



## FSC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Because Forests and People Matter

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) brings people together to find solutions which promote stewardship of the world's forests.

FSC provides a stakeholder system to promote responsible management of the world's forests. People with varying interests are empowered to come together and seek a consensus on the future of the world's forests through the FSC system.

Over the years, FSC has worked to facilitate participation among all forest stakeholders. FSC's commitment to social issues is reflected in its vision for socially beneficial forestry and further emphasised in the FSC Social Strategy.

### FSC's Vision: Socially beneficial forestry

"... helping local people and society at large to enjoy long-term benefits from the forests through providing strong incentives for responsible forest management."  
(FSC Social Strategy)

Four out of ten of FSC's Principles address social issues:

**Principle 2:** Tenure and Use Rights and Responsibilities  
Long-term tenure and use rights to the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established.

**Principle 3:** Indigenous Peoples' Rights  
The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories and resources shall be recognized and respected.

**Principle 4:** Community Relations and Workers' Rights  
Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.

**Principle 5:** Benefits from the Forest  
Forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.

In addition to the above four Principles, FSC Principle 9 relating to the maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests requires that forest managers identify and protect critical social values of the forests for which they are responsible.

Several case studies on FSC certified forests reflect notable success in advancing the rights of forest workers, indigenous peoples and local communities. FSC has, however, recognised the need to implement a Social Strategy in order to fully achieve its vision of socially beneficial forestry.



## Protecting the rights of indigenous people

**“Thanks to FSC-certification, Sami reindeer herders now can discuss forest management with forest owners on a more equal level.”**

Olaf T Johansson,  
representative of The National Union  
of the Swedish Sami People (SSR).

## FSC Social Strategy:

### Strengthening FSC’s commitment to people-related issues

While FSC strives to embrace all stakeholders, members at the FSC Annual Conference in 1999 decided to give special attention to indigenous peoples, forests workers, communities and owners of small and low intensity forest operations. These forest stakeholders have been repeatedly identified as experiencing obstacles that restrict participation in the FSC system.

The FSC Social Strategy identifies objectives and activities to put FSC’s social values into practice. The overall aim of the FSC Social Strategy is to make forest certification more accessible and responsive to the needs of its social constituents so as to bring about an improvement in welfare and conservation of the environment for these groups.

## Promoting the rights of forest workers and local communities

**“FSC has improved the social conditions for forest workers. The employment of local people has been favoured, formal job training has increased and it has also led to better compliance with social and legal requirements. It has avoided the evasion of social contributions and ensured that employment rights are complied with. Finally, rural development has been strengthened through the involvement and participation of neighbours, local stakeholders and communities in forest planning and decision-making.”**

WWF report on FSC certification in Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Russia, Sweden and the UK

The goal of the FSC Social Strategy is to promote forest management practices that:

- Enhance forest values, products and services
- Ensure that current and future generations of social constituents enjoy the benefits of well-managed forests
- Recognise, respect and address indigenous land tenure and rights, traditional and customary rights and culture of indigenous peoples and local communities
- Contribute to enhancing local livelihoods and well-being

In recent years, the FSC Social Strategy has served to focus FSC’s social activities. The next pages describe the activities undertaken since 2002.



## FSC certification: a tool to improve social conditions for small forest operations in Kenya

**“Achievement of FSC certification for the small rural-based wood producers and processors (in Kenya) is confirmation that certification is not just a practical forest management tool for large forest blocks. It confirms FSC’s commitment in making certification possible for small-scale producers as outlined in the (small scale and low intensity management forest) scheme.”**

David Maingi,  
project co-coordinator for the FSC  
certification project at the  
Coast Farm Forestry Association  
in Kenya.

Extract from a report by Meriel Robson,  
Soil Association in FSC News and Notes, 31 March 2005.

## Promoting Equitable Access to FSC

### Improving forest certification for small scale and low intensity forest operations

Small scale, community-based operations, low intensity forest managers and non-timber forest product collectors, often from tropical regions, face particular challenges in relation to the cost of certification. FSC has developed solutions through its “Small and Low Intensity Management Forest” initiative.

This initiative seeks to promote access to information about FSC certification, to lower the costs of certification assessments and to facilitate development of standards and performance indicators designed for small scale and low intensity forest operations.

Since 2002, this initiative has resulted in

- Streamlined certification procedures for these forest operations
- More appropriate, user-friendly standards and indicators
- Cost reduction in some cases of 40% or more for forests through group certification.

## Improved Certification for Sustainable Tropical Forest Management

Large areas of high biodiversity forest worldwide are outside protected areas and are critically affected by commercial exploitation.

A project was started in May 2005, in collaboration with CIFOR through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), to develop tools and incentives to help small forest managers, communities and non-timber forest product collectors in the tropics identify and protect biodiversity through certification.

The project is focused on 3 countries: Cameroon, Mexico and Brazil with the aim of extending the practical tools developed to further countries in the tropics.

## Communication

### Promoting understanding of the FSC system among social stakeholders

FSC has produced a series of user-friendly communication materials to promote understanding of forest certification and the benefits for social stakeholders. Educational materials on FSC certification and FSC’s policies for small and low intensity managed forests were produced for workshops held in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru. Copies of these materials can be obtained through FSC National Initiatives in Latin America. Contact details of National Initiatives are available under the “Contact FSC” section on the FSC website. FSC has also set up a Spanish language website to facilitate exchange of information within the FSC network.



## Improving Evaluation of FSC Social Principles

### Activities to clarify the interpretation of FSC Social Principles in the development of national and generic standards

Guidelines are being developed for Principles 2 and 3 relating to rights for forest communities and indigenous peoples and for the interpretation of FSC Principles and Criteria for small and low intensity management forest operations. Guidelines will be developed for Principle 4 to focus on issues relating to the employment of forest workers. This guidance will also contribute to the improved application of Principle 4 in forest operations.

In addition, FSC will be developing indicators to identify the social impact of forest certification in collaboration with International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL), Vanderbilt University and partner organisations in selected countries.

### Addressing workers' conditions in the certified forest products supply chain

Whilst operations outside forests do not fall under the scope of the FSC Principles and Criteria, FSC will be consulting with stakeholders on how best to address social issues associated with forest product manufacturer. The overall objective is to ensure the integrity of the FSC system and label, with further work planned through to 2009.