Legislation aimed at giving Bolivia’s Indigenous communities the right to extract resources from their forests has solidified land tenure, but conflicts with long-standing forest-management practices, according to a study of the Yuracaré people.

Under land and forest reforms passed in 1996, the Yuracaré, who live in the Amazon Basin lowlands in the Chapare River watershed, secured improved rights to their land, but some of their traditional practices and organizational structures were undermined, researchers said.

By creating a timber-management structure more suited to large-scale, commercial production, the law made it difficult for Yuracaré families to harvest just a few trees to sell when they needed cash. It also required the community to involve outsiders in forest-management decisions that previously had been made only by Yuracaré people in community assemblies.

Published research findings, underscore the view that policymakers should take the needs of local communities, knowledge and traditional forest-management practices into account when designing regulations, said Anne Larson, a principal scientist with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) who studies forest tenure rights.