

# Migration patterns and property rights variation on forest frontiers in the Peruvian Amazon

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In the Peruvian Amazon migration is a common strategy used by residents to adapt to environmental and economic change. The region has periodically attracted dramatic influxes of people seeking land and economic opportunities or fleeing violent conflict. Recently, these patterns have drawn the attention of policy makers that flag migration and migratory agriculture as crucial drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. However, the lack of information about current migration processes and their effects on forest access have inhibited effective policy responses to perceived threats to the region's forests. This paper draws on recent research in the Peruvian Amazon among twelve non-indigenous rural communities to understand variation in household migration patterns, property claims and the influence of these factors on livelihood and forest. We selected three multi-village landscapes exhibiting varied gradients of forest cover and agricultural conversion. We conducted 24 focus groups with residents and interviewed 233 randomly selected households to understand the linkages between migration patterns, property rights and forest use. We observed how each community was the result of spontaneous settlement in which migrants occupied forestland and later petitioned the government for legal recognition. In this process, settlers use a number of intermediate types of property claims combining customary and formal rights to secure their hold on the land, which produced diverse mosaics of titled, imperfectly titled and informal properties. Even though many residents in these communities lacked formal title, the majority reported high levels of property rights security. These cases illustrate how the government reacts to land occupation and land use change after the fact rather than providing institutional frameworks to allow settlement that is more orderly and that promotes forest management or conservation. Changing current dynamics requires greater coordination among government agencies, as well as land and forest policies adapted to respond to these dynamics.

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