

## Fire Management in a Protected Area of Amazonia: A Reflection on the Effectiveness of Partnerships between NGOs, Communities, Governments, and Civil Society

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Fire is part of the agricultural system for thousands of farmers in the Amazon. This practice is sometimes problematic because fire spreads outside of the agricultural field. In 2000 the lower Tapajos region suffered from intense wildfires, and the forests became highly susceptible to fire. In 2001 an Amazonian NGO was invited by a Brazilian environmental agency to work with communities living within a protected area. The objective was to decrease accidental fires caused by the communities' slash and burn system. The NGO established a partnership with most of the communities and local organizations of the civil society, as well as the environmental agency.

During the first four years of this project some important lessons were learned. An important lesson was that an understanding of the demands of government and representatives of civil society are often different from the demands of families within the community, even when the government and community work close together. Flexibility is necessary in order to guarantee that the basic goals and needs of the partners are met. For fire management, the government must be able to act as a mediator between land users and environmental policies for the establishment of local fire agreements. While coming together on the importance of, and problems associated with fire use can establish a partnership, the negotiation of a common platform through which specific goals can be achieved is an ongoing challenge.

Keywords: fire management, accidental fires, local agreements, partnership.

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