

Project Update: July 2006

After four months of preparation – which involved many meetings with local government officials and non-government agencies, several community meetings to present the research project, two field tests, and numerous reconnaissance visits to the three field sites - the household level interview phase has finally begun. The first round of interviews has now been completed in Site 1, an extractive reserve accessible only by river canoe and the remoter households on foot and occasionally by horse. Fortunately, households have been receptive to my questioning which could last for up to 4 hours per interview, and have also shown me great hospitality despite their poverty.

Some interesting, and often surprising, preliminary observations have been revealed so far. Although this site is an extractive reserve – areas conceded by the government to rubber-tapping communities in order to continue conducting their forest-based activities – forest dependency is limited to Brazil nut harvesting in the rainy season months and hunting throughout the year. Outside of the rainy season, livelihood activities are based on small-scale, and often unproductive, agriculture. This indicates a much lower dependence on the forest than originally hypothesised, despite this community's history of forest-based livelihoods.



Left: Conducting the household interview. Middle: Smallholding with clearing for pasture. Right: Typical household .