

**Report on Conference:**

**‘Advancing Community Forestry:  
Innovations and Experiences’**

**Organised by RECOFTC**

**Chang Mai, Thailand**

**24-28 September 2001**

**Oliver Springate-Baginski**

**School of Geography, University of Leeds**

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## Appended Outputs:

AI – Conference Background Papers

- Conference Agenda
- Pre-conference workshop: Enabling Policy Frameworks for Successful Community Based Resource Management
- Parallel Session Papers

AII - Records of discussion, proceedings, including final agenda

AIII - Participant List including full contact details

## 1 Introduction and Overview

It is evident that 'Community Forestry' (i.e. what might be defined as local people's participation in the management and use of locally accessible forests) is proceeding as a process of policy development and field implementation and experiment, in almost all countries in Asia.

The forms and level of process unfoldment is different in different countries. This is partly explained by the different initial conditions. Firstly, varying forest resource type and condition. Secondly, different social composition, education / awareness levels, wealth and livelihood strategies and practices. Thirdly, differing local and national socio-political arrangements. It is also explained by factors influencing the dynamics of the process: the level of commitment of governments, and the level of funding support and policy and institutional reform; the level of external bi-lateral and multi-lateral support; national and international market conditions, and so on.

In sum, the term 'community forestry' can be misleading when it is used without qualification to encompass to such a diversity of country policies and experiences, ranging from day-labour programmes for locals working in the logging industries in high value forests in Indonesia, to highly politically influential Forest User Groups in Nepal, with the legal authority to manage forests for their own livelihood needs.

The challenge facing this conference was to provide an opportunity to share innovations and experiences from across these diverse circumstances, in a way in which the relevance of each could be understood in its own context. Whilst there was a great variety of evidence of innovation, there was not sufficient recognition of the importance of contextualising these experiences.

If progress is to be made in understanding what works and why in 'community forestry', it is essential that the local context of achievements is recognised. If we are to draw out the general lessons which 'case studies' and locality-specific stories might offer, an overarching framework is needed, which allows us to locate each case relative to the others.

However many implications for research did emerge. Perhaps most importantly is the potential role of action research to prompt advances in the policy process by incorporating different stakeholders views, particularly those of the local people. Another area of great interest was livelihood analysis of the dynamic impacts of CF, which could be used to sensitise policy and implementation to local needs

## 2 Outline of Conference Format

The conference was attended by over 200 participants from throughout the Asia region (see participant list – AIII).

The conference was spread over 5 days:

The **first day** (Monday 24 September) involved a pre-conference workshop: 'Enabling Policy Frameworks for Successful Community Based Resource Management Initiatives'. This involved presentation of papers and discussions on the basis of these (See collected papers – AI).

The **second day** (Tuesday 25 September) commenced with a welcome ceremony and speeches, and then an animated debate on the motion '*There is no way to get forests in Asia properly managed unless the rights of the communities to manage their forests are clearly recognised.*' This allowed all participants to share their experiences in a fairly light-hearted way.

The afternoon participants split into parallel groups according to the following streams:

- Planning and Negotiating Collaborative Management Agreements
- Community Forest Management Practices
- Income Generation and Livelihoods: Community Based Forest Enterprises (CBFE)
- Policy Development and Implementation
- Institutional Issues in Forestry Sector Reform
- Education
- Training
- Networking and Information Management

Discussions were based on initial discussion papers.

The **third day (Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September)** began with all participants being introduced to the 'Information market', where many participants (including myself) had organised displays of their work, and information stalls. This afforded time for informal interaction.

Later in the day parallel session discussions resumed.

The **fourth day** involved field visits in small groups to a number of different local forest management initiatives.

The **fifth and final day** began with wrap up parallel sessions, where action points were summarised. After lunch there was a plenary session where each group presented their main points and these were discussed. Finally, concluding speeches were made.

### **3 Parallel Session Discussions**

*The following themes and subjects were covered. Minutes of these discussions were documented by the organisers, and will be made available shortly.*

#### **Theme 1. Local innovations in local forest management**

##### **Community Forest Management Practices**

Session Facilitator, **Deep Pandey**

- Community Based practices related to regeneration, sustainable use, protection and conservation
- Indigenous/local innovation strategies, skills for management, and farmer experimentation and innovative silvicultural options
- Multiple-use management systems and integrated farming and natural resource management systems
- Community Based monitoring, feedback, learning and adaptations

##### **Income Generation and Livelihoods: Community Based Forest Enterprises (CBFE)**

Session Facilitator, **Bhishma Subedi**

- Enterprise modalities
- Process of developing products and enterprises
- The market chain - harvesting, processing, marketing (ecological, social, legal, technological, financial, management)
- Impact of enterprises: socially, environmentally, conservation and benefit distribution

#### **Theme 2: Governance**

##### **Policy Development and Implementation**

Session Facilitator, **Rita Lindayati**

- What approaches are being followed in policy formulation (who are involved, what is process)?
- What has really worked (issues, problems, opportunities)?
- What has not worked (issues, problems, opportunities)?
- What are the possible future directions?

##### **Institutional Issues in Forestry Sector Reform**

Session Facilitator, **R. K. Singh**

- Reform in forest departments and local organizations (issues/problems, innovations, future trends)
- Reform in (issues/problems, innovations, future trends)
- General issues - decentralization, corruption, inclusion, legal empowerment, judicial reform

#### **Theme 3: Capacity building**

##### **Education**

Session Facilitators: **Gopa Pandey** or **John Pulhin**

- Analyse existing trends in CF education
- Agree and share recent development of education to develop capacity of users communities
- Evolve action plan to scale up education in participating countries

### **Training**

Session Facilitator **Hukum Singh**

- Identify and explore key issues and strategies related to community forestry training.
- Share and learn from strategies, innovations and experiences in training, drawing upon participants' knowledge and experiences.
- Identify and lists the 'factors of success' that contribute to effective training and the development of useful models
- Assess the problems, costs-benefits and impacts arising in the context of community forestry training.
- Identify and recommend innovative approaches for needs-based training.

### **Networking and Information Management**

Session Facilitators: **Sushil Saigal** and **Michael Glueck**

- Key issues and functions related to networking and information management (IM)
- Strategies, innovations and experiences in networking and IM
- 'Factors of success' for effective networking arrangements and structures
- IM tools and techniques
- Problems, costs, benefits and impacts of networking and Information management

## **4 Objectives for Visit**

### **4.1 To assess the Geographical Replicability of Findings of NRSP / FAI Project R6778 'Community Forestry in Nepal: Sustainability and Impacts on Common and Private Property Resource Management'**

*By findings:*

#### **A. Process Indicators of local institutional development.**

What was clearly recognised as transferable was the simple participatory method used by Forest User Groups to identify process indicators for their own self-monitoring. This can be used as a tool for forest user groups to then plan how to overcome institutional weaknesses, and to reflect on progress. The actual process indicators for local institutional development identified by Forest User Groups in the Middle Hills of Nepal are loosely generic for user groups in other areas, although they cannot have specific applicability – users need to define their own indicators in a 'bottom-up' process if they are to identify with them and have ownership of them. Transfer of the method requires a skilled local facilitator.

#### **B. Micro-Action Planning Process**

Again the wider applicability of this tool for local development planning was accepted by many participants, in conjunction with the Process Indicator method discussed above.

A key lesson we had found in Nepal was that with skilled facilitation, local institutions became far more confident of their own ability, more self-supporting and more oriented to wards meeting users needs. Many other participants also contributed that they had found likewise that with robust support to local institutions a great deal of inertia in local socio-economic conditions could be overcome. Whilst policy obstructions and local socio-economic inequity did obstruct progress in alleviating poverty, this was often overestimated.

The research was warmly received by participants at the conference, as it highlights how each local institutions evolves through its own development process, and has specific support needs at different stages of the process. This support agencies need to tailor support provision according to the specific stage each local institution has reached.

### **C. Evidence for the Evolution of Forest Management Institutions in to wider development institutions**

There is a great explosion in local development activities throughout Asia. However the extent to which these activities are prompted or evolving out of local forest resource management institutions is unclear. In the middle hills of Nepal there is indeed a great deal happening through the development of the FUGs. However this is a region where governance structures are very weak at the village level, and furthermore district headquarters are very inaccessible in the hills. Hence FUGs are often one of the main local community institutions at hamlet level, through which local people may articulate a range on needs and wishes.

### **D. Livelihood Impact Analysis**

There was no other participant at the conference (as far as I was aware, and I met most) who had made an extensive livelihood analysis of the impacts of Community Forestry. Methodologically, livelihood impact analysis was of great interest to participants, and appears to be a strength that DFID could share with Government agencies and projects in the region, in order that policy development and implementation could proceed more sensitively.

### **4.2 Size and Location of Recommendation Domains which might be associated with Advances in Policies, Practices and Procedures in CF Management which are reported at the Conference**

The number of advances in policies, practices and procedures reported were so diverse, and generally so unsystematically presented that it was not possible to clarify, during the conference the domain of applicability. Due to the diversity of the participants experiences, many comments remained at a general level. Furthermore, innovations in policy and practice reflect the stage of development of CF in a country. Participants from Dept. of Forests in Vietnam for instance were occupied with issues and concepts which would be seen by South Asian participants as 'Social Forestry' rather than Community Forestry.

Therefore it is a great challenge to try to put these in some order. As an attempt, the following structure is suggested. Community Forestry process occurs according to a number of stages in each national context:

#### **Stage 1: Initial perception of crisis and need for reform.**

Pressure may be both national and international. In the case of Nepal, pressure grew in the 1970s and coalesced into the 'Himalayan Crisis' model, most shrill in the World Bank paper. At the same time national actors were also making concerted action – meeting of foresters expressed renewed concerns over efficacy of prevailing 'command and control' model.

In other countries various factors are at play, but donor pressure and local civil society are undoubtedly important.

#### **Stage 2: Field experimentation with collaborative approaches.**

Local Department of Forest officers taking risks and investing energy beyond needs of job. Donor projects initiating new ways of working, and so on.

This is apparently the stage many countries, such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia, have reached. Concern has been raised and experiments are proceeding, to establish possibilities, which might be scaled up. However there is a fair degree of resistance from vested interests both within and outside the government, which means that in many areas progress is slow and even discouraging. Resource and social conditions are widely variable such that initiative effective on some areas may not be easily transferred

#### **Stage 3: Legal reform to provide 'enabling environment'**

Experiments (both successful and otherwise – SF) have provided the learning of what works and what doesn't and provide evidence of opportunities for doing things differently.

This may then be reflected through a review of policy, which may or may not be through consultative process. It is likely to be led by 'policy entrepreneurs' – skilled policy actors able to rally support at critical junctures and moments.

Negotiation of policy – ‘horse-trading’ over what is acceptable: (Politics – the art of the possible). For instance:

- How far ‘hand-over’ can go: just degraded mid-hills forests close to habitation, protection of plantations, even National Forests and forests in Terai?
- Legal basis and constitution of local institution? Legally independent of FD. Forest guard as *ex officio* member of committee?

This stage of legal reform is likely to occur through fortuitous circumstances supporting change. For instance in Nepal –the return of democracy helped the process to the breakthrough 1993 Act & 1995 Byelaws.

Some countries, such as the Philippines, and Regions in Pakistan are apparently at this juncture presently, with policies in their legislatures to be passed subject to consensus.

#### **Stage 4: Widespread implementation - ‘Scaling up’ – and Forest Hand-over**

The rate at which this stage may proceed depends on the level of real commitment by the national government, the financial resources and staff consequently made available, and level of institutional transformation in the formal structures. In India for instance implementation of JFM in different states is generally at this point, with progress greater in some areas than others.

An acid test for implementation is implementation outside of donor areas. If this is not happening it has serious implications for sustainability of the programme.

This is the stage where capacity building and cultural change in Forest Departments is essential, as the change of their roles from policing to facilitation occurs.

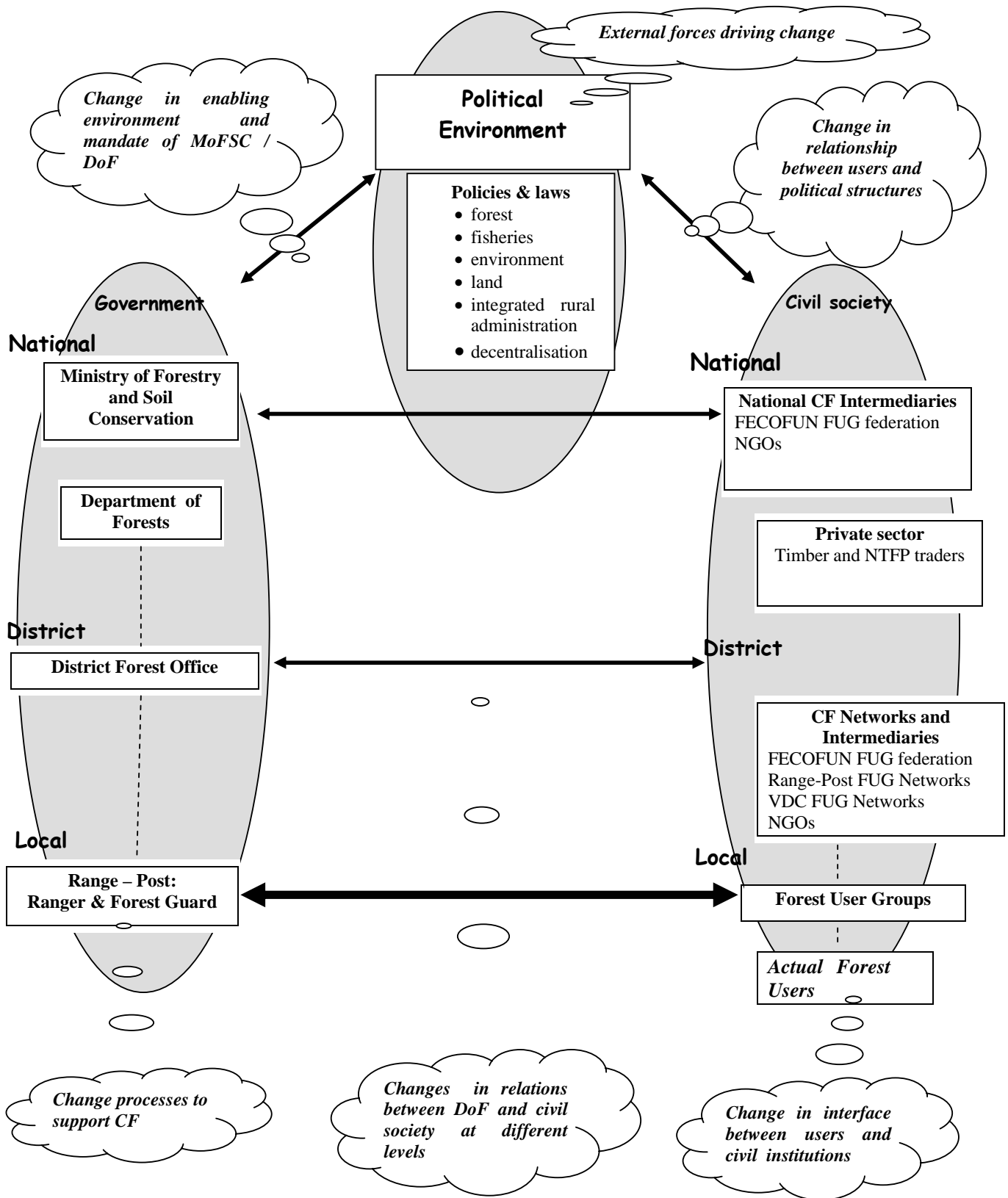
#### **Stage 5: Post formation development – ‘Second-generation issues’ – consolidation of process**

After handover has reached a critical mass, and local institutions have been managing their forests for long enough to get improved benefit flows, and to gain some institutional confidence the process evolves to a new stage, of what might be called second generation issues. As local institutions consolidate their role, they throw up new questions such as:

- Inclusion in decision-making and equity in product distribution
- Gender roles
- Management of forest: just conservation / protection oriented or active and planned multi-product silviculture.
- Timber marketing
- Local networking

This is the stage that CF in the middle hills of Nepal has generally reached, with a ‘quiet revolution’ in village politics, and powerful national apex group successfully pressuring the National government for policy and personnel changes. (The Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation was recently removed from his post after demonstrations organised by FECOFUN, the National Federation of FUGs.)

Figure 4.2 Model of Change:





The above figure highlights where institutional relationships change, through the policy and implementation process.

Actual innovations discussed at the conference fitted into a number of categories:

#### *'Policy Process' Innovations*

One of the key policy innovations discussed by people from a variety of stakeholder roles (Forestry Department personnel, NGOs and Project staff), was development of policy forums where all stakeholders could come together and discuss developments, in order to find consensus. Whilst nothing really new, supporting the 'policy process' in every country was seen as critical to CF being implemented on a sustainable basis. In some countries donors had brought the different stakeholders to the table. In other countries the government seems to have taken the initiative.

Here is a potential role for FRP research; to ensure in target countries the 'policy process' is adequately supported, and where necessary to initiate participatory research with stakeholder 'learning groups' in order to promote an adaptive learning environment amongst policy makers and other national stakeholders. Politics is said to be 'the art of the possible', and through policy process oriented research the most beneficial possible outcomes may be identified and made more achievable. In many countries much depends on capacity development of the Department of Forests to play the transformed support role.

#### *Capacity Building*

Many Department of Forest staff discussed new ways of working with the local resource groups, and how best to transform the capacity of the Forest Departments from primarily policing to facilitation / support roles. There were few evident innovations overall of interest to someone outside the specific institution, as other countries have already passed these stages. However one of the key issues remains how can FDs be most responsive to the great diversity of local institutions support needs, on a demand-led basis. This requires having both technical skills more appropriate to local multi-purpose silviculture, and also local facilitation skills. Retraining staff that have been used to a hierarchical relationship with local people is providing a challenge in many areas.

The basis on which Government institutions can provide demand-led and need based support to local resource management institutions remains an issue requiring investigation in different regions, and is a potential role for the FRP.

#### *Economic Development of Local Institutions and Livelihood Impacts*

In many areas of Asia local institutions are developing the capacity for marketing forest products, and a diversity of examples were highlighted, including medicinal herbs, aromatic oils, honey, paper, and timber.

A number of key issues were identified:

- Awareness and application of processing technologies
- Regulating sustainable offtake
- Awareness of market situation and opportunities
- How to increase the bargaining power of small producers

These are all areas on which there were a number of calls for improved understanding. Furthermore, many participants were unclear as to the actual livelihood impact of CF, current and potential, in their countries. FRP could perhaps provide a review of the literature or even primary research.

#### *Networks*

The experience of Nepal, where the forest users apex group, FECOFUN, has a degree of national policy influence was highlighted as a major step in transforming the asymmetrical power relationships, which generally prevail between Forest Departments and local people. However networks can and do support the FDs in their CF monitoring and support at the local and district level. Networks can indeed reduce the workload on Forest Departments by providing services such as awareness raising, meeting facilitation and so on.

FRP may play a research role to find out what conditions most support the emergence of local and national networks – for instance whether on the basis of products marketed, locality, ethnic group etc.

#### **4.3 Follow-up of Findings of FRP-Supported survey (ZF0160) on participatory and community forestry management.**

*By topic in ZF0160 report:*

1. It is apparent that amongst many donor project practitioners and many Forestry Department staff awareness of the range of materials on PFM, and of the international context of their specific circumstances is often poor. Hence I would agree with the authors that the lack of information is more apparent than real. This doesn't necessarily mean that a new manual needs producing, but perhaps a brief guide to extant manuals, and their availability, and a guide to national contexts, judiciously distributed.
8. Re-establishment of the RDFN. There was a sense amongst most participants that there is a 'community' of CF practitioners, but people rarely converge, and some common communication of means for sharing innovations is valuable.

In the summary points 1-5 are certainly of value as guides to future research needs. However these must, for each country, be made relevant to the existing state of knowledge, and stage of development of the CF process.

#### **4.4 Follow up of ODA case studies / syntheses of PFM.**

It remains the case, as stated in 'Sharing Forest Management' that 'establishing links between policy and ground-level change is the most effective approach.' P.4. It is also true that in many areas change in govt. Policies and institutions is 'hesitant and slow'.

'Critical questions about their final impact are poorly answered' p.5 This remains the case. There is little really systematic livelihood study of the dynamic changes brought by participatory approaches. It remains the case that there is great scope for understanding and monitoring the impact.

As an overall theme that may be drawn from the conference there remains a need for contextualising local experiences and processes. It is certainly true that PFM / CFM are highly location specific, and this may militate against the usefulness of comparative studies. On the other hand it is also true that their manifestation in most countries is part of an international process of policy change regarding forest resource management. There is a high degree of similarity on the policy level issues, and also to great extent in village level issues.

Commonalities can depend on location and resource conditions. For instance regions within countries can have more in common with similar regions in other countries than with other regions in the same country (The Terai and the Middle hills in Nepal have had very different experiences so far with CFM, but have fared similarly to similar geographic regions in India.

ICIMOD is good example of a regionally-based research institute relatively effective in regional research programmes which are supporting common learning across national boundaries. In areas with common resource contexts, there may well be common researchable constraints, and the list provided by ZF0160 is a starting point.

Because the international process of PFM / CF continues at a gradual pace, much of the ODA report 'Sharing Forest Management' remains pertinent today.

#### **4.5 Information on the Sustainability of the Land Titling and PFM / CFM programmes in the Philippines regarding Kaingineros.**

*Discussions on the Philippines yielded the following:*

The Philippines was a colony of Spain for about 400 years, but in 20<sup>th</sup> C the Philippines were annexed by US, which has had a serious formative effect on policy institutions.

In 1900 90% of land forested, (about 70m ha.) but now there is only 16million ha – 20%. Still in 1987 about 1/3 of population was living in the forest.

Currently there is a fundamentally good policy draft before Congress, (although it needs a little improvement). However CF so far has been little implemented.

There is much govt. corruption in all sectors.

In 1987 1/3 of the population was living in forest areas.

In the last 20 years peoples role in protecting and managing the forest has become recognised in the following stages:

1986 New Govt. – international donors entered – Master Plan drafted – but focussed on timber.

1992– New law created Protected area system

Asian Development Bank project during this period– paid people to plant trees, but they were often planted on land claimed by others.

1992 – ‘Community Forestry’ policies introduced, but alongside other policies.

1995 – Executive Act tried to simplify forest policy by making CF overarching national policy. This was because there had been many complaints over too many programmes and different use rights (CF, forests land management programme SF etc.)

There had been very many different arrangements in different areas over forest use, so president issues executive order that CF is national policy for forest management - supported by USAID (Natural Resource Management programme), it also supported agency to come up with an Action Plan for implementation: (by 2008 2m ha to be put under CF).

Indigenous people: the constitution recognises rights but there is no law – draft law in congress but not passed. The State agency for forests said the state would recognise their claim.

1997 – An act proposed that indigenous would own land – but this would transfer standing forest areas – so the Act remains on hold (though there would be ecological controls but not under FD).

Previously there had been some programmes, then in 1995 the Executive Order – and now this is becoming the basis for a new Forestry Act. The 1995 policy is good but needs space to be defined in very different local conditions – needs to be community resource management rather than just for forests– e.g. incorporate watershed and so on.

There is much negotiation over community resource management due to the great diversity in the Philippines: >7,000 islands.

Under CF policy – there has been much consultation – for locals to identify which areas might be put under community management.

But most forest lands have claims on, either by incomers or by people who have brought land.

CF is a good policy in theory, but there has not been enough support to implement it, – especially for people’s institutions, technology and capital for livelihoods and restoration of forest.

There is less cohesion amongst migrant population all over country – so requires ‘community organising’ to reach collective goals, prior to collective decision-making.

Indigenous people have been forced to the uplands and marginalised by incoming settlers, and forest destruction.

There are good CF policies which can be built on ..... But there are also shortcomings. Forests still owned by Govt, people granted use rights (for 25yr. Period). Collective & individual rights – separate plots

Originally in the early 1990s the Government was planning to use cutting some areas to fund CF. But poor management of timber concessions ruined the forest, and so only now Govt. is moving to CF, but now on degraded forests, and without cross-subsidisation.

Pre1980s concessions were the main timber production instrument. Due to overfelling it is now a serious challenge to produce timber. Project for industrial timber plantations are proceeding, but with difficulty, as many people have claims to the land. Some succeeding but this will not fulfil demand. National demand for timber now far exceeds supply now. Timber is manly imported from NZ

Official target for forest land hand-over is >5m ha (of total 16m).

Watersheds have become very degraded.

*Problems with implementation:*

There are good possibilities, if communities can appropriate power – i.e. to reach forest management plan and appropriate concessions.

Mineral resource exploration is also marginalizing CF, and state agencies are not playing proper role: Estrada mining has led to a lack of support for CF and lack of respect for ancestral domains.

There remains a need to truly democratise govt. structures – many politicians are considered ‘*trapo*’: ‘traditional politicians’ that is, motivated by self-interest.

**Interview with Peter O’Hara, Project Coordinator, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) Philippines ([Peter.O’Hara@iirr.org](mailto:Peter.O’Hara@iirr.org)):**

‘Part of my project is finding out if the Community Based Forest Management(CBFM) programme here ‘worked’. Actually from the community perspective, apart from a few showcases, which are case studied to death, and which are continually lubricated with outside funding, it hasn’t really worked. Again development workers/researchers have this unhealthy habit of blindly chasing around after these handful of tiny false economy showcases to learn from(and try to scale up), instead of embracing the countless failures as lessons, and trying to ‘scale down’ the failures.

‘In the Philippines the whole idea of taking the pressure off the forest by offering alternative livelihood strategies for communities (which CBFM here is) is dodgy, I have never seen it work outside a showcase. For example much of the primary forest was cleared by cronies of the Marcos regime, who were businessmen and ministers who had very rewarding alternative livelihoods to cutting the forest, but they still went ahead and cleared the forest.

‘One good thing here is that individuals were given some tenure rights over small plots of land (up to 5ha) for 25 years(under the Integrated Social forestry programme ISF which predates CBFM), which the individuals then invested in. The problem with these plots and in general with the forest resources is that the government still owns any trees that grow naturally and to cut them is illegal, so on these plots the natural growing trees are systematically cleared away as soon as they sprout up. The plots are purely coconuts and fruit trees on the whole. I recently wrote a rough report for one of the donors of my project, which may give an idea how the villagers feel about CBFM. I think it gets pretty close to the reality.

‘I’m still searching for a reliable non-government assessment.’  
(*See attached paper*)