



# Commercialisation of NTFPs in Mexico & Bolivia: factors influencing success.

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# Presentation Structure

- Introduction: researching NTFPs
- Description of our NTFP project;
- Data collection & analysis methodologies;
- Challenges encountered & lessons learnt:
  - Undertaking development research in the NR sector;
  - Collaborating across disciplines & institutions.
- Research findings & final outputs
- Discussion!

# Undertaking development research in the NR sector

- Working across the development : conservation interface implicates the need to consider many different factors;
- Our research “CEPFOR” considers the relationships between poverty alleviation and the use of forest biodiversity, and the impacts upon gender, the resource base and livelihoods of the rural poor, in Mexico and Bolivia;
- A research focus on NTFPs (Non-timber forest products) provides a good example of how a multitude of issues may be addressed within one project. For example: SRL, Gender, SFM...

# Non-timber forest products - NTFPs

- A collection of biological resources derived from both natural and managed forests and other wooded areas (Peters, 1997);
- Are culturally important, cheap and often accessible to local people;
- Are collected opportunistically or via planned expeditions, often influenced by the urgency for money, amount of \$ & the time that can be spared from other activities;
- Their holistic management attempts to maintain & sustain the resource and its users; contribute to sustainable development; conserve forests and biodiversity, and promote non-traditional enterprises to improve local economies and diversify the economic base of the rural poor (Falconer, 1997).

# The research context: Rural livelihoods

- NTFPs are an important tool in addressing poverty issues for marginalised, forest dependant communities, by contributing to livelihood outcomes, including food security, health and well being, and income (FAO, 1995; Falconer, 1997).
- NTFP resources are critical, especially for the rural poor and women, and it is the socially most marginalised people who are the main actors in NTFP extraction (Ros-Tonen, 1999).

# The research context: Gender Issues

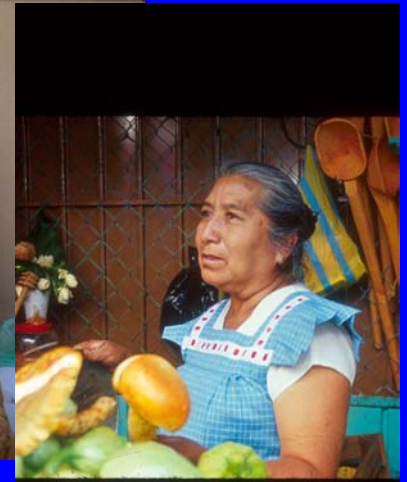
- Gender discrimination is globally the most widespread form of social exclusion, and this inequality is a key obstacle to development (DFID, 1999).
- Throughout much of the South, management of NTFPs is undertaken primarily by women who face a specific set of opportunities and constraints in relation to trading NTFPs.
- The role of NTFPs has changed markedly over the years with forest products becoming more commercially harvested and traded in much of the world. It is thus increasingly important to capture impact differentiation of commercialisation along gender lines & the resulting implications on livelihoods & welfare, & access to, and conservation of, forest and other natural resources.

# NTFP commercialisation in Mexico and Bolivia: factors influencing success

- Objective to investigate the factors which determine the success or failure of NTFP commercialisation, through comparative analysis of 10 case studies (18 communities, 10 products);
- Collaboration across 7 research and non government organisations, 4 countries, and two languages;
- In addition to assessing the socio-economic, gender and resource use impact of different commercialisation strategies at community and household level, both donors and partners highlighted demand for analysis of the commercialisation chain (processing, transport, storage, marketing, sale).



# Examples of fieldwork sites, Mexico





# Making baskets from wild harvested lianas, Mexico.





# Plaiting soyate palm for weaving, Mexico



GEA, A.C.

GEA, A.C.



# Harvesting wild edible fungi, Mexico





# Making natural fibre from Pita leaves (a bromeliad), Mexico.



# Camedora palm Mexico, used in floristry in the USA & Europe





# Examples of fieldwork sites, Bolivia





Various articles are weaved from Jipi Japa palm,  
Bolivia.





# Tapping of "wild" rubber trees, Bolivia.



## A common framework of research hypotheses

The overarching research focus addressed the impact of changes in commercialisation on the following:

- poverty alleviation;
- impact on women's livelihoods;
- resource overexploitation and/or domestication;
- resource access and tenure;
- & How market structure and function (inc trader & product characteristics) influences “success”.

It is interesting to note that our primary focus was on successful commercialisation, which we did not assume to be synonymous with “sustainability” .

## Methodology: data collection and analysis

1. Text analysis on the basis of product reports of individual NTFPs, and community reports from each case study location;
2. Value-chain analysis on the basis of interviews with stakeholders and NTFP traders at various stages of commercialisation of the product;
3. Statistical analysis on the basis of household level and trader level information.
4. An interactive model integrating all the research findings, based around probabilities of outcomes

# What challenges did we encounter?

## 1. Collaborating across disciplines

- Multi-disciplinary team with strong research agendas and information needs, which sometimes presented challenges WITHIN disciplines especially for our economists!;
- Different levels of understanding and interest in the different project components;
- Strong in-country partner skills in bio-physical and socio-economic research, but weaker in collecting, analysing and interpreting marketing data;



# Market interviews – a novelty for a plant ecologist!



# More “challenges”

## 2. Multi Institutional collaboration

- Different institutions have different ways of working;
- Different final objectives between partners and core research team;
- To what extent is this project about Research or Development?

## What have we learnt from the “process” of research?

- Early joint analysis – are we on track?;
- The need for intensive management;
- Reciprocal training of researchers and frequent joint reviews: over 3.5 years 7 capacity building & data analysis workshops;
- There is value in jointly developing hypotheses to integrate your different research strands!



## Value of jointly developed Ho & Research Questions

- Time consuming but imperative in developing a standard comparative methodology for comparing NTFP case studies;
- Played an important role in focussing all participants on key thematic questions – we all have the 6 central questions (& 40 sub questions!) to come back to;
- Makes clear how different methods can interact to test particular hypothesis;

## A The research hypotheses

Changes in NTFP commercialisation & impacts on:

- poverty alleviation;
- women's livelihoods;
- resource overexploitation and/or domestication;
- resource access and tenure;
- market structure; & market function.

Present: a few key findings from each hypotheses and some recommendations for interventions...

## Key findings about NTFPs & poverty

- In Mexico, NTFP households generally felt themselves to be less successful than other households in their communities with only very few feeling more successful than their peers.
- In Bolivia, most households felt that they were on a par with their peers or more successful, the exception being the Jipi-japa palm communities, where households felt predominantly less successful
- In many of the Bolivian communities, the NTFP income was the only or predominant source of cash income for households, whereas this was far less likely to be the case in Mexico.
- Very few poor NTFP collectors and producers are able to move along the value chain to become traders.

## *What makes NTFP activities so attractive to poor people?*

Low FC & VCs. Almost all costs are labour, so as long as they are healthy, the poor can engage in these activities.

- Combinability w/ other livelihood activities
- Free access to the resource, often communally owned (and managed) land
- Low level of skills needed for collection
- Source of cash income in subsistence communities where families often have no other cash-generating opportunities
- Traditional use of the resource – can be consumed or sold depending on need

## Key findings about NTFPs & women

- Women's involvement often culturally linked: “women shouldn't wander the hillsides on their own...” so wild harvesting opportunities limited;
- Processing usually take place in the home & generally involve women: jipi-japa palm & rubber processing;
- Often no alternative wage-earning opportunities for women so they engage in NTFP activities even though they bring in very low returns to labour;
- If women are involved in selling, this tends to give them greater control over the income generated.
- Most benefits to women in closer to home activities

## Key findings about NTFPs & resources, access & domestication....

- **Overexploitation:** > a problem where resource is far away & occurs on non-individualised land where community no longer has effective control (incense);
  - generally not a problem for plants from which the flower (tepejelote) or fruit (cocoa, mushrooms) are harvested rather than leaves (most fibres) or whole plants (maguey);
- **Domestication:** Generally the same people who collect that begin to domesticate the resource. In most cases this involved using wild germplasm & is more concerned with bringing the resource closer to home than with improving its quality.

## Resources, access & domestication....

- **Better management of the natural resource:**
  - Depletion resulting from poor harvesting techniques insufficient recovery time between harvests, e.g. cocoa & maguey overexploitation reversed by a combination of enrichment planting & manual cross-fertilisation to increase yields.

### **Collecting from farther away:**

- No increase in commercialisation of soyate & camedora palms > average collection times in last 10 years. People go much farther to find sufficient resource to meet demand.
- In rubber and jipi-japa, increased commercialisation is correlated with a decrease in collection time because of increased management of the resource or a switch from collection to purchasing by most jipi-japa processors.



## Key findings about NTFPs & markets

- **Building good links with intermediaries:**
  - play key roles in ensuring viability of the value-chain;
  - reliance on intermediaries means generally means < producer capacity to exert market power & vulnerable;
  - ‘faithful’ intermediaries = social contacts-god parenting
- **Processing (local value-adding):**
  - where physical access to markets is difficult because of poor transport, product unit weight can be important.
- **Organisation at community level:**
  - enable producers to bulk up sufficient quantities to interest traders &/or negotiate better relationships, e.g. fresh mushrooms to Japan accessible by intermediary & air transport; coop traded pita reaches \$ paying markets & these producers receive more than local processors

## Barriers to entry to selling NTFPs, % of hhds answering yes

	Mexico (n=133)	Bolivia (n=122)
Access to finance	31	43
Family situation	5	27
Lack of appropriate infrastructure	8	34
Taxes and regulations	1	0
Lack of information	23	9
Technical capacity	9	18
Monopolisation	7	1
Market contacts	68	38
Knowledge of market	70	42

## Some key assumptions about “supporting” the poor

- Helped most by activities on communal land (‘free’ access);
- “CBOs” can help the whole community (even poor non-participants) by contributing to community funds;
- Public support is important across the chain (from community to cooperative and entrepreneur);
- Ecological studies (e.g. for permits) should not be carried out without follow-up;
- There is a need to support NTFPs as part of a basket of activities (including agricultural and other forest products).

## Some key recommendations for interventions:

### Role of NGOs & other partner organisations:

- provision of technical know-how & training for improved resource management, harvesting techniques & processing;
- entrepreneurial spirit & help in raising funds;
- making links between producers and consumers;
- helping to link producers to markets.

## So, what how can we use these research findings?

- There is a growing need for ecological, socio economic and marketing “information & tools” to support decisions being made by a wide range of stakeholders;
- These include: local communities considering investing in establishing commercial enterprises; development & conservation agencies; G & NGOs; the private sector & institutions involved in trading and marketing forest products;
- We have developed a decision-support tool designed to meet this need, developed on the results of our interdisciplinary research.

## Expected project outputs

- Published book summarising the project;
- CD-ROM: all project outputs & findings + 2 "Decision Support Tools :
  - [1] BBN – software interface integrating all data types, to enable 66 key factors influencing success & potential impacts of NTFP commercialisation to be explored;
  - [2] Manual – designed around FAQs to provide the methodology for the collecting of this key information.

For more information:

[www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/ntfp](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/ntfp)

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