

Community Participation for Crabwood (*Carapa guianensis*) Conservation and Management at Iwokrama Rainforest Reserve

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Indigenous communities have long used the Iwokrama Rainforest's biological resources for their sustenance. One such resource is the crabwood tree (*Carapa guianensis*), which is an important medicinal plant for Indigenous communities. The crabwood tree is a valuable timber species and source of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as crabwood oil, soaps, and candles. This research aimed to identify how community participation contributed to conservation and management of the crabwood tree at Iwokrama; to determine whether community members benefitted from their participatory activities; and to identify the challenges to participation in the communities. The study focused on the communities of Fairview and Surama, situated within and adjacent to the Iwokrama Forest, respectively. A mixed methodological approach was used for data collection. Questionnaires were administered to the heads of households in Fairview (n=26) and Surama (n=39), and in-depth interviews were conducted with village leaders from both villages and a representative from the Iwokrama Rainforest Reserve. Secondary data was obtained from the review of literature from journals, reports, books, and news articles. Data analysis revealed varying levels of participation in each village towards crabwood tree conservation and management. Community participation levels were classified using the Pretty (1994) typology of participation, according to the categories: participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and self-mobilisation. Participation rates in Fairview (69%) were higher than those attained in Surama (46%). Among the participatory activities identified were establishment of crabwood conservation areas, sustainable harvesting of seeds and non-bearing trees to support continuation of the natural regeneration process, undertaking community outreach programmes, attending workshops and community meetings, employment as forest rangers, and conduct of forest inventories. The key challenges identified that prevented or hindered participation were personal responsibilities, willingness of community members to participate, and difficulties comprehending workshop materials. These findings highlight the vital role of indigenous communities for supporting conservation and management of the crabwood tree as they possess the values, traditional skills, and knowledge that can reliably aid these efforts. Given the useful insights on participatory efforts in the Iwokrama Forest Reserve, these findings may be applied to improve community participation in future conservation initiatives.

Keywords: Community participation; Crabwood Tree; conservation and management