

## Evaluating and Monitoring Social Impacts

Good forest management needs to take account of the impacts that different forest activities can have – both on the environment and on people.

The FSC Principles and Criteria ask forest managers to take account of 'social impacts' when managing the forest. This means incorporating the results of evaluations of social impact into planning and operations, and monitoring social impacts.

### Social impacts: People and Communities

To properly manage your forest you need to think beyond the forest itself. You need to consider how your actions affect other people. If the way you manage your forest creates changes to the lives of individuals or communities these changes are 'social impacts'. Social Impacts can be positive or negative, intentional or unintentional.

FSC expects you to be aware of them, to monitor them, and to try to minimize or eliminate any negative changes.

There are 4 main steps to evaluating and monitoring social impacts:

- agreeing which positive social impacts you want to achieve
- discovering what other social impacts there are and who they affect
- discussing the impacts with those affected
- taking action to eliminate, or reduce negative impacts in the way you manage the forest.

### How to monitor and evaluate social impacts

You need to find out:

- who might be affected
- whether and how they are affected
- if you find negative impacts, what can you do to eliminate or reduce these.

You may then need to make the changes to your forest management plan, or the way you work to make sure any negative effects are eliminated or reduced, wherever possible.

What is important is that you implement practical ways – which are appropriate to your situation – to *understand* what social impacts your forest operations are having, and to *take steps to change your practices*, if you detect negative social impacts.

### Who is likely to be affected?

The type of people or groups who might feel the impacts of initiating or changing a forestry operation will include:

- the workers (in the forest, in processing sites)
- neighbours (adjacent land owners, and also nearby communities, villages)
- any local population which relies on water supplies which originate in the forest or are captured by the forest
- any local population that has traditionally had access to the forest (eg. for hunting, collecting, for spiritual or religious use, for recreation or as an access route to somewhere else).

Make sure you have taken into account all of these groups when considering the social impacts of your operation.



## Consultation

Involving *all* sectors of the community in discussions about forest use, forest access, and the forest business, will help you to discover any negative consequences of forest management activities.

A common challenge is to take into account the use of the forest by the most marginalised sectors of the community such as the elderly, women and immigrants. While they often rely on forests for seasonal collection of products (e.g. firewood, food) they are least likely to take part in the formal decision-making systems of the community.

You should make sure you have consulted with them, and taken their concerns into account when designing your management plan.

Particular attention must be paid to discussing your forest use with **indigenous peoples**, who are often for – language or cultural reasons – left out of consultation processes. You need to take into account their traditional uses, and special sites within your forest.

No forest operations should take place on indigenous peoples lands, unless you have obtained their free, prior and informed consent.

## Expectations for small and low intensity managed forests

Social impact monitoring should be appropriate to the scale, intensity and diversity of the forest operation.

Social impact monitoring should be carried out by operations of all sizes; *however* small forests, or those operations with only low intensity harvesting, can reasonably be expected to devote less time and resources to this than large or high-intensity operations.

Larger companies might need to use an external company to carry out a social impact assessment (before they begin) or a social impact evaluation (periodically), but it will often be more appropriate for small individual or low-intensity operations to carry out some simple monitoring of social impacts on a regular basis.

In all cases consultation and dialogue is important. You must get views from other people and discuss possible problems with them. Apart from helping to identify what the impacts of your forest operation are, consultation may also help to provide answers about how to reduce or eliminate negative impacts.

## Documentation

How much of your social impact monitoring needs to be documented will also probably vary according to scale and intensity and also the context. Usually, certifiers won't be expecting a small community operation or a group of villagers harvesting nuts or fruits on a small scale to have written reports on social impacts! In some cases it may be more appropriate to show the minutes of community meetings where social impacts were discussed and actions to address them agreed. Alternatively it may be suitable for your situation to prepare a simple table showing groups affected, impacts, and what you have decided to do about it. What's most important is that you can demonstrate that you've been keeping an eye on social issues, and that you've turned your observations into practical changes to management and operations where necessary.



## What sort of impacts are typical?

You will need to discover for yourself exactly what sort of positive and negative effects your forest use is having on other people. The table below shows some common examples.

Type of Issue	Examples of positive impacts	Examples of a negative impact
Employment	Creating jobs locally	Reducing the number of jobs due to new technology in the sawmill
Health	Having access to healthcare because of employment in the forest operation	Accidents in the forest or sawmill
Land use / access	Protecting the traditional areas of mushrooms or fruit collection from damage by timber harvesting, and allowing collectors access	Local people's traditional access to the forest being restricted
Pollution (noise, air etc)	The operation listens to local people and agrees to manage noise and dust from heavy vehicles passing through villages, by introducing a lower speed limit	Use of pesticides or poor disposal of fuel containers pollutes the streams
Water	Good management of water sources and streams improves water quality for local people	Poor water management (e.g. not protecting water sources, or use of water-demanding species in areas of water scarcity) leads to water shortages downstream

## Community Forestry

Avoid the trap of thinking that just because yours is a community owned or managed forest any changes made to improve forest management will always automatically be 'good for the community'. While this may often be true, communities are so diverse that you cannot just 'assume' that everyone is positively affected. You should check that your well-intentioned changes to the forest management are not having a negative impact on some members of the community. The more people that participate in your activities to monitor and evaluate social impacts, the more useful the results are likely to be, and the better the communication with the people effected.

## Tips for social impact monitoring, evaluations and assessments

**Consult others** FSC requires that you talk to people (both men and women) who may be directly affected by your forest operation.

**Don't collect information that you don't need, or don't know how to use: keep it simple & relevant!** You probably don't need a huge socio-economic analysis: a list of key concerns, based on consultations and knowledge may be more useful.

**Discuss the results!** Don't just collect them and file them away: discuss what they mean and what to do about them.

**Use the results!** The reason for looking at social impacts is to see what changes you may need to make to the way you manage the forest. If you find problems - make changes!





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## Relevant parts of the FSC Principles and Criteria (partial text only)

**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.

[all 4 criteria of Principle 3 refer to respecting indigenous peoples rights. Therefore where indigenous peoples are found, consultation with them must therefore play a central role in any social impact assessment and monitoring]

### Principle 4: Community Relations and Workers Rights

4.4: Management planning and operations shall incorporate the results of *evaluations of social impact*. *Consultations shall be maintained* with people and groups (men and women) directly affected by management operations.

### Principle 7: Management Plan

7.2 The management plan shall be periodically revised to incorporate the results of *monitoring*, or new scientific and technical information, as well as to respond to changing environmental, social and economic *circumstances*.

### Principle 8: Monitoring and Assessment

*Monitoring shall be conducted – appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management – to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.*

8.2 Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to *monitor*, at a minimum the following indicators:

d) environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations

### 10 Plantations

10. 8 *Appropriate to the scale and diversity of the operation, monitoring of plantations shall include regular assessment of potential on-site and off-site ecological and social impacts [...] Special attention will be paid to social issues of land acquisition for plantations, especially the protection of local rights of ownership, use or access.*

## Group Certification and Social Impacts

Group certification is a way for more than one forest operation to be certified under a single FSC certificate (see 'Briefing Note 1 Group Certification' for more information).

Certified groups can be of any size and can be made up of forests of different sizes. There is a great deal of variation among certified groups: they vary in the way they are organized, the size and intensity of operations, the type of forest, how close together the members forests are located, and how much they work together to take collective decisions.

Since there is so much variation different groups will also manage social issues and the monitoring of social impacts in different ways. The group manager, group members and certification bodies will need to look at their particular circumstances and agree how best to evaluate and monitor the social impacts of the forest operations in the group. It is recommended that the group manager records how the monitoring will take place (whether by individual group members, or centrally), so that the responsibility for monitoring and addressing social impacts is clear and well understood by all.

For those groups whose members' forests are geographically close together – such as those who are all managing parts of a larger forest area, it might be cost-effective to collect social impact information as a group, and to consult neighbours and forest users collectively. For groups with members who are more spread out, it might be better for them to consult their neighbours themselves. Use the method that is most appropriate for your situation.

## Definitions

**Social impacts** (also called **effects** and **consequences**) refer to **changes** to individuals and communities due to actions that alter the way in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize etc. These changes can be intentional or unintentional. They can be positive or negative.

An **evaluation of social impacts** is usually an analysis of **what happened** over a particular period of time. It looks back at the social impacts that have occurred as a result of activities carried out.

**Monitoring of social impacts** is the **regular collection** of information about social issues. It is a way to see what effects - both positive and negative - the activities of the forest business are having.

**Social Impact Assessments (SIA)** are more formal analyses of the social impacts of **proposed** activities. They are a way of considering **in advance** the possible impacts on the people and communities of a proposed forestry project, operation or policy change. Although the global FSC Principles & Criteria do not require operations to have carried out SIAs, some national FSC standards may specify that they do.

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