

Recognising the power of strong partnerships

In 2006, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) announced a new award, worth US\$30,000, for exemplary partnerships between CG centres – CIFOR being one of 15 – and civil-society organisations. One of the first four winners, announced at the annual general meeting of CGIAR in Washington DC, was a partnership between CIFOR and Fundación Natura Bolivia. “The partnership has been highly rewarding for both of us,” explains Sven Wunder, “and our long and close relationship has allowed us to make advances in the design of ‘payments for environment services’ schemes with great depth and rigour.”

Since 2001, Fundación Natura has made innovative use of marketing mechanisms to improve watershed management, and defuse possible conflicts between upland and lowland farmers, in Santa Cruz Department. The lowland farmers, whose livelihoods depend on irrigated agriculture, had been suffering from declining water flows for some years when the project began work. They attributed the water shortages to the clearance of cloud forests and an increase in the area of land under irrigation higher up the watershed. Fundación Natura brought together farmers from both the lowlands and the uplands and brokered a deal which encourages the upland farmers to conserve the cloud forests.

It works like this. The lowland farmers provide one artificial beehive and training in honey production to the upland farmers for every 10 hectares of cloud forests which they conserve. This payment for environmental services (PES) scheme – known locally as the ‘bees for water project’ – compensates upland farmers for profits they forego by not clearing forest. The deal has proved highly beneficial, both for the environment and for the farmers involved, and it has encouraged the local government to develop

a regional PES mechanism to support watershed management throughout Santa Cruz Department.

The CGIAR’s Innovative Market Place Award recognises that the success of the scheme owes much to the partnership between Fundación Natura and CIFOR, with the development interventions of the former being informed and guided by the research of the latter. CIFOR has acted as a sort of research department for Fundación Natura, while Fundación Natura’s field initiatives have allowed CIFOR to test specific research hypotheses. “We found that the deeper our relationship has become with CIFOR, the more productive it has been,” explains Fundación Natura’s executive director, María Teresa Vargas. The partnership has so far yielded a jointly organised international workshop and five internationally peer-reviewed articles, ranging from a global analysis of how PES projects can be designed to a site-based analysis of the impacts of carbon forestry on rural livelihoods.

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CGIAR Chairman Kathy Sierra (right) and USAID's Franklin Moore (left) congratulate Bolivia's Maria Teresa Vargas and CIFOR's Michael Hailu.

will provide new insights on ‘hot’ policy issues such as the relationship between community-based forest management and poverty alleviation, and the impact of market liberalisation on forest use and poverty. Third, the data set is very rich and will permit analysis of a number of specific issues. For

example, the PEN partners have even been asked to report how often people laugh and smile during the interviews. “This might provide us with some interesting insights about the levels of happiness, or unhappiness, in forest-dependent households,” explains Angelsen.