



Rural
Development
Forestry
Network

network paper 24b
winter 98/99



 **odi**

Rural Development Forestry Network

Local Governments and Forests in the Bolivian Lowlands

David Kaimowitz, Pablo Pacheco, James Johnson, Iciar
Pávez, Christian Vallejos and Róger Vélez

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David Kaimowitz leads a project on ‘Causes of Deforestation, Forest Degradation, and Changes in Human Welfare’ at the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Bogor, Indonesia. He can be contacted at: P.O. Box 6596, JKPWB, Jakarta 10065, Indonesia. Email: d.kaimowitz@cgiar.org

Pablo Pacheco is a sociologist at the Center for Studies of Labor and Agrarian Development (CEDLA) in La Paz, Bolivia. He can be contacted at CEDLA, Avenida Jaimes Freyre # 2940, Zona Sopocachi, Casilla Postal 8630, La Paz, Bolivia. Email: ppb@caeba.entelnet.bo

Cristian Vallejos currently works at the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in Oaxaca, Mexico. When he participated in the research for this paper he worked at the Bolivian Sustainable Forest Management Project (BOLFOR) in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

James Johnson and **Róger Vélez** are consultants in Santa Cruz Bolivia and **Iciar Pávez** works as a consultant in La Paz.

ISSN 0968-2627

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND FORESTS IN THE BOLIVIAN LOWLANDS

David Kaimowitz, Pablo Pacheco, James Johnson, Iciar Pávez, Cristian Vallejos, and Róger Vélez

SUMMARY

This paper evaluates Bolivia's recent experience of giving municipal governments a role in forest management. It first provides background information on Bolivia's decentralisation policies, including the 1994 Popular Participation Law and the 1996 Forestry Law. It then presents case studies of four specific municipalities: Ascención de Guarayos, Rurrenabaque, Villa Tunari, and San Ignacio de Velasco. It concludes that decentralisation has created new opportunities for marginal groups, but they have not always been able to take advantage of those opportunities. Municipal forest reserves could provide small-scale loggers with greater access to forest resources, yet institutional, technical, and organisational constraints impede their full implementation. Local government municipalities are interested in forest issues but their capacity to address them remains limited. While they show signs of interest in sustainable forest management, they are unlikely in the short term to make major progress on reducing deforestation, regulating concession management, or improving small-farmer timber management.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, countries around the world have begun to give local and provincial governments greater rights and responsibilities

in relation to forests. It is hoped that by so doing government bureaucracy can be reduced, decision-making will be democratised, the benefits from forest resources will be distributed more equitably, and forest utilisation can be regulated more effectively.

It remains to be seen whether the new policies will live up to their expectations. To-date, few studies have analysed their effects. This paper draws on initial experiences in the Bolivian lowlands to present some tentative conclusions on the topic.

Five years ago, the Bolivian government embarked upon a wide-reaching process of decentralisation. It approved a 'Popular Participation' law that strengthened municipal governments and attempted to make them more democratic. Two years later, in 1996, it passed a Forestry Law that gave municipal governments an explicit role in forest management and the right to receive a portion of forest revenues.

Between December 1996 and October 1998, we interviewed key informants and prepared nine municipal case studies to assess how these laws had affected: i) the participation of previously marginalised stakeholders in decision-making related to forests; ii) the access of these groups to forest resources; and iii) the extent to which forest resources were

sustainably managed. We also hoped to identify steps that might be taken to better achieve these objectives in the future. Full versions of the nine cases in Spanish, along with a comparative analysis can be found in Pacheco & Kaimowitz (1998).

Since we conducted our fieldwork less than five years after the start of decentralisation and less than three years after the passage of the new forestry law, we could not reach firm conclusions regarding the longer-term impacts of these processes. Nevertheless, we believe the evidence we have collected so far gives us some significant insights which can contribute to the on-going debate on these issues.

Perhaps not surprisingly, we conclude that decentralisation increases diversity. Depending on local circumstances, it can lead to more or less democratic, equitable, and sustainable outcomes. On balance, in Bolivia it has led to slightly more democratic and equitable outcomes, although the opposite has clearly occurred in certain cases. The net effect on the sustainable management of forest resources is more uncertain. It is worth stressing, however, that even in those cases where decentralisation has favoured more sustainable resource management the dominant trend towards resource degradation has still not been reversed.

For decentralisation to yield optimal results, municipal governments must receive political, technical, and financial support from national governments, foreign aid agencies, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The evidence suggests that the NGOs and international donor organisations have so far been rather more forthcoming with their support than have the government agencies.

The next section of this paper provides basic background information on Bolivian forest management. This is followed by a summary of the major elements of the decentralisation process. Four examples of how decentralisation of forest management has worked in particular municipalities are then presented. A comparison of these cases allows us to present some broad conclusions in the final section.

FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE BOLIVIAN LOWLANDS

In this study the Bolivian lowlands are taken to include all the departments of Beni, Pando, and Santa Cruz and the tropical areas of Cochabamba and La Paz. Most of the region is less than 500 meters above sea level, although some areas are much higher. Forests cover around 44 million hectares, or 57 percent of the entire lowlands (MDSMA, 1995). Most of this forest belongs to some forty or so heavily forested municipalities.

Commercial logging in the lowlands began to increase in scale in the 1970s and has grown sharply in recent years. By 1994, the Bolivian government had assigned 185 logging areas, covering almost 21 million hectares, to 173 timber companies (Quiroga & Salinas, 1996). After the Congress passed the 1996 Forestry Law the area in concessions declined to 5.8 million hectares. Under the new law, timber companies pay taxes based on the size of their concessions and the government can no longer give out forest concessions on private properties. As a result, timber companies have lost access to certain areas and have voluntarily reduced their control over other areas to lower their taxes.

Small-scale operators produce a substantial amount of timber, although the full extent of their contribution remains uncertain. Many of these producers belong to the 'informal' sector, which has traditionally operated outside the legal framework.

Logging in Bolivia tends to be quite selective and rarely contributes directly to deforestation (although, in certain instances, farmers use logging roads to gain access to forest areas, which they then clear for agriculture). Nevertheless, timber harvesting has greatly depleted the population of valuable species such as mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) and cedar (*Cedrela sp.*) and has had a negative effect on certain mammal, bird and fish populations (López, 1993).

The collection of Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*) and palm hearts (*Euterpe precatoria*) plays an important role in the economies of Pando and northern Beni. Although the collection of Brazil nuts typically does not deplete resources, the same cannot be said of the extraction of palm hearts.

Deforestation rates in the Bolivian lowlands have traditionally been low, but in recent years they have increased markedly, particularly in Santa Cruz (Pacheco, 1998). The expansion of large-scale soyabean production is responsible for most of the increase in deforestation, although small-farmer shifting cultivation and large-scale ranching are also partially responsible.

In 1992 the lowlands had a total rural population of 810,000 people, most of whom lived in agricultural colonisation areas near the city of Santa Cruz and in the tropical regions of

Cochabamba and La Paz (INE, 1993). Indigenous people accounted for around one quarter of the rural population (Díez Astete & Reister, 1996). By early 1998, indigenous people had received title to about three million hectares of land. The government had yet to rule on indigenous peoples' claims over an additional area of 11.5 million hectares (Pacheco, 1998).

By 1995, 12.8 million hectares, or 17 percent of the entire lowlands, had been given some protected status, although only a small fraction of that total was effectively protected (Pacheco, 1998). Among the most important lowland protected areas are: the Amboró, Noel Kempff Mercado and Kaa-iyá National Parks in Santa Cruz, the Isiboro-Securé National Park in Beni, and the Pilón-Lajas Biosphere Reserve in Beni and northern La Paz.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In the mid 1990s, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada made decentralisation a major theme of his government. The centrepiece of the policy was the 1994 'Popular Participation' law, which fundamentally changed the role of municipal governments.

The new law expanded the jurisdiction of municipal government beyond the urban centres to the surrounding rural areas and made municipalities responsible for local schools, health facilities, roads, and water systems (SPP, 1994). To finance these new responsibilities, it allocated 20 percent of the national budget to the municipal governments and allowed them to collect property taxes.

The law sought to introduce community control over municipal governments by recognising territorially-based grass roots organisations (Organizaciones Territorial de Base) (OTBs) and permitting them to influence investment decisions and elect oversight committees to monitor municipal finances. The law allowed local farmer organisations, urban neighbourhood committees and indigenous groups to become OTBs simply by registering as such. To promote the law's implementation, the central government created a National Secretariat of Popular Participation and dedicated substantial resources to disseminating information about the law, providing municipal governments with training on planning and administration, and contracting consultants to help local governments formulate their plans.

The Popular Participation law did not give municipal governments any explicit new mandate with regard to forests. Nevertheless, by strengthening them politically and financially it opened the door to greater municipal involvement in a wide variety of areas, including forest management.

The 1996 Forestry Law changed this situation by giving municipal governments an explicit role and allocating them funds to be used for forest-related activities. Under the new law and accompanying regulations, municipal governments are expected to administer up to 20 percent of public forests as municipal forest reserves to be exploited by local community groups (ASLs) and have a role in ensuring that timber concessions and sawmills comply with forestry regulations. The cost of these activities is to be met by allocating 25 percent of the royalties from forest concessions and

the revenue generated from forest clearing permits to municipal governments.

To meet their new responsibilities, the law specifies that municipal governments should create municipal forestry units (UFMs). Each municipality can decide either to create its own unit or to join together in a group ('*mancomunidad*') and share a unit. The principal UFM functions stipulated in the law include:

- Identifying and requesting areas for municipal forest reserves;
- Taking part in decisions regarding who can use those reserves;
- Helping local organisations prepare forest management plans;
- Monitoring compliance with forestry regulations and management plans;
- Promoting forest plantations and agroforestry.

Under the 1996 law, the process of assigning public forests to ASLs begins with the mapping and classification of all public forests by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and the Environment (MDSMA). Once this is done, the MDSMA and the municipal governments must provide Bolivia's Forest Superintendent with a list of areas suitable for municipal forest reserves. The municipal councils then recommend who should be allowed to exploit the forest reserves, the municipal oversight committees approve those recommendations, and the Forest Superintendent formally assigns the forests to those groups.

The 1996 Forestry Law and previous legislation do not give municipal governments any specific role with regard to protected areas. Since the passage of the 1994 Popular

Participation law, however, the MDSMA has generally invited municipal governments to participate in the protected area advisory committees that it has established for each national park.

CASE 1: ASCENCIÓN DE GUARAYOS

Ascención de Guarayos is located in northern Santa Cruz and covers 766,700 hectares, the vast majority of which is forested (Vallejos, 1998).

In 1997, Ascención had a population of about 14,000, the majority of whom were Guarayos. Other ethnic groups included *mestizos*, Quechua and Aymara immigrants from the Andes, Chiquitanos, and Moxeños.

Until the 1960s the Guarayos remained isolated and concentrated on subsistence agriculture and extractive activities. Timber companies from Santa Cruz then moved in to harvest mahogany and cedar, and this process accelerated after the late 1970s.

Soon after this, the government built a highway between the cities of Santa Cruz and Trinidad which passed through Ascención and attracted large cattle ranchers and small agricultural colonists to the area. All three activities (logging, ranching, and agricultural colonisation) displaced the Guarayos, who eventually responded with protest.

At present, five timber companies control 127,395 hectares, or 17 percent of the total area. Before the 1996 Forestry Law came into effect, timber companies controlled an even larger area.

During the 1980s, the Guarayos created the Confederation of Guarayo Native Peoples (COPNAG) to defend their territorial rights. COPNAG soon came into conflict with the logging companies, complaining that they often trespassed on indigenous peoples' farms, kept local people from harvesting timber, depleted the stock of valuable timber, and failed to keep their promises to provide benefits to local communities. There were also conflicts between COPNAG and the large cattle ranchers.

For the 1995 municipal elections, COPNAG entered into an agreement with one of Bolivia's major political parties, the Revolutionary Left Movement, which allowed them to field their own candidates under its electoral banner. At the same time, they urged individual COPNAG members to become candidates for other parties. This strategy enabled COPNAG members to win three out of five municipal council seats, which allowed them to make a decisive break with the local *mestizo* elite's traditional domination over local politics.

Despite COPNAG's majority on the council, another political party, the National Revolutionary Movement, used its political influence with provincial authorities to have COPNAG's mayoral candidate arrested by the local prefect, in the hope that this would allow its own candidate to be elected Mayor. This led the Guarayo population to revolt, forcing the prefect to release COPNAG's candidate and to allow him to assume his position as Mayor.

Under a new Agrarian Reform Law passed by the Bolivian Congress in 1996, COPNAG claimed most of the land within the municipality as indigenous territory. In response, the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA) issued a

resolution in July 1997 prohibiting the sale or allocation of the land claimed by COPNAG until it could determine its legal status. Nevertheless, the Forest Superintendent allowed logging companies to convert their old logging contracts into forest concessions under the terms of the 1996 Forestry Law. The previous logging contracts would have expired after twenty years, but the new concessions lasted for forty years and could be renewed. Consequently COPNAG argued that the Office of the Forest Superintendent had violated the July 1997 INRA resolution by giving additional property rights to logging companies for areas whose legal status the INRA had not yet determined. After the Forest Superintendent reaffirmed his decision, COPNAG appealed to the Office of the Natural Resources Superintendent, which has not yet ruled on the matter.

In 1997, the municipal government had an annual budget of about US\$113,000, of which it dedicated about 60 percent to education. Its main rural activities were a small agricultural credit programme and the maintenance of rural feeder roads.

Despite this, the municipal government has shown interest in forestry issues, advised by the Christian Women's Association, a Santa Cruz-based NGO, since 1996. This NGO has promoted the creation of a joint municipal forestry unit (UFM) that would serve the municipalities of El Puente and Urubichá, as well as Ascención. That initiative has been stalled, however, by concerns in Urubichá that Ascención might dominate a joint UFM.

When we conducted our fieldwork in Ascención in late 1997, more than one year after the

passage of the 1996 Forestry Law, the Forest Superintendent's Office had still not transferred any of the forestry revenues it had collected to the municipality. However, it acknowledged that it owed the local government a total of almost US\$42,000, which was apparently paid a short while later.

According to the Superintendent's Office one major reason for the delay was COPNAG's demand that the Superintendent revoke the forest concessions it had authorised on indigenous lands. The Office argued that until this issue was settled it could not disburse any funds since if it were forced to revoke the concessions it would have to return the concessionaire's royalty payments. Several observers, however, suggested that the real motivation behind the delay was to pressure the municipal government to convince the COPNAG to drop its case.

Even before the Office of the Forest Superintendent disbursed its first payment to Ascención from forest taxes and royalties, the municipality had already spent over US\$13,000 in 1996 and 1997 on documents to help it meet its forestry obligations. While this may not be a large sum in absolute terms, it represented a substantial commitment for the municipality, given the small size of its budget.

The local government also expressed interest in managing the Ríos Blanco y Negro wildlife reserve located to the north of the municipality. However, it has taken few, if any, concrete steps in that direction.

Since practically all the municipality's land is already in logging concessions or private property, or has been claimed as indigenous

territory, it appears that few public forests remain that could be used for municipal forest reserves. This implies that the major role of a municipal UFM would be not to manage such reserves but rather to help regulate forest management in indigenous territory, logging concessions and private lands.

CASE 2: RURRENABAQUE, BALLIVIÁN

Rurrenabaque is only slightly smaller than Ascención (650,000 hectares) and is located in southeast Beni. Like Ascención, most of the land remains forested (Pavez, 1998).

Rurrenabaque has a population of between 9,000 and 11,500, about half of whom live in the main town. Many of these people depend on logging for their livelihoods. The 2,800 agricultural colonists from the Andes and the 1,350 indigenous people make up the majority of the rural population. Most colonists have arrived during the last ten years following the construction by the government of a road connecting Rurrenabaque and Yucumo to La Paz and live in colonies alongside that road, covering some 75,000 hectares (VSF, 1997).

Most indigenous people live in the 400,000 'Pilón-Lajas Biosphere Reserve and Indigenous Territory', most of which is in Rurrenabaque. The government initially declared the area a biosphere reserve in 1992, and in 1997 went on to name it an indigenous communal territory (TCO) belonging to the Chimanes and Mosevenes. In 1996, the MDSMA and the Vice Ministry of Ethnic Affairs (SSAE) signed an agreement with Veterinarians without Borders (VSF), a French NGO, to manage the reserve.

The municipality's main economic activities include logging, ranching, food crop production, palm heart extraction, and ecotourism. Most of the wood harvested comes from Pilón-Lajas and logging generates an estimated US\$2.5 million annually. Small and medium-sized chainsaw operators dominate the local forest sector. Before the passage of the 1996 Forestry Law six large logging companies operated in the municipality, but currently only two remain. The total area under crops is about 3,000 hectares. Ranchers own some 30,000 head of cattle, but these put little pressure on the local environment since they are mostly grazed in natural savanna areas. Eleven thousand tourists visited the municipality in 1997 and spent an estimated US\$1.5 - 2 million. Four organisations represent the town's major social groups:

- the Association of Timber Workers (ASTRAMAR),
- the Association of Small Independent Sawmill Owners (ASPIFOR),
- the Special Federation of Colonists of Rurrenabaque (FECAR), and
- the Council of Chimanes.

ASTRAMAR's 86 members are urban-dwelling chain saw operators, while ASPIFOR represents five small sawmill operators. Local farmer unions (*sindicatos*) organised into six peasant councils together constitute FECAR. The Council of Chimanes belongs to the Eastern Bolivia Indigenous Council (CDOB), lowland Bolivia's main indigenous peoples' organisation. ASTRAMAR, ASPIFOR, FECAR, and various small local groups comprise the local 'civic committee'.

Since the mid-1980s, the civic committee and local government representatives have been

engaged in a struggle against the larger logging companies. Initially, the aim was to make them pay timber royalties to the municipal government. More recently, local groups have sought, with some success, to have the larger companies expelled.

Local chainsaw operators and sawmill owners exercised substantial influence in the local government even before the 1994 Popular Participation law. Nevertheless, the law strengthened their power vis-à-vis other groups, such as the outside logging companies. One of ASTRAMAR's founders served as Mayor on several occasions before 1994 and was the acting Mayor when we did our fieldwork in Rurrenabaque in late 1997. Several ASTRAMAR and ASPIFOR members were municipal council members.

Whether the 1994 law also served to empower agricultural colonists and indigenous people remains less clear. Traditionally, the townspeople have always controlled local politics and for the most part this has not changed. The municipal council had only one colonist in 1997 and no representative from the indigenous communities.

Nonetheless, a few signs indicate that these groups now participate more than in the past. Despite some controversy, the townspeople agreed to name a FECAR representative president of the municipal oversight committee in late 1997. At about the same time, the Mayors of Rurrenabaque and San Borja signed an agreement with the Council of Chimanes to create a joint committee to support the management of the 'Pilón-Lajas' indigenous territory. The Mayors committed themselves to help the Chimanes get logging permits,

prepare forest management plans, and negotiate with outside logging companies as well as to support the Chimanes' and Mosenes' demands for territory. For their part, the Chimanes agreed not to make any agreements with timber companies outside the framework of the 1996 Forestry Law.

The municipality created its Municipal Forest Unit (UFM) in mid 1997 and hired a director and two agronomists to staff it. A little later, the Dutch government agreed to finance the UFM and to contract VSF to provide it with technical assistance. VSF also assisted the UFM staff with transportation. UFM staff participated in several training courses offered by the Bolivian Sustainable Forest Management Project (BOLFOR), funded by the United States.

In 1997, the municipal government received a total of US\$37,000 from the Forest Superintendent's Office for its share of forest taxes and royalties for that year. (The municipality also charged a volume-based tax on all timber extracted, although the law does not authorise such taxes.)

Rather than coordinating closely with the Forest Superintendent's Office as the law envisaged, the municipal government and its UFM have often been in conflict with it. Despite several requests, the Superintendent's Office failed to provide the municipal government with complete information regarding the status of several companies' attempts to obtain forest concessions under the new law. On one occasion the municipal government and the Council of Chimanes formally accused a company of illegal logging, only to discover later that the Forest

Superintendent's Office had authorised its activities. Due to the influence of chainsaw operators and sawmill owners over the local government, the municipality has been outspoken in its opposition to a clause in the 1996 Forestry Law that prohibits the use of chainsaws to saw wood and this has also brought it into conflict with the Superintendent's Office.

The Mayor's Office organised a meeting in June 1998 to discuss these problems, attended by the national leadership of the Forest Superintendent's Office, the Vice Minister of the MDSMA, representatives from the governments of four neighbouring municipalities, and leaders of organisations representing chainsaw operators, agricultural colonists and indigenous people. It was agreed that chainsaw operators could use chainsaws to process wood as long as they had forest management plans and applied to be recognised as ASLs. The MDSMA and the Superintendent's Office committed themselves to identifying public forests that could serve as municipal forest reserves and be allocated to the ASLs.

Subsequently, BOLFOR prepared a map of all public forests in Rurrenabaque and delivered it to the municipal government. This allowed the municipality to identify an area of 43,102 hectares that it could request as a municipal forest reserve and in September 1998 it submitted a formal request to the MDSMA.

A total of nine local groups including both ASTRAMAR and ASPIFOR have informed the UFM that they would like permission to exploit the municipal forest reserves. Before the UFM can officially submit these requests

to the MDSMA, however, the groups will need to do some additional work to meet the requirements.

A final conflict within the municipality concerns the 'Pilón-Lajas' Biosphere Reserve and the role of VSF. Even though the Reserve's management plan strictly protects only a small portion of the total area and contemplates various types of forest utilisation on the remainder, many agricultural colonists and chainsaw operators have opposed any restrictions on their activities. In May 1996 agricultural colonists occupied VSF's offices and temporarily kidnapped several VSF staff members, and tensions have continued ever since. As a result in early 1998, the MDSMA decided to gradually phase out VSF's role in managing the Reserve. The municipality has taken a somewhat ambiguous position in these conflicts. On the one hand, it has participated in the Reserve's management committee and collaborated with VSF on the establishment of the UFM. At the same time, it has also echoed many of the complaints against VSF and the Reserve voiced by local chainsaw operators and colonists.

CASE 3: VILLA TUNARÍ, CHAPARE

The municipality of Villa Tunarí in northeast Cochabamba claims an area of 2,170,000 hectares. Several neighbouring municipalities dispute this figure, alleging that part of the land claimed by Villa Tunarí belongs to them (Johnson and Vélez, 1998).

Significant doubts exist as to the size of the population, with estimates for 1997 ranging from 66,676 to 81,496. The great majority of these people are small agricultural colonists

who have migrated from other parts of Cochabamba and the Andes and live in dispersed rural settlements, most producing coca and food crops. Less than 10 percent of the people live in towns and there are fewer than 3,000 Yuracarés and Mojeños, the local indigenous populations.

Although some non-indigenous families moved into the area as early as the 1920s and the government began directed settlement programmes there in the 1960s, the major influx of agricultural colonists occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Most families came to take advantage of high coca prices, lax government control over coca production, and readily available land. The government has since cracked down on coca production, coca prices have fallen, and little accessible land remains unclaimed. Immigration into the area has slowed somewhat as a result.

The municipality has no forest concessions or large logging companies. Small-scale timber companies and chainsaw operators harvest timber mostly from colonists' farms. Often they make agreements with local *sindicatos* to build or improve roads, bridges, schools, or other facilities in return for the right to harvest the timber. Unlike Ascención or Rurrenabaque, they mostly harvest softwoods used for construction and furniture in Cochabamba, rather than mahogany or cedar.

The largest and most powerful grassroots organisations in Villa Tunarí are the Special Peasant Federation of the Cochabamba Tropics (FETCTC) and the Special Yungas Chapare Federation. The former has 13,000 members and the latter 3,200. Both have focussed principally on defending their members' right

to plant coca against government attempts to limit coca production.

Since 1995, the FETCTC has dominated the local municipal government. They contested the elections on the 'United Left' ticket and won the Mayoral position and four out of seven municipal council seats. The Special Yungas Chapare Federation won a fifth seat. The president of the local municipal oversight committee is also a former FETCTC leader.

The municipality's total budget in 1997 was approximately US\$2.2 million, most of which went to education, urban infrastructure, and feeder roads. The budget included US\$24,000 for agriculture and forestry, of which it allocated US\$13,412 to the Municipal Forest Unit (UFM).

The local government established the UFM in July 1997, and hired two young professionals to staff it. The UFM has spent most of its efforts on: disseminating information about the 1996 Forestry Law; identifying communities' forest management needs; participating in regulatory activities; and coordinating with other entities concerned with forests, such as an FAO forest management project and the Forest Superintendent's Office.

The Forest Superintendent's Office has approved forest management plans for two colonist communities, Primero de Mayo and Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz. To support these efforts, the municipal government constructed a road to Primero de Mayo and has agreed to purchase the sawn timber they produce for municipal construction activities.

In response to complaints about timber trucks damaging local roads, the municipal government issued an ordinance prohibiting the trucks from using roads constructed or approved by the municipality. It used both local radio and television channels to publicise the new regulations.

The only ASL that has made a request to the municipality for an area in which to harvest timber is the Puerto San Francisco Loggers' Association, which has 43 members. The area they asked for permission to work in may be one of the last public forest areas in Villa Tunarí. However, a local agricultural cooperative has also laid claim to the same area. The municipal government would like to support the Association and provide them with about 20 hectares of forest for each member to log, but before filing an official request with the MDSMA it must resolve the issue of the two competing claims.

Villa Tunarí and the other two municipalities of Tropical Cochabamba, Chimoré and Puerto Villaroel, joined together in late 1997 to create a *mancomunidad*, which now has official legal recognition and formal statutes. One of their first joint actions was to protest against the Forest Superintendent's Office's delay in transferring the funds owed to them from timber taxes. As part of this effort, during two days in December 1997 they refused to allow some 200 timber trucks to circulate in their municipalities. This led to negotiations between the Forest Superintendent's Office, the departmental government and the municipalities, and to an agreement regarding specific deadlines and procedures for transferring the funds. Villa Tunarí's share of 1997 timber revenues came to US\$12,696.

Despite the tension between the municipalities and the Forest Superintendent's Office, the two do work together on certain issues. For example, the FAO Forestry Project has organised an 'Inter-Institutional Forestry Working Group' involving both groups, as well as logging companies, the Agricultural Superintendent's Office, and CERES, a Cochabamba-based NGO. The Group's main activity so far has been to map the public forest areas in the three municipalities so that these areas can be made available to ASLs or allocated as forest concessions.

The municipal government has not become seriously involved in issues concerning protected areas, although it formally participates in the management committee of Carrasco National Park. One factor limiting municipal participation in both Carrasco National Park and Isiboro-Securé Indigenous Territory and Protected Area (TIPNIS) has been the uncertainty about which portion of these areas actually fall within municipal limits.

CASE 4: SAN IGNACIO DE VELASCO

San Ignacio de Velasco sits on the Brazilian border in northeast Santa Cruz. Its 4,786,500 hectares make the municipality almost as large as Costa Rica. Its population, however, is only 36,000, with most people living either in the main town or in nearby rural communities (Pacheco, 1998b).

Chiquitano Indians constitute the majority of the local population and derive their livelihoods largely from small-scale agricultural activities. Their total landholdings only amount to 82,000 hectares, most of which they own collectively (CORDECRUZ et al., 1995).

Forest and natural savanna still cover most of the land, although the low land prices in the region have recently attracted an influx of Brazilian cattle ranchers who cleared between 10,000 and 20,000 hectares of forest for pasture in 1997.

Logging and cattle ranching both became more important after the mid 1970s, when the Bolivian government improved the road connecting San Ignacio with the city of Santa Cruz. Between 1975 and 1985, loggers exported large amounts of *morado* (*Machaerium scleroxylon*) to Brazil, after which they shifted to harvesting *soto* (*Schinopsis sp.*) to make railroad ties and *cuchi* (*Astronium urundeuva*) to make electric poles. Currently, most logging in the north of the municipality focuses on mahogany, cedar, and oak (*Amburana cearensis*), while *soto*, *cuchi*, and other secondary species have greater importance in the south and centre.

Until 1996, 14 large logging companies based in Santa Cruz had logging contracts for 2.3 million hectares in the north of San Ignacio (Kraljevic, 1996). However, since the 1996 Forestry Law came into effect they have reduced their forest concession area by 80 percent. Now only three concessions remain, with a total of 388,235 hectares.

Smaller locally based loggers harvest most of the timber in the centre and south. These loggers traditionally obtained either one-off permits to harvest timber from their own lands or operated completely outside the legal framework.

Traditionally, the *mestizo* loggers, ranchers, and merchants located in the main town have

dominated local politics. The 1994 Popular Participation Law did not affect this situation, even though the Chiquitanos constitute a majority of the population. Each Chiquitano community has its own council (*cabildo*) and leader (*cacique*), but the only organisation including representatives from more than one community is the 'MINGA Producer's Association', which has avoided becoming involved in politics.

The main *mestizo* organisations are the Civic Committee, the San Ignacio Loggers Association, and the San Ignacio Ranchers Federation. During the early 1980s the Civic Committee and the Loggers Association fought hard to force the outside logging companies to pay them timber royalties and to establish a local tax on timber sales. To press their position, they went so far as to block the road to Brazil. These efforts were partially successful and resulted in some additional revenues for municipal development activities, although many companies evaded payment. More recently, however, both the Civic Committee and the Loggers Association have become less dynamic.

The Mayor and all five council members in San Ignacio come from the local elite. In the first ten months of 1997, the municipality spent a little over US\$1.2 million, of which over 70 percent went to projects in the main town. It allocated only US\$15,000 to agricultural or forestry projects.

Throughout 1997, the municipality was only marginally involved in forest issues. At the beginning of the year it renamed its 'Parks and Gardens Department' the 'Agroforestry Department' but the Department's only activity was to manage a small tree nursery. The

municipal government and the Forest Superintendent's Office worked together to identify ranchers clearing forests without permits, but the main motivation behind this was to increase municipal revenues from permit sales, not to halt deforestation. The municipality also consulted with the IP-Latina consulting company, the Christian Women's Association, and the departmental government on how to comply with the 1996 Forestry Law.

With the support of IP-Latina, San Ignacio had already come together with eight other municipalities in northeast Santa Cruz to create a *mancomunidad* in late 1996, whose initial purpose was to jointly administer a rural property tax system. At the time, the municipalities envisaged that the *mancomunidad* would also get involved in forestry issues, but that has not yet happened.

Forest issues moved up San Ignacio's municipal agenda in early 1998. The municipality created its Municipal Forest Unit (UFM) and hired a professional forester. At about the same time, the Forest Superintendent's Office turned over the US\$91,563 it owed San Ignacio from royalties, taxes, and fees collected in 1997. With the support of the BOLFOR Project and the Government of Santa Cruz, the UFM dedicated most of its energies to identifying public forests that it could request as municipal forest reserves. In September 1998, it formally applied to the MDSMA for an area of 259,897 hectares. The MDSMA considered the request and asked the UFM to clarify and correct certain points. So far, no one has formally organised an ASL in San Ignacio and requested access to the municipal forest reserve, although some local loggers have taken initial steps in that direction.

The municipal government participates only marginally in managing the Noel Kempff Mercado National Park, which covers almost one third of the entire municipality (1.5 million hectares) in an isolated area in the north. The Bolivian Government established the park in 1979 with an initial area of 541,000 hectares. It later expanded that to 706,000 hectares in 1988 and 1.5 million hectares in 1996. The Friends of Nature Foundation (FAN), a Bolivian NGO, manages the park under an agreement with the MDSMA.

The FAN has its main office in Santa Cruz and interacts relatively little with the municipal government. The park management committee meets only sporadically and municipal representatives do not participate to any great extent. In 1997, the FAN agreed to pay the municipality US\$100,000 owed to it by a logging company for unpaid timber royalties in return for the company's agreement to cancel its forest concession, which is located within the park boundaries. The FAN and the municipal government committed themselves to co-finance a project to purchase land for three communities whose activities were restricted by the park's expansion and to provide them with services. However, they had made little progress in implementing these activities by the time we conducted the fieldwork for this study in late 1997. Apparently, in the final months of 1998, the three communities got into a conflict with local forest concessions over the right to extract palm hearts.

CONCLUSIONS

As the cases show, decentralisation in Bolivia has created new opportunities for previously marginal groups such as indigenous people,

agricultural colonists, and small-scale loggers to influence forest policies. However, they have only been able to take advantage of those opportunities in places where they were already rather well organised. In many other places, decentralisation has simply strengthened the traditional local elite.

External logging companies have faced increasing difficulties as a result of this process, as local timber harvesters and indigenous people have sought to have their concessions cancelled and municipal governments have pressed them to pay their timber royalties, taxes, and fees. Nevertheless, the companies are still powerful and the final outcome in several key cases remains uncertain.

Municipal forest reserves could potentially serve to provide greater access to forest resources for small-scale loggers and bring informal producers into the legal framework. For this to happen, municipalities and local groups still have to overcome various institutional, technical, and organisational impediments. To-date, NGOs and bilateral projects have provided some support in overcoming these obstacles, but central government assistance has been weak.

It proved difficult to determine whether the municipalities have increased the benefits from their forest resources under the new system. In the past, timber royalties were not generally paid directly to municipal governments and little information exists on how much the companies paid and what the money was used for. The Forest Superintendent's Office has transferred a significant sum of money to the municipalities under the new law, and the municipalities are meant to use that money principally for forest management activities.

Municipal governments in heavily forested areas have an interest in forest issues but their capacity to address them continues to be rather limited. The UFM's have few personnel and generally lack information and adequate transportation. This raises important questions about whether municipal governments will ever have sufficient critical mass and continuity to carry out their functions effectively.

The municipalities show little interest in sustainable forest management, and there is little suggestion that they will make much progress on reducing deforestation, regulating concession management, or improving small-farmer timber management at any time in the near future. Many have an ambiguous attitude towards protected areas, which they perceive as offering both threats and potential benefits to local livelihoods.

Having said all this, no generalisation can hide the fact that each municipality faces unique challenges and has its own dynamic. The differences between the four municipalities we have presented are striking. All of the other five cases we have examined in our research are equally unique. Indeed, one of the main objectives of decentralisation is precisely this – to make space for diversity.

REFERENCES

- Corporación de Desarrollo de Santa Cruz (CORDECRUZ), IP/GTZ, & Fundación Martin Schmid (1995) 'Plan Participativo de Desarrollo Municipal 1996-2000', Honorable Alcaldía Municipal de San Ignacio de Velasco, San Ignacio de Velasco.
- Diez Astete, A. & Reister, J. (1996) Etnias y territorios indígenas, pp 19-45 in: Blanes, J. & Galindo, M. (Eds.), *Comunidades, territorios indígenas y biodiversidad en Bolivia*, Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (CEBEM), La Paz.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) (1993) *Resultados finales del censo nacional de población y vivienda de 1992*, INE, La Paz.
- Johnson, J. & Vélez, R. (1998) Villa Tunarí: Manejo forestal en un municipio cocalero, pp 315-360 in: Pacheco, P. & Kaimowitz, D. (Eds.), *Municipios y Gestión Forestal en el Trópico Boliviano*, CEDLA / CIFOR / TIERRA / BOLFOR, La Paz.
- Kraljevic, I. (1996) Estudio exploratorio del sector maderero local de la Provincia Velasco en el Departamento de Santa Cruz, *Documento Técnico 48/1996*, BOLFOR, Santa Cruz.
- López, J. (1993) *Recursos forestales de Bolivia y su aprovechamiento*, Cooperación Técnica Holandesa, La Paz.
- Ministerio de Desarrollo Sostenible y Medio Ambiente (MDSMA) (1995) *Memoria Explicativa. Mapa Forestal*. Secretaria Nacional de Recursos Naturales, La Paz.
- Quiroga, M.S. & Salinas, E. (1996) *Minerales y madera, temas para el debate ambiental*. Grupo de Acción y Reflexión sobre el Medio Ambiente (GRAMA), La Paz.
- Pacheco, P. (1998) *Estilos de desarrollo, deforestación y degradación de los bosques en las tierras bajas de Bolivia*. Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario (CEDLA) / Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) / Taller de Iniciativas en Estudios Rurales y Reforma Agraria (TIERRA), La Paz.
- Pacheco, P. (1998b) San Ignacio de Velasco: Madereros informales en el nuevo régimen forestal, pp 265-314 in: Pacheco, P. & Kaimowitz, D. (Eds.), *Municipios y Gestión Forestal en el Trópico Boliviano*, La Paz. CEDLA / CIFOR / TIERRA / BOLFOR.
- Pavez, I. (1998) Rurrenabaque: Motosierristas y dilemas para la conservación de los bosques, pp 227-264 in: Pacheco, P. & Kaimowitz, D. (Eds.), *Municipios y Gestión Forestal en el Trópico Boliviano*, CEDLA / CIFOR / TIERRA / BOLFOR, La Paz.
- Secretaría Nacional de Participación Popular (SPP) (1994) *Ley de Participación Popular*, SPP, La Paz.
- Vallejos, C. (1998) Ascención de Guarayos: Indígenas y Madereros, pp 51-82 in: Pacheco, P. & Kaimowitz, D. (Eds.), *Municipios y Gestión Forestal en el Trópico Boliviano*, CEDLA / CIFOR / TIERRA / BOLFOR, La Paz.
- Veterinarios sin Fronteras (VSF) (1997) *Plan de Manejo 1997-2000*, VSF, La Paz.

ASL	asociación social del lugar (local community group)	MDSMA	Ministerio de Desarrollo Sostenible y Medio Ambiente
ASPIFOR	Asociación de Pequeños Aserraderos Independientes (Association of Small Independent Sawmill Owners)	NGO	(Ministry of Sustainable Development and the Environment) Non-Governmental Organisation
ASTRAMAR	Asociación de Trabajadores de la Madera (Association of Timber Workers)	OTB	organización territorial de base (territorially-based grassroots organisation)
BOLFOR	Proyecto Boliviano de Manejo Forestal Sostenible (Bolivian Sustainable Forest Management Project)	UFM	unidad forestal municipal (municipal forestry unit)
COPNAG	Confederación de Pueblos Nativos Guarayos (Confederation of Guarayo Native Peoples)	VSF	Veterinarians without Borders
FAN	Fundación Amigos de la Naturaleza (Friends of Nature Foundation)		
FECAR	Federación Especial de Colonizadores de Rurrenabaque (Special Federation of Colonists of Rurrenabaque)		
FETCTC	Federación Especial de Trabajadores Campesinos del Trópico de Cochabamba (Special Peasant Federation of the Cochabamba Tropics)		
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (National Agrarian Reform Institute)		

Please send comments on this paper to:

Rural Development Forestry Network
Overseas Development Institute
Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5DP
United Kingdom
Email: forestry@odi.org.uk

Comments received will be passed on to the authors and may be used in future Newsletters. Photocopies of all or part of this publication may be made providing that the source is acknowledged. The Network Coordinator would appreciate receiving details of any use of this material in training, research or programme design, implementation or evaluation.

CREDITS

Editors of this paper:	David Brown and Kate Schreckenber
Layout and editorial assistance:	Caroline Wood
Printed by:	Russell Press Ltd, Nottingham on recycled paper
RDFN logo by Redesign	

Rural Development Forestry Network
Overseas Development Institute
Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5DP

Tel: +44 (0) 171 393 1600

Fax: +44 (0) 171 393 1699

Email: forestry@odi.org.uk

Website: www.oneworld.org/odi/

The Rural Development Forestry Network is funded by
The EUROPEAN COMMISSION