community processes and resources. Currently, FORESCOM is receiving German technical assistance and is seeking additional funds from the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) (Nittler and Tschinkel, 2005). In FORESCOM,[24] the community organizations have an agency of their own that enables them to benefit through joint management and assumption of efforts and costs. At present, FORESCOM is responsible for forest stewardship activities, seedling production, road main-

[24] As of November 2004, FORESCOM had 11 member organizations: Laborantes del Bosque, Custodios del la Selva, Árbol Verde, Uaxactún, Carmelita, San Miguel La Palotada, AFISAP, Cruce a la Colorada, La Colorada, Unión Maya Itzá and Cooperativa La Técnica.

tenance and wood commercialization. Selling as a group in this way is enabling access to new markets and yielding higher profits. Despite its short life, FORESCOM is in the final steps of becoming a "forest operator" and certifier; once accredited the certification cost will drop by 20% (Nittler and Tschinkel, 2005).

ACOFOP could be the first case in Central America where a community representation structure controls everything from the phase of resource production management to commercialization on international markets. For the NGOs, which saw themselves assuming this role, ACOFOP does not have sufficient business sense to take on this responsibility. According to them, the communities' way of making decisions, slower and more given to thought, and seeking agreement based on the consensus of diverse groups and leaders, is not efficient enough for the business world, which requires quick decisions, information, contacts and highly developed technical skills (Grant and Rodas, 2004; Romero, 2004). According to this rationale, the community groups would have to depend on external agents to complete the commercialization cycle for their forest products.

For its part, ACOFOP is remaining firm in its stance of assuming the entire process. Even though the results from commercialization have been very limited, FORESCOM has had early successes in obtaining higher prices for mahogany and identifying buyers for other semiprecious wood in Europe (Nittler and Tschinkel, 2005). Their main challenges consist not only of searching for better markets, adding value to the wood or becoming a wood-products business; they must also gain credibility with community concession-holders, build consensus and obtain support. Therefore, FORESCOM's potential cannot be understood if it is seen solely as an agency that offers technical and financial products and services. It is also the institutional framework for organizing the running of a community enterprise, based on developing arrangements that, taking into account the organization's identity, develop skills for responding to market demands. It also intends to become a training center for the community organizations (Cortave, 2004).

The social role of the community enterprise

A community enterprise has the idiosyncrasy of uniting social/community dimensions with enterprise dimensions. The linkage between these two different dimensions is what characterizes this type of business, which is becoming an important actor for the communities. This nascent community entrepreneurship is a vehicle for development, which is in step with the pace of its actors, since it is based on their values and principles.

This process requires investing in training in order to learn how to link into the market world while not losing sight of the community dimension. Some community businesses have made progress along these lines. Through a process of organizational development, they have come to a point of institutional reorganization, in which they are more precisely defining the decision-making venues for social-community aspects and for enterprise ones.

The communities continue to be dedicated to discussing the enterprise's social role. Improving their business capacities, based on more integrated control over the production cycle of the forest products and a more careful assessment of investment options, has a great influence over the business's success and for improving community livelihoods. This does not just mean the opportunity to create direct and indirect jobs, but also the opportunity to make the business into a means for improving the

social and human capital of the communities and their families.

For several organizations, this involves a process of institutional reorganization, which has meant passing new by-laws and internal regulations, created autonomously. These changes are ensuring transparency in trading the wood and are improving the participation of the members in decision-making. The board of directors is gaining greater credibility and acceptance because it has clearly defined its roles and ensured a stable membership in order to provide continuity in planned activities.

With all these changes, they have improved the sale price of the wood and have made new investments, such as purchasing machinery, vehicles, land for sawmills and carpentry equipment and building new offices.

One of the first organizations to make these institutional changes was the Sociedad Civil Árbol Verde. By the end of 2004, it had reorganized its institutional structure, separating the community-trade association role, assumed by the board of directors, from the business role. They hired a manager to take over running the business, who was given autonomy over decisions in the production and commercialization cycle. This division lead to better performance in the commercialization area, and in 2003, earnings were distributed to the members for the first time.

In addition to trying to run a successful business, the members have engaged in outreach activities aimed at building the capacity of young people and adults, seeking out new agroforestry projects, promoting social welfare and supporting community education. To do all of this, the business heavily invested in community improvements and in capital expenditures, including setting up the sawmill and the carpentry workshop. The workshop expanded the cycle of transforming the wood by adding furniture making. Young community members were trained in the workshop, with the idea that in the medium and long term this investment would result in better capacities and skills for managing the business, making it more self-sufficient and sustainable.

Integrating local actors into community forest management

Integrated management of a territory also requires active participation by the different actors who influence and control the instruments and resources for making decisions about the land's management. It is important to point out that local institutions, such as municipal governments or schools, have participated very little in the management of the MBR, in contrast to the leadership role played by the NGOs until 2001. According to the way the system was set up, the protected zones come completely under the protection of CONAP, but this is not true for the buffer and multiple use zones, where municipal governments retain their authority. According to Chemonics-BIOFOR and IRG-EPIQ (2000), the exclusion of these local actors has robbed the MBR of medium- and long-term political and social legitimacy. This had also meant losing the opportunity to strengthen the municipalities with technical and financial resources from the MBR.

An analysis of the loss in fiscal revenues to the municipalities when the MBR was established makes this evident. According to Chemonics-BIOFOR (2000), these include: 1) a loss of a portion of tax revenues in San José and Melchor de Mencos; 2) the transfer of 50% of taxes on the extraction of wood and non-wood forest products to CONAP, under the forestry law; and 3) capital expenditures on infrastructure for the communities that were relocated from the core zone to several municipalities.

Recently, municipal governments have acquired a more important role in the community forest concessions. Some of the concessions that were visited reported on building alliances and better communication with the municipal governments, since a functioning government directly affects the lives of the families in the concessions. In comparison with external projects, the community concessions are concerned with the day-to-day life of their members, which includes relating to the municipalities where they live. However, our perception was that municipal governments are still only marginally involved in decisions concerning the concessions.

Reconfiguring the relationship with technical assistance organizations

The technical assistance role of the NGOs continues to be important for the community concessions, even though conflicts still arise. One serious conflict between ACOFOP and the NGO Alianza para un Mundo Justo (Just World Partners) originated over the offer to purchase a sawmill with European Union money, which was to be run by Mundo Justo, under the assumption that it would serve the community concessions. Following a series of transactions, it seemed instead that Mundo Justo was going to become the owner of the sawmill and it would take the role of a remunerated service-providing business. There were many contradictions in the case, to the point where ACOFOP filed a complaint with international bodies, including the European Union. In turn, Mundo Justo threatened to sue an ACOFOP advisor for defamation (Cortave, 2004).

The perspective of the Mundo Justo officials in Petén closely follow the lines of the official assistance model, which considers the communities to be incapable of successfully implementing strategies and actions for processing and commercialization (Grant and Rodas, 2004).
This perspective concludes, therefore, that the accompanying NGO must assume this role in order to support community management. ACOFOP, on the other hand, wants to demonstrate that the community organizations can develop well-run organizations with leaders who understand commercialization and processing as new themes about which to develop their capacities.

ACOFOP's justification for their position is evident. Taking on more stages in the chain of production, processing and commercialization gives community organizations the opportunity to increase their income and profits and to also strengthen their organizations. This particular case does not negate the important role that the NGOs have in the Petén, since the forest concessions still need a certain degree of accompaniment. However, this accompaniment should be focused on strengthening community institutions and capacities. In addition, the relationships between the accompanying NGOs and the community organizations should develop over the long term through commitments based on trusting, horizontal and transparent relationships grounded in democratic principles.

References

ACICAFOC, Ford Fundation, ICCO, IMAZON y CIFOR (2004). Memoria del Taller Internacional "Aprendiendo de nuestras propias experiencias de manejo forestal comunitario". Ixlu, Flores, Petén, 9-16 de Octubre.

ACICAFOC (2005). ¿Qué es ACICAFOC? http://acicafoc.net/institucional/index.php (8.05)

ACOFOP (2002). Desafíos y estrategia para el fortalecimiento del proceso de manejo forestal comunitario de Petén. Informe Interno. Octubre, 2002. ACOFOP: Santa Elena, Petén, Guatemala.

ACOFOP (2003). *ACOFOP: situación actual*. Manuscrito interno, junio 2003.

Aldana, H. y Matias, J. (2004). *Unión Maya Itzá: sistematización*. Presentado en el Taller Internacional "Aprendiendo de Nuestras Propias Experiencias de Manejo Forestal Comunitario". 9-16 de Octubre. Ixlu, Flores, Petén.

AI - Amnistía Internacional (2002). *El legado mortal de Guatemala: el pasado impune y las nuevas violaciones de derechos humanos*. www.amnestiainternacional.org/publica-ISBN_8486874785.html (10.04).

Barry, D. (2004). Comunicación Personal con Deborah Barry, Oficial de Programa de la Fundación Ford-México.

BCIE y otros (2001). *Plan Puebla Panamá: iniciativas mesoamericanas y proyectos*. Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. www.iadb.org/ppp/files/projects/OTRO/OT_PPP_PPP1_ES_PP.doc (8.04).

Bebbington, A. J. y Batterbury, S. P. J. (2001). *Transnational livelihoods and landscapes: political ecologies of globalization*. Ecumene 8 (4):369-380.

Bray, D. B.; Merino-Perez, L.; Negreros-Castillo, P.; Segura-Warnholtz, G.; Torres-Rojo, J. M. y Vester, H. F. M. (2003). *Mexico's community-managed forests as a global model for sustainable landscapes*. Conservation Biology 17 (3):672-677.

Buck, L.; Lassoie, J. P. y Fernandes, E. C. M. (eds.) (1999). *Agroforestry in sustainable agricultural systems*. Advances in Agroecology CRC Press: Boca Raton, Fl.

Carrera, F. y Pinelo, G. (1995). *Prácticas mejoradas para aprovechamientos forestales de bajo impacto*. Serie Técnica/Informe Técnico No. 262. Colección Manejo Forestal en la Reserva de la Biósfera Maya No. 1. CATIE: Turrialba, Costa Rica.

Castiglione, J.; Donado, J.; López, J.; Salazar, M.; Morales, M. y Tuy, H. (2000). *Promoción del conocimiento y uso sostenible de las especies forestales de Guatemala*. pp. 217-224. In Varios (ed.) Encuentro internacional de investigadores: nuevas perspectivas de desarrollo sostenible en Petén. Guatemala, Guatemala.

CCAD-RUTA (2000). Inventario de Proyectos Ambientales de Centroamérica: Informe Nacional de Guatemala (Versión Ejecutiva). Febrero, 2000. CCAD-RUTA.

Chemonics-BIOFOR (2003). *Community forest management in the Maya Biosphere Reserve: close to financial self-sufficiency*. Guatemala BIOFOR IQC Task Order 815. August 2003. Chemonics International BIOFOR Consortium:

Chemonics-BIOFOR y IRG-EPIQ (2000). *Guatemala: assessment and analysis of progress toward SO5 goals in the Maya Biosphere Reserve*. Informe Final para USAID/G-CAP. 6 de Diciembre. Chemonics/IRG:

CONAP (1996). *Plan maestro Reserva Biosfera Maya*. Colección Manejo Forestal en la Reserva de la Biósfera Maya No. 2. CATIE: Turrialba, Costa Rica.

CEMEC/CONAP y otros (2004). Deforestation estimation in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, 2003-2004, Petén, Guatemala.

Cortave, M. (2003). *La Experiencia de ACOFOP en Petén, Guatemala. Un Proceso arduo de gestión política*, CEDARENA-CICAFOC, San José, Costa Rica.

Cortave, M. (2004). *Experiencia de la asociacion de comunidades forestales de Petén en el manejo forestal comunitario en la Reserva de la Biosfera Maya, en Petén, Guatemala, Centroamérica*. Presentado en el Taller de Estrategias y Políticas Forestales. Mayo. Honduras. 11 p.

Cuéllar, E. (2004). Entrevista con Erik Cuéllar, Funcionario del Área de Gestión Social, ACOFOP. 15 de marzo: Flores, Petén, Guatemala.

Elías, S.; Gellert, G.; Pape, E. y Reyes, E. (1997). *Evaluación de la sostenibilidad en Guatemala*. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

FARES y GHF (2004). *Maya biosphere conservation trust: an innovative private-sector trust for establishing sustainable wilderness, wildlife and archaeological parks to save the heart of the Maya biosphere*. Proposal developed by FARES and GHF. March.

Ferguson, B. G.; Vandermeer, J.; Morales, H. y Griffith, D. M. (2003). *Post-agricultural succession in El Petén, Guatemala*. Conservation Biology 17 (3):818-828.

Finger-Stich, A. (2003). *Community concessions and certification in the Maya Biosphere Reserve*. In E. Meidinger, C. Elliott y G. Oesten (eds.) Social and political dimensions of forest certification. www.forestbuch.de

FLACSO (ed.) (2000). *Encuentro internacional de investigadores: nuevas perspectivas de desarrollo sostenible en Petén*. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

FORESCOM, Empresa Comunitaria de Servicios del Bosque S.A (2004). Presentación realizada en el Taller Internacional "*Aprendiendo de nuestras propias experiencias de manejo forestal comunitario*". Ixlu, Flores, Petén, 9-16 de Octubre

Gillespie, A. R.; Knudson, D. M. y GEILFUS, F. (1993). *The structure of four home gardens in the Peten, Guatemala*. Agroforestry Systems 24:157-170.

Gould, K.; Howard, A. F. y RODRÍGUEZ, G. (1998). *Sustainable production of non-timber forest products - dye extraction from Cruce Dos Aguadas, Petén, Guatemala*. Forest Ecology and Management 111 (1):69-82.

Grant, R. y Rodas, A. (2004). Entrevista con Funcionarios del proyecto "Facilitando acceso a mercados a pequeñas y medianas empresas forestales en Petén" ejecutado por la ONG Escocesa "Alianza para un Mundo Justo". 19 de marzo: Petén, Guatemala.

Gretzinger, S. P. (1999). *Conceciones forestales comunitarias: una alternativa económica para la Reserva de la Biósfera Maya en el Petén, Guatemala*. pp. 151-165. In R. B. Primack, D. B. Bray, H. A. Galletti y I. Ponciano (eds.) La selva Maya: conservación y desarrollo. Siglo Veintiuno Editores: México, D.F., México.

Guariguata, M. R. y Kattan, G. H. (eds.) (2002). *Ecología y conservación de bosques neotropicales*. Libro Universitario Regional Editorial Tecnológica de Costa Rica: Cartago, Costa Rica.

Huxley, P. (1999). *Tropical agroforestry*. Blackwell Science: Oxford, UK.

INE - Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2002). *Censo Oficial 2002*, citado por MINUGUA, 2004, Informe de Cierre, Oficina Regional de Petén, Guatemala.

Jum, C.; Abega, M. y Bengono, F. (2003). *Participatory action research for collaborative management: Lessons from the Ottotomo forest reserve of Cameroon*. ACM Report.

Klein, K. (2000). *Desarrollo sostenible y el proyecto de la RBM: desafíos, avances y reflexiones sobre lecciones aprendidads (perspectiva de un donante)*. pp. 241-250. In Varios (ed.) Encuentro internacional de investigadores: nuevas perspectivas de desarrollo sostenible en Petén. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

Kunen, J. y Roney J. (2004) *"Evaluación y recomendaciones para la protección de sitios arqueológicos dentro de las Concesiones Forestales Comunitarias en la Zona de Usos Múltiples de la Reserva de la Biosfera Maya* ". USAID, Borrador. Peten, Guatemala.

Kurzel, C. y Müller, A. (2004). *ACOFOP: el proyecto forestal comunitario más grande del mundo se presenta*. Tríptico Informativo. ACOFOP: San Benito, Petén, Guatemala.

Langholz, J. (1999). *Exploring the effects of alternative income opportunities on rainforest use: insights from Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve*. Society and Natural Resources 12 (2):139-149.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2003). *Ecosystems and human well-being: a framework for assessment*. Island Press: Washington, D.C.

MINUGUA (2004a). *Acuerdos de paz, herramientas para el cambio. Tomo V, Guatemala*. www.migua.guate.net / default2.htm (10.04).

MINUGUA (2004b). *Informe de cierre*. Oficina Regional de Petén, Guatemala. http: / / minugua.guate.net / default2.htm (10.04).

Nittler, J. y Tschinkler, H. (2005). *Manejo Comunitario del Bosque en la Reserva Maya de la Biósfera de Guatemala*, University of Georgia, Watkinsville, Georgia.

Pasos, R. (2002). *ACOFOP: Situación actual y perspectivas*. Informe de Consultoría. ACICAFOC: Flores, Petén, Guatemala.

Pasos, R. (2004). Comunicación Personal con Rubén Pasos, Consultor de ACOFOP.

Pasos, R. (en preparación) *La sociedad civil Centroamericana y las iniciativas regionales para la conservación y sostenibilidad del medio ambiente.*

PNUD, 2003, Informe de Sobre Desarrollo Humano El Salvador, San Salvador.

Poffenberger, M. y McGEAN, B. (eds.) (1998). *Village voices, forest choices: joint forest management in India.* Oxford University Press: New Delhi, India.

Radachowsky, J. y otros (2004). *Effects of certified logging on wildlife in community and industrial forest concessions of northern Guatemala . Monitoring ecological integrity of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Petén, Guatemala.* CONAP, USAID, FIPA y WCS. Guatemala.

Reyes, R. (2000). *Caracterización y evaluación de la sostenibilidad de los sistemas de producción de las conseción comunitaria de San Miguel La Palotada, Petén, Guatemala.*In Varios (ed.) Encuentro internacional de investigadores: nuevas perspectivas de desarrollo sostenible en Petén. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

Reyna Contreras, A. V.; Gramajo, S. E.; Cigarroa, C. y Moreno, P. (1999). *Comunidades rurales y áreas protegidas: análisis de la gestión colectiva en dos sitios de El Petén*. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

Romero, L. (2004). Entrevista con Luis Romero, funcionario de Asociación Centro Maya. 18 de marzo: Petén, Guatemala.

Rosa, H.; Kandel, S. y Dimas, L. (2003). *Compensación por servicios ambientales y comunidades rurales: lecciones de las Américas y temas críticos para fortalecer estrategias comunitarias*. PRISMA: San Salvador, El Salvador.

Scherr, S. J.; White, A.; y Kaimowitz, D. (2004). *A new agenda for forest conservation and poverty reduction: making markets work for low-income producers.* Forest Trends / CIFOR / UICN: Washington, D.C.

Schroth, G.; Foseca, G.; Harvey, C. A.; Gascon, C.; Vasconcelos, H. y IZAC, A. M. N. (eds.) (2004). *Agroforestry and biodiversity conservation in tropical landscapes*. Island Press: Washington, D.C.

Schwartz, N. (2000). *El avance de la frontera organizacional: notas para una nueva "historia social (1960-1998)"*. pp. 27-52. In Varios (ed.) Encuentro internacional de investigadores: nuevas perspectivas de desarrollo sostenible en Petén. FLACSO: Guatemala, Guatemala.

Shriar, A. J. (2001). *The dynamics of agricultural intensification and resource conservation in the buffer zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Petén, Guatemala.* Human Ecology 29 (1):27-48.

SmartWood Program (2003a). R*esumen público de certificación de Cooperativa Agroindustrial Unión Maya Itzá R.L.* www.rainforest-alliance.org / programs / forestry / smartwood / documents / unionmayaitzafmpubsum04.pdf (11.04).

SmartWood Program (2003b). *Resumen público de certificación de Sociedad Civil Organización, Manejo y Conservación Uaxactun (OMYC).* www.rainforest-alliance.org / programs / forestry / smartwood / documents / omycpubsum04.pdf (11.04).

SmartWood Program (2003c). *Resumen público de certificación de Sociedad Civil para el Desarrollo Árbol Verde.* www.rainforest-alliance.org / programs / forestry / smartwood / pdfs / arbol.pdf (11.04).

SmartWood Program (2003d). *Resumen público de certificación de Cooperativa Integral de Comercialización Carmelita de R.L.* www.rainforest-alliance.org / programs / forestry / smartwood / pdfs / cooperativacarmelitafmpubsum04.pdf.pdf (11.04).

Soza, C. (2003). *The process of forest certification in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve in Petén, Guatemala.* pp. 1-10. In A. Molnar (ed.) Forest certification and communities: looking forward to the next decade. Forest Trends: Washington, D.C., E.U.A.

Sundberg, J. (1998). *Ngo landscapes in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala.* Geographical Review 88 (3):388-412.

Sundberg, J. (2003). *Strategies for authenticity and space in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Petén, Guatemala.* pp. 50-69. In K. S. Zimmerer y T. J. Bassett (eds.) Political ecology: an integrative approach to geography and environment-development studies. Guilford Press: New York, NY, E.U.A.

Taylor, P. (2004). Comunicación Personal con Peter Taylor, Profesor de Sociología de la Universidad Estatal de Colorado.

UNESCO (1996). Reservas de biosfera: La estrategia de Sevilla y Marco Estatuario de la Red Mundial. UNESCO, Paris.

UNESCO (2002). *Maya Biosphere Reserve Information*. The MAB Programme. www2.unesco.org / mab / br / brdir / directory / biores.asp?mode=all&code=GUA+01 (7.04).

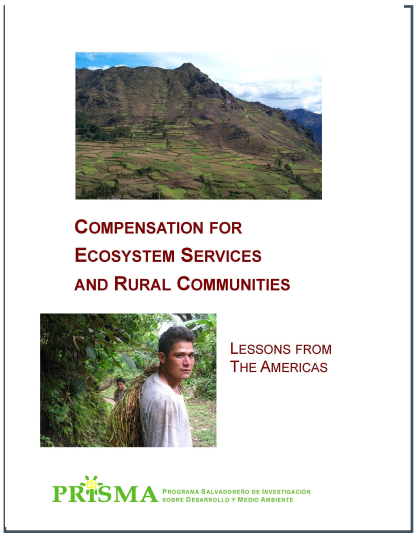
Universidad Rafael Landívar (1984) *República de Guatemala: Pérfil Ambiental*. Universidad Rafael Landívar: Guatemala, Guatemala.

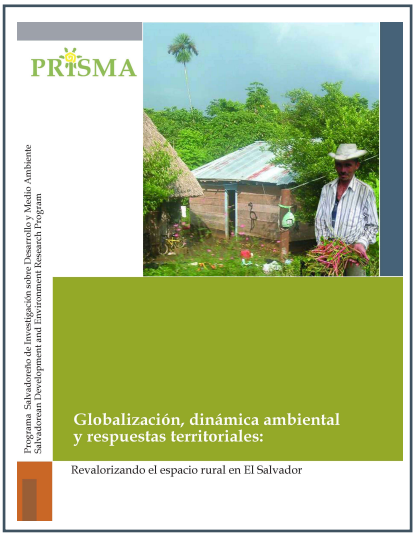
Valenzuela, I. (2002a). *Algunas reflexiones sobre el Plan Puebla Panamá y las actividades que se han llevado a cabo en Petén*. Revista Theomai: No. 5. http: / / revista theomai.unq.edu.ar / numero5 / artileanavalenzuela.htm (8.04).

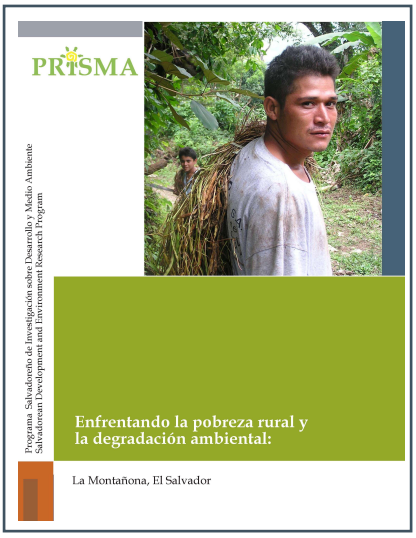
Valenzuela, I. (2002b). *Algunos datos sobre el Plan Puebla Panamá.* Grupo Solidario de Acción. www.ciepac.org / otras%20temas / queselppp.htm (8.04).

.

Recent Publications







PRISMA

The Petén forest communities are showing promise in their experience with community and territorial development, while at the same time meeting natural resource conservation objectives. The setting for this process is the Multiple Use Zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in northern Guatemala. Here, community-based resource management has made significant environmental advances, including a reduction in forest fires and deforestation, the elimination of illegal logging and the stabilization of the agricultural frontier, preventing the formation of illegal settlements. Furthermore, the forest has become the communities' prime natural asset, breathing new life into their production activities; they have successfully entering the certified wood market and are starting their own commercialization enterprise.

The organizations belonging to the Association of Petén Forest Communities (ACOFOP) have been successful at community forest management because they have access to woodlands rich in precious wood, a high level of community social capital, strong technical knowledge-building and have integrated forest management into community livelihood strategies. This trend is in stark contrast to the instability reigning in the MBR's national parks, which continue to suffer from rampant deforestation; strong pressure from "agarradas" or illegal land invasions; illegal trafficking in flora, fauna, undocumented migrants and illegal drugs; and looting of archeological resources.

Despite the accomplishments of community forest management, it is still a work in progress, facing new challenges due to important changes in the offing from the economic integration of the Central American region and proposed macro-projects such as Cuenca Mirador Park. Given this scenario, the community-based model needs to consolidate its management and make it more integral by linking forest management, agroforestry, conservation and the preservation of cultural goods. This also involves moving toward inclusive management where territorial stakeholders are active participants in discussions about the future and where the true ecological and social value of the community concessions is recognized.

Programa Salvadoreño de Investigación sobre Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente
Salvadoran Research Program onDevelopment and Environment

www.prisma.org.sv
prisma@prisma.org.sv
3a. Calle Poniente No. 3760, Colonia Escalón, San Salvador
Tels.: (503) 2 298 6852, (503) 2 298 6853, (503) 2 224 3700; Fax: (503) 2 2237209
International Mailing Address: VIP No. 992, P.O. Box 52-5364, Miami FLA 33152, U.S.A.