COMMUNITY FORESTS
equity, use and conservation

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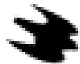

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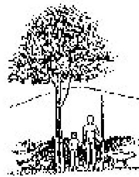

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book gathers a selection of articles published in the monthly electronic bulletin of the World Rainforest Movement (WRM), addressing the issues of Community-based Forest Management and the struggles developed at the local and global levels to protect and use these forests in a social and environmental sound way.

The level of detail and analysis in the articles varies greatly, as a consequence of the nature of the bulletin, which is intended to serve as a tool, both for individuals and organizations acting on a local level and for those working on an international scale. However we have included most of the articles, as we consider that in some way they can all serve to generate resistance and solidarity movements on an issue such as this, of vital importance for the survival of local communities whose livelihoods depend on forests as well as for the future of the Earth's forests themselves.

Most of the articles are the result of a collaborative effort between the WRM bulletin's editorial team and people and organizations working at the local and global level supporting Community-based Forest Management experiences. The numerous sources of information on which the articles are based are detailed (by article) at the end of the book. The articles are organized in section and within each section by country and date, in chronological order of publication.

Responsibility for this publication is shared between the WRM editorial team and the numerous individuals and organizations who contributed articles or relevant information for the preparation of articles. Errors that may have been made are the exclusive responsibility of WRM.

What is more important is that beyond the authorship of the various articles, the true protagonists of this work are the many communities

possessing the knowledge that enables a sustainable use to be made of this type of ecosystem. These communities live in the tropics and subtropics and are suffering from the impacts of forest destruction and degradation, struggling for their (rightful) possession and their sustainable management and resisting industrial interests taking over their lands. The articles attempt to reflect the struggles of these protagonists, with the central aim of supporting them. To all of them, we pay our most sincere homage.

OUR VIEWPOINT

Community-Based Forest Management is not Only Possible, it is Essential

The conservation of the world's forests requires the adoption of a series of measures to change the current model of destruction. Now that both the direct and the underlying causes of forest degradation have been clearly identified, the next step is to take the necessary measures to address them.

At the same time, a new forest management model should be adopted that will ensure their conservation. In this respect, it is important to note that in most of the countries of the world, there are many examples of appropriate forest management, in which environmentally sustainable use is assured while benefiting local communities. This type of management is generically known as "community-based forest management," although it adopts different modalities in accordance with the socio-environmental diversity of the places where it is developed.

Considering the above, it is obvious that in order to ensure the conservation of the remnant forests of the world – and even the restoration of vast areas of degraded forests – work must be undertaken from two different standpoints. One, by eliminating the direct and underlying causes of deforestation and the other, by returning responsibility for forest management to the communities who inhabit them, considering that they are the ones primarily concerned in the conservation of this resource.

Therefore, in theory, the solution of the forest crisis is within reach. However, experience shows that for community-based forest

management to become effective, a series of problems, both external and internal to the communities need to be solved.

The solution of most of the external problems is the responsibility of governments. In fact, they are the ones who must create the basic conditions to ensure this type of management, implying a radical change in the policies followed for many years now. In the first place, this implies ensuring secure tenure of the communities over the forests. This change is not easy for the governments to make, given that it involves ceding power over forest resource use thereby affecting the interests of both state agencies themselves (for example, Forestry Departments), and also of the companies (both national and transnational) that are presently benefiting from State concessions.

Although securing community land tenure is a necessary condition, in general it is not enough. The State should also remove a series of obstacles hindering community management, while providing all the support necessary for it to become generalised. Such measures range from simplifying bureaucratic formalities and reducing tax burdens, to research and support in marketing forest products.

For their part, the communities themselves must adequately solve a series of fundamental issues, such as questions of organisation and administration, ensuring democratic, participatory and transparent management of community-managed resources. In many cases, they will need to recover traditional knowledge and/or adapt it to the new situation, while promoting equitable participation – in particular in decision-making – by the community as a whole. In many cases, this involves addressing the gender issue and training at all levels.

The NGOs accompanying these processes must also clearly define their role and limit themselves to supporting the communities, avoiding taking up a leading role which is not theirs and which, in the end, does little to strengthen the communities. At the same time, they must recognise the transitory nature of their assistance, seeking to transfer their knowledge as soon as possible to the communities themselves to enable them to become independent from external assistance and to take up all the functions involved in forest management.

However, perhaps the main aspect to be highlighted is that community-based forest management is not a technical issue – without this implying that technical aspects should be ignored – but a political issue. For it to become reality, it is therefore necessary to get organised, coordinate efforts, share information and develop campaigns so that the governments adopt policies generating the necessary conditions for forest management to be returned to the communities. Community-based forest management is not only possible, it is essential. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

RELEVANT ISSUES OF THE COMMUNITY APPROACH

Community Forest Management: A Feasible and Necessary Alternative

Ten years after the Earth Summit, deforestation continues to advance in most of the countries of the world, and in particular in tropical regions. In our successive bulletins we have abundantly recorded cases and processes of destruction, behind which in one way or another, it is possible to perceive the hand of the North.

Although this is the predominant model, advancing with all the force of globalisation and the power mechanisms it has at its disposal (namely multilateral financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation, credit conditionalities etc.), there is also another model or other different models. These are the systems that indigenous peoples and local forest-dependent communities have developed over hundreds or thousands of years. These societies have a rich tradition in forest management on the basis of totally different parameters from those of the predominant model, based on the community and with the objective of conservation. They have been ancestral custodians of this ecosystem as it is an intrinsic part of their way of life and undoubtedly, they have become an obstacle to the economic forces which, following their profit-making equation are attempting to destroy it. For this reason, these forces have tried to silence these traditions and to make them invisible.

For many years, forest policy has been based on the notion that local forest users were ignorant and destructive. The State authorities in capital cities, responsible for policy-making, looked down on the knowledge and capacities of the indigenous peoples and local

communities, overlooking what was obvious: they were the most interested parties in the sustainable management of the forests as these were their source of life – no one better than these peoples knew forest ecosystem functioning and management.

It is thus that the so-called experts classified indigenous forest management practices, implying a sustainable rotation system, together with those of settlers-farmers herded by governmental policies towards tropical areas (and for whom the forest was more of an obstacle than a resource), accusing them all – indigenous peoples and farmers – of being the main agents causing forest degradation.

This prejudiced vision prevailed for a long time, but recently forest communities have launched a process of empowerment, making their positions known, setting up local, regional, national and international alliances, linking themselves with other sectors of civil society with similar positions, demanding respect for their rights, dialoguing, defending their territories, expressing their positions in international fora.

And at this time, when the economic, social and environmental impacts of the industrial and Western development model are revealed as more than sufficient proof of unsustainability, when the loss of the ancient harmonic links between humans and nature – which up to now had enabled the life of our species on the Earth – hurts and is felt in its tragic dimensions, a change becomes imperious, a change implying a return to the sources. And it is in this sense, against the prevailing power that the community-based natural resource management systems become visible once again and arise with the force of an alternative to be followed.

In 1978, during the World Forestry Congress “Forests for People,” a gradual change of perspective started to gain acceptance on an international scale, insofar as people started recognising that those who most know about forests are those living in them.

On the basis of successful cases and of the analysis of others that were not so successful, a movement has been established, both at national and international level, gathering those who seek to promote community forest management. At the level of international processes

– and in particular the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) – this current has materialised in the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management, which met in June in Bali, Indonesia, at the same time as the last preparatory meeting for the WSSD. Those who participated in the Caucus – among which the WRM – have committed themselves to actively promote community forest management as an alternative which is not only feasible, but its incorporation into the WSSD would be socially and environmentally desirable, as a solution to the forest crisis.

Beyond more or less elaborate technical definitions, the name itself of "community forest management" already expresses its characteristics quite precisely. However, it might be useful to identify at least some of the minimum assumptions for it to be considered as such.

In the first place, the community management system seeks to guarantee access and control over forest resources to the communities living in them, but mainly to those who depend on the forest to satisfy their economic, social, cultural and spiritual needs. Forest management should be aimed at offering security not only to the present generation but also to coming generations, and also at increasing the possibility of sustainability. It therefore is based on three principles:

- the rights and responsibilities for forest resources should be clear, safe and permanent.
- forests should be managed in an appropriate way so that they can supply benefits and added value.
- forest resources should be handed down in good condition to ensure their future viability.

In general terms, the concept incorporates basic defining elements that do not attempt to refer to a single model but to a diversity of models. Each one will have its own special characteristics, as a result of the culture and the environmental characteristics of the site, but all of them within a conceptual framework transcending the merely technical.

Such a conceptual framework includes a holistic vision of the world, spanning ecological, social, political, economic, moral and spiritual

factors. Its moral values are based on harmony and not on conflict; social values are seen in links based on co-operation and association among community groups; ecological values seek to integrate people and their environment with economy on a local scale through the adoption of a multifunctional and multi-product approach. In this framework, the economy seeks to reduce poverty, promoting equity and self-sufficiency; and social integration aims at promoting local development based in the communities. Furthermore, democracy in decisions on local resources implies that measures should be adopted by the community itself, in the ways it decides to. In turn, spirituality and culture are an integral part of the forest communities who consider the forest to be the home of their ancestors, of spirits and sacred gods, giving it a much wider dimension than that of a purely commercial one.

It is important to note that this is not a theoretical suggestion, but a description of real situations existing throughout all the continents. Community forest management exists and is increasingly visible, in spite of the opposition or insufficient support it receives on the part of governments and international organisations.

In this framework, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (August-September 2002) offers a good opportunity to disseminate this approach as an alternative to the predominant destructive model. The Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management is working to gather forces and to try and have an influence on governments as a way of having an impact on how the texts of international agreements are drawn up, on identifying strategies and mechanisms to create a world movement that will go beyond summit meetings, establishing links with other similar groups, making the most of the presence of the mass media to reach public opinion and thus be able to create awareness.

In Johannesburg the governments have the possibility of taking the community forest management system as a reference and of attempting to change the predominant course of forest policy. Whether they take these suggestions into consideration or not will reveal the degree of commitment they have with forest conservation. (WRM Bulletin Nº 61, August 2002).

Wilderness Parks or Community Conservation?

Conservation through the establishment of 'National Parks' was an idea born in the United States during the 19th century at a time when it was waging war on Indians and colonizing the 'Wild West'. The world's first National Park, Yosemite, was established on the lands of the Miwok people after a bitter war and was followed by the eviction of the remaining people from their land. Setting up the park at Yellowstone also triggered conflict with the local Indians. Nearly all the main National Parks in the USA today are inhabited or claimed by indigenous peoples. Yet according to US law these areas are 'wildernesses', defined by the US Wilderness Act as places 'where man himself is a visitor who does not remain'. It is this wilderness model, exported by western conservationists, that became the dominant approach to nature conservation throughout the tropics during the era of 'development' after the second world war.

Though fundamental to much western thinking about nature, many indigenous peoples reject the notion of wilderness, as Jakob Malas a Khomani hunter from the Kalahari, whose lands were classified as the Gemsbok National Park, has noted:

"The Kalahari is like a big farmyard. It is not a wilderness to us. We know every plant, animal and insect, and know how to use them. No other people could ever know and love this farm like us."

Ruby Dunstan, of the Nl'aka'pamux people of the Stein Valley in Alberta, Canada, who have been fighting to prevent the logging of their ancestral lands, has likewise remarked:

"I never thought of the Stein Valley as a wilderness. My Dad used to say 'that's our pantry'. We knew about all the plants and animals, when to pick, when to hunt. We knew because we were taught every day. It's like we were pruning everyday... But some of the white environmentalists seemed to think if something was declared a wilderness, no-one was allowed inside because it was so fragile. So they have put a fence around it, or maybe around themselves."

The results of the imposition of the wilderness model are shocking. Millions of indigenous people have been evicted from their lands.

Millennial systems of natural resource management disrupted and destroyed. Communities impoverished and deracinated. Rights trampled and colonial forms of administration and enforcement imposed. Getting sound data on the scale of these evictions is hard, they don't get recorded in the 'red data' books, but in India alone it is estimated that 600,000 'tribal' people have been expelled from their lands to make way for protected areas. These impositions have also bred conflict. Protected areas imposed against the will of the local people become management nightmares, conservation fortresses laid siege by local people who have to 'squat' and 'poach' to stay alive. Ironically, too, the expulsions of human settlements may even impoverish the biodiversity of local areas, many of which were managed landscapes not wildernesses, where customary land use systems helped sustain ecosystem diversity and multiplied the niches for wild animals and plants.

But aren't forests better defended by securing local peoples' rights? Many conservationists don't think so, arguing that native people are no better than anyone else at conserving nature. The fact that, in the past, forests were preserved in indigenous areas, they argue, was mainly due to the lack of transport, low populations due to warfare and disease, and simple technology. Once roads are built, communities pacified, clinics curb child deaths and the people adopt chainsaws and pick-up trucks, indigenous communities are as liable to destroy nature as anyone else, they claim. They point to Indians selling timber from their reserves in Brazil and the depredations of the bush-meat trade in the Congo basin to underline their argument. However, other data support the contrary case. For example only some 5% of the Brazilian Amazon is locked up in Protected Areas, while over 20% is in officially recognized Indian Reserves. Recent research by the Woods Hole Research Center shows that forests in Indian reserves are in good shape and what forest loss has occurred has been mainly caused by illegal invasions, not by the Indians.

Most of the big international conservation agencies, like the WWF-International, the World Conservation Union and the World Commission on Protected Areas, have now adopted policies that recognize indigenous and 'traditional' peoples' rights and promote their involvement in conservation. In theory, these agencies should no longer be establishing protected areas without first ensuring that the indigenous

peoples' land rights are recognized, the people consent to the establishment of protected areas on their lands and they participate fully in management. The Convention on Biological Diversity also makes (somewhat ambiguous) provisions securing the rights of indigenous and local communities. These changed policies recognise a 'new model' of conservation, which promotes community-based conservation as an alternative to the old exclusionary model based on establishing 'wildernesses'. Not surprisingly, perhaps, given their history, it is the large US-based conservation agencies that have been most reluctant to endorse this new approach.

Despite advances at the policy level, on the ground the situation is not very encouraging. Few governments accept that recognising indigenous peoples' rights is a logical part of their national conservation strategies. Most protected areas continue to be managed in the old way, excluding communities, denying their land and resource rights and obliging their resettlement. In part this is because most developing countries adopted their conservation laws in the 1960s and 1970s, when the exclusionary model of conservation was still being preached. Another reason is that the local personnel of international conservation agencies have often not even been informed about the new policies adopted at headquarters, let alone trained to implement them. Besides, many protected area administrators of the old school are reluctant now to cede power to those they see as truculent native people grown too big for their boots. The colonial mind-set dies hard. It will be some time before these old dinosaurs die out. (By: Marcus Colchester, WRM Bulletin Nº 62, September 2002).

Forests for the People who Sustain the Forests

The world is losing its forests. All over the globe, many people are suffering from destructive processes that are depriving them from the natural resources on which they have sustained their livelihood. WRM as well as many organisations from around the world have long been denouncing this situation and supporting the peoples who are struggling to defend their forests and their rights.

The story of colonial and later state appropriation and control of the forests under the banner of "scientific forestry" has been a common

feature of a centralised technocratic management that was increased along the last century with the rise of the modern nation-state, the power of technology and of the global economy, eventually leading to the wholesale trade of the forests for the sake of industrial forestry interests. Scientific forestry, as imposed on the South by the North, first through colonialism and then through the development agencies and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, has fatal flaws, it arrogates forest lands, the land of local communities, to the State and then hands out rights to exploit the timber to private interests. The result is an unholy alliance of powerful players who have a vested interest both in excluding communities from forests and avoiding serious limits on exploitation that would limit profits in the name of sustainability.

In the case of Southern impoverished countries, timber sales have been servicing the spiralling debt. Such debt is built on the dependence ties woven by major Northern countries acting on behalf of the vested interests of big corporations, and supported by the mediation of the international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank, etc.), while at the same time generating enormous personal wealth for a handful of timber tycoons. That process has given rise to a number of factors which have put enormous pressure on the forests and the people living in and depending on them, who suffer unequal access to forest resources. The unfair terms of international trade have depressed commodity prices – the main exports of Southern countries – triggering a never ending search of increased productivity at the expense of ecosystems. Along these lines, "development programmes" – and the infrastructure that go with them – have been imposed on the impoverished and nature-rich countries by the powerful nations which thus benefit twofold from easy access to natural resources and the high interests of the loans granted to carry out those programmes, which regard nature as a pool of merchandises – minerals, oil, genetic resources, wood, land for agricultural expansion – to be exploited for short-term profit. That process, graphically described by writer Eduardo Galeano as "the open veins of Latin America" is equally applicable to Southern countries throughout the world.

The result has been forest degradation and destruction, displaced people, and the loss of local livelihoods and cultures. In face of that, there is now a growing concern to find a new way to preserve what is left of the world's forests.

The WRM has put forward the urgent need for a change in the present relationship with the forest. Two approaches are confronted: one that sees the forest as land – to be exploited, to be explored, to be cleared and occupied, to be tilled, to be planted along large-scale monoculture commercial tree schemes –, and the other that sees the forest as an ecosystem – to be used in its multiple dimensions by and for the people without disrupting the necessary balance between the whole array of components.

It is clear that only the second approach can ensure forest conservation and it is equally clear that Indigenous Peoples and other traditional and local communities are the ones capable and willing to implement it. They have a long tradition in the sustainable use of forests under common property regimes, where mutual dependence, shared co-operation and association values, and traditional laws have regulated access to and use of forest resources, conscious that they have been borrowing the forest from their children.

We are aware that many experiences have been dismantled, knowledge has been lost and natural resources have been depleted in a number of places. Many communities have suffered external pressure which forced them out of their land, destroyed their livelihood, or "contaminated" them with new fashions and consumerism trends, all of what eventually detach them from their rich culture. However, before it's too late, the solution is at our hands reach. Indeed, it has laid there all the time. Policy-makers have the chance to prove their willingness to fulfill their proclaimed pledges of sustainability; it's just a matter of serving the interests of the people – over transnationals – and to support and promote the ancient systems of community-based forest management which for centuries have enabled forest-dependent communities to sustainably manage the forest for a living and at the same time to be their guardians. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

The Forest: A Generous Providing Home

For forest dwellers and forest-dependent people, the forest is their main shop, supplying them with food – tubers, leaves, flowers, fruits, nuts, fungi, worms, ants, honey, birds' eggs, small game and fish. They also find there building materials, medicines as well as fuelwood, and raw

materials such as bamboo, reeds, leaves, grasses, gums, resins, waxes and dyes for making ropes, mats and baskets, which they can use, barter or sell in nearby villages. Furthermore, the forest is a great water provider; it is a rain catchment area which allows a balanced water storage and distribution.

Last but not least, the forest is more than a mere supply-provider for them. It is also the place where they gather for social and cultural celebrations, they assemble in order to take decisions, they bury their dead, they assert a deep moral and spiritual interconnection through which they see themselves as part of the forest.

Seeing the forest with a holistic view

The close relationship with the forest is imbued in the forest and forest-dependent communities who have always had an “ecosystem approach” in forest management. The present trend of forest exploitation, with its reductionist approach, has taken things apart and disrupted the balance, leading to the present forest crisis. Thus, a holistic view is a necessary element of any community-based forest management experience. It has brought about a deep and wide system of knowledge with its own concepts, definitions and practices which have enabled a sustainable use of the forests along several centuries. This is still valid even now, where we can find examples of communities that manage to conserve and even sometimes restore against all odds areas of degraded forests on which they depend.

The forest is the source of forest and forest-dependent communities’ livelihoods, so for them it is a matter of survival that their efforts are aimed at managing the forest in a way that guarantees its perpetuity. Otherwise, they are putting their own future at risk. However, when confronted by external forces that disrupt their environment, communities find themselves pressed to search for other means of survival that generally imply an unsustainable management of the scarce natural resources left by forestry companies and other commercial and market-oriented interests that have usurped communities’ homelands. The wholeness has been broken from outside, but it usually happens that forest and forest-dependent communities, the weakest link of the chain, the victims, end up being portrayed as the culprits.

Secure tenureship for community management

Below and above all the way of living of forest and forest-dependent communities lies the concept of common ownership of the forest for its use, management and control. The community does not “possess” the forest; rather, it is its guardian for which it has duties as well as rights.

But for communities to be able to adequately fulfill the role of guardians they must have secure tenure over the resources contained in the forest and its use must be guaranteed through the governing bodies chosen by each community to adequately represent them. Case studies confirm that lack of security of land rights and user rights for communities is a major cause of decline in local systems of forest management. Conversely, within a context of conflict, security of land rights and user rights is the basis of forest conservation and the well-being of local forest-dependent people.

Autonomy and sovereignty for local decision-making power

The decision-making power of communities lies within their own representative institutions that legitimately represent their interests and which adopt different forms according to the local culture, the natural environment, and the organisation of each community. Whenever this has been altered to shift the power to a central government (national, state, provincial) the result has been the disruption of the ecosystem integrity with the ensuing decline of resource sustainability and the impoverishment of the community.

There is no single model of community-based forest management but all of them have as a common trait the necessary autonomy and sovereignty of their legitimate authorities in order to make decisions relevant to the control, use and management of the resource base of the community with a view to fulfill the needs of its members.

Challenges and expectations

Community-based forest management is re-emerging as a valid alternative to the present pattern of industrial forest use. A large number

of people, organisations, and processes are already working towards achieving and strengthening successful experiences according to their local needs, background and history.

However, many challenges lay ahead and a number of questions need to be raised. Is it possible that isolated cases of community-based forest management can survive within a context where powerful actors like transnationals, governments, international institutions in charge of globalising an economic pattern of open markets and deregulation, are at the wheel? Will we be aware enough to make the difference between genuine cases and those which are just a co-option to the prevailing model? How to preserve the promissory model of community-based forest management from internal and external spurious interests?

Most forest and forest dependent communities are no longer living in conditions of balanced ecosystems that long ago they managed to maintain. Large scale deforestation and forest degradation processes, depletion of forest resources with the subsequent scarcity for the surrounding communities have led to changes in their ways of living. In its turn, such alteration gives rise to new needs and values which may imply the loss of traditional knowledge, the shattering of old binds and beliefs which have been the pillar of social cohesion and cultural continuity.

Additionally, a number of issues need to be addressed within the communities to ensure their internal cohesion and strength. Among these mention must be made of the participation of women, who have specific needs, perspectives, and roles. Their active participation in decision-making and the equitable sharing of benefits between men and women is crucial for ensuring the long term sustainability of community-based forest management. Equally important is the need to generate the necessary conditions to promote the active participation of youth, representing the future of the community.

Getting together

Those of us committed to support the forest and forest-dependent communities who struggle to maintain or recover their forests, who support and promote that they regain control over forest management,

need to bear in mind that there are many obstacles – both internal and external, national and international – to be sorted out. The importance of summing up strength and efforts and sharing experiences needs to be underscored. Many local, national and international organisations – including the WRM – have for many years been advocating and campaigning for a change in that direction. In May 2002, a number of those organisations decided to join efforts in the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management, which aims at influencing global and national processes to create the necessary conditions for enabling local communities to manage their own forests. This is a first step in the right direction.

It is now crystal clear that the industrial model leads to forest destruction, while community management allows for its sustainable use. Governments have agreed – at least on paper – that forests need to be conserved in order to ensure the Planet's health. They must now be made to comply with their commitments and organised civil society – from the local to the international level – is the key actor in ensuring that deeds match words. The message must be loud and clear: responsibility over forest management must be put back in the hands of forest and forest-dependent communities. Only then will forests stand a chance of surviving. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Community Forests: Emancipatory Change or Smoky Mirrors?

A groundswell of support appears to be building for community forests, if we believe the rhetoric of the World Bank, the United Nations, and NGOs all over the world. For example, Objective 3: Goal 4 in the Forest Work Programme approved by the 6th Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity reads: "Enable indigenous and local communities to develop and implement adaptive community-management systems to conserve and sustainably use forest biological diversity".

Now, no one likes a pessimist, but I have some serious reservations about the supposedly blissful track of community forests, including some of the success stories I have come to rely on in my own advocacy. I wonder, do some community forest schemes actually enable state actors to extend their reach and control over forests? That is, while

community forests purport to address power and governance over forests, how many really challenge or, more importantly, change state authority? Research by Arun Agrawal in Kumaon, India, noted that even in so-called community forests, the state continues to "outline the ways in which resources can be used, define who is empowered to use these resources, and extend their control further and more intensively into given territories." (Agrawal, Arun, 'State Formation in Community Spaces', 1998) Furthermore, Agrawal's research found that these community forests did little to further the interests of the most marginalized members of the communities.

Nepal's community forests also seem to be heading down this track. Changes to National Forest policies are encroaching on community autonomy over forest lands in insidious ways. The forestry department has enacted stringent measures which make it very difficult and expensive for communities to develop and maintain control over forests. For example, communities are now required to do intensive forest inventories that the government itself does not even do on the national lands. The government is also beginning to charge high taxes on forest products produced by communities. (Kaji Shrestha, FECOFUN, pers. comm., August 2002).

Devolution of real power and authority is only one part of the community forest challenge. Community forests are bound to remain marginal if our societies (particularly those in the North, and Southern elites) remain on the current trajectory of high-throughput economic growth and industrial consumption. The most valuable forests and largest proportion of forests still remain in the hands of the state, and in large companies – where profits can be captured. It seems community forest movements need to address central issues of consumption and economic development as a part of their strategy. Unfortunately, the consumptive aspect of forest conservation has largely remained on the sidelines for governments and NGOs alike. Ashish Kothari states (in reference to the lack of reference to northern consumption in the Forest Work Programme of the Convention of Biological Diversity): "Ah, so while poor communities are expected to take action to restrict their meagre consumption, the rich will only be obliged to 'become aware' of their consumption. And then maybe, once they are aware, they will be nice enough to reduce their impact on the world." (Kothari, Ashish 'Let the Poor Pay for the Excesses of the Rich', ECO 6(2), 2002).

Community forests have the potential to create great change in the way we live with forests and each other. Community forests have the potential to empower marginalized people, deepen democracy, conserve biodiversity, and undermine established (and often oppressive) relations of power. This is happening in many places already to differing extents. But it is not easy, nor simple. If community forestry is going to move off the sidelines, it will have to confront an entrenched system of forest liquidation and consumption. Recognizing, revealing and removing the smoky mirrors of "community forests" is a pressing challenge – community-based must mean more than communities helping the state manage national forests. (By: Jessica Dempsey, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Women and Forest Resources: Two Cases from Central America

In Guatemala, in spite of the fact that 20% of the forest regions are under systems of protected areas, the continuous advance of the agricultural frontier, a result of the unequal distribution of means of production – particularly land – has left a trail of poverty and social exclusion. This situation is more serious in rural zones where most of the population depends on forests.

Indigenous and peasant groups are among the most affected, obliged to settle and inhabit fragile ecosystems lacking basic services. However, groups of women have sought alternative organisational forms to manage natural resources in forest systems. In this article we will present two cases, one set in a coniferous ecosystem in the West of the country (in the Department of Huehuetenango) and the other in the North of the country in one of the most important tropical forest ecosystems of the Central American region, in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Department of Peten.

The information submitted comes from two case studies carried out by the Environmental Area of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) at its Guatemala Academic Centre, as part of its research activities on community-based forestry and local institutionality. In the Huehuetenango region, groups of Kanjobal indigenous women have organised themselves to manage their forests

through a programme of forestry incentives supported by the Government through the National Forestry Institute (Instituto Nacional de Bosques - INAB). Starting with a project to improve the social conditions of Kanjobal women affected by the internal armed conflict, the women organised themselves through the Association of Eulalen Women for Comprehensive Development Pixan Konob (AMEDIK) Corazón del Pueblo. Since they launched the project, 143 hectares have been reforested already and 246 hectares are managed under natural regeneration systems. The forests are jointly managed with three municipalities, as they are located in communal areas and on municipal lands. In this case, the municipalities report to INAB and receive approximately 1.5 to 2.0% on the total accrued from the forestry incentives. This synergy has made it possible for groups of women to have access to the incentives, as without deed titles they were unable to do so. Close on 500 families are presently participating in the project and over the past four years, AMEDIK has received nearly US$100,000 as part of the incentives.

In the Maya Biosphere Reserve there are community concessions representing rental contracts for 25 years, for organised groups to manage forests in a comprehensive manner. This amounts to approximately 400,000 hectares that are divided into 15 community concessions. This is considered to be one of the most important regions in the world under indigenous and peasant community management.

However, the process involving the women of the region has been slow, and has been marked by generalised opposition by the men, who alleged that economic profit sharing is not fair when two members of the same family are in the organisation. Therefore, there are organised groups with no women members and others where wives and daughters can obtain the right to be member only if the husband is dead or there are no male children. Presently, women participating in the concessions amount to approximately 15%. The groups of women carrying out tasks in the forest are focused on the extraction of non-timber products such as wicker (*Monstera sp*), berries (*Desmuncus sp*) and xate (*Chamaedorea sp*), mainly for handicrafts or to make furniture, while others prefer to participate in the eco-tourism projects. Forestry-management activities are classed as needing hard labour and correspond to men.

Summing up, although it is true that the gender issue and involvement of women have been promoted by foreign development bodies, there are certain factors that prevent women becoming involved in forestry-management activities. Firstly, the system for land distribution used in the past did not allow women to have access to land deeds. Other variables, such as education and health show that the most vulnerable groups are indigenous women. In spite of the fact that some groups such as AMEDIK have achieved access to forestry management under forestry incentives, this has not been possible without being accompanied by the municipalities. Furthermore, while forest management changes from timber use to comprehensive management, women participating in community concessions will have to face a long road towards recognition and participation in alternative management of non-timber resources and handicrafts. (By: Iliana Monterroso, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Mapping as a Step for Securing Community Control: Some Lessons from South East Asia

Community forestry requires secure tenure, if the local people are to have any confidence that they will reap the benefits of their efforts. Community mapping can be a powerful tool to help communities think about the lands, represent their land use system and assert their rights to the forests they seek to control.

The use of geomatic mapping technologies by indigenous peoples to demonstrate their relationship to their lands and to mount land claims is a relatively recent phenomenon. In South East Asia the basic idea and the technology was introduced in the early 1990s and the technique has since spread rapidly. Community level mapping exercises are now underway in India, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Thailand.

At their best, mapping projects directly involve community members in the survey of the land use and boundaries of the own domains. The technologies used vary widely. At their simplest, as used in Thailand, maps may be hand-made 3D maps, made by cutting shapes along contour lines derived from government base maps enlarged to a 1:15,000 scale. Vegetation zones, roads, land use data, village sites

and the boundaries of land claims can then be painted onto the models by the local community members. These maps have proved to be useful tools for community mobilisation and village-level discussions of land claims and natural resource management planning.

Other mapping exercises are using geomatic (mainly GPS) or traditional surveying techniques to locate data on maps. Although these techniques do allow community members to decide what is put into the maps, they do, however, generally rely to some extent on trained personnel from outside NGOs to prepare the base maps, record the field data directly on the maps, or in the computer, and print up the final maps. Higher technologies, such as sophisticated Global Information Systems, while allowing much more subtle use of colours, layers and data sets, increase the conceptual distance between those with the indigenous knowledge in the communities and those who make the maps. Community control and a sense of ownership of the maps can be attenuated accordingly and there is a risk that the technical NGOs consider themselves and not the villagers to be the owners of the maps.

There is a tendency for support NGOs helping indigenous peoples with mapping, to adopt progressively more sophisticated systems driven by their own thirst for knowledge, fascination with the technology and a will to get ahead of and outwit government administrators. The risk is that the mapping process becomes more and more remote from indigenous priorities and in the end becomes yet another form of administrative annexation, this time by NGOs, against which the indigenous peoples have to struggle. Clear mutual agreements on who has the intellectual property rights to maps – they should be vested with the communities not with the NGOs – and greater investment in training the indigenous leadership in the manipulation of data and the new technologies are part of the answer to this emerging problem.

In the field, there are a number of other difficulties that mapping exercises have to overcome. The first is that they tend to freeze what are in reality fluid boundaries and systems of land use. Hard lines are drawn where fuzziness and ambiguity may, in fact, prevail. Mappers in Mindanao, in the Southern Philippines, for example, find that traditional areas of land use expand and contract seasonally. In Borneo, communities move around as lands in the immediate vicinity become

'used up'. Boundaries of hunting grounds shift accordingly. Secondly, the maps do not just include – more or less successfully – the concepts of the community mappers, they exclude the concepts of those who are not involved, both people within the communities (often women) or areas in question (often lower caste or lower status groups) and those outside them or on their boundaries (neighbouring communities). Successful mapping initiatives depend on both adequate community preparation within the area to be mapped and on prior agreement with neighbouring groups on the boundaries between villages or ethnic groups. This problem can be exaggerated, however, and a common solution where inter-community boundaries are disputed is to map the boundaries that extend around all the communities and leave resolution of the disputes of the internal boundaries to the future, preferably according to customary law and procedures.

Within the region, the process of mapping indigenous lands has probably gone furthest in the Philippines, where something like 700,000 hectares of community lands have been mapped out of a total of 2.9 million hectares so far registered with the government as Ancestral Domains. The experience there has revealed a number of additional problems. One is that customary areas and boundaries frequently do not coincide with existing administrative boundaries. Villages can thus find that they are subject to several "barangay", district or even provincial jurisdictions, which entails complicated negotiations if the regularisation of tenure is then sought. Unusually, in the Philippines NGO-made maps can be accepted by the local administration as authoritative documents on which to base land claims and not just as advocacy tools, which is the way they are used in many other areas. In this case, increasing precision in the survey techniques is called for, requiring more specialised training of mappers and implying a closer interaction with the local administration.

Those involved in mapping emphasise the need for preparation, training and community-level capacity building as an integral part of any mapping project. Preparatory meetings, workshops and visits are crucial for the long-term success of the mapping exercises themselves. Establishing community consensus and agreement on the goals and practices of the project is a necessary first step and some NGOs make consensus decisions a pre-condition to their involvement in helping to map any

area. Community control and sense of ownership depends not only on formal agreements – which are vital – but also on quite detailed training of community members to ensure that at least some in each mapped community are comfortable with the details of the technology and the way it is being used to represent local knowledge. Unduly abbreviated training is the main weakness in many projects. Since maps are just tools in a much longer process of establishing a community's control over its lands and natural resources, the long term usefulness of mapping projects also depends on adequate capacity-building and community mobilisation. A frequent complaint is that outside donors tend not to provide enough funds for this element, as they seek quick and visible results and are wary of creating dependency – a legitimate concern.

Participatory mapping is here to stay as part of the tool-kit used by the indigenous movement. Communities have discovered that it is powerful, as much for community organising, strategising and control as for communicating local visions to outsiders. Mapping can help build community coherence and reaffirm the value and importance of traditional knowledge, recreating respect for elders and customary resource management practices.

Perhaps one of the most important benefits of the mapping movement is that it has provided a tool for the indigenous leadership to address community-level concerns, thus helping them maintain ties with their constituents as they engage in political negotiations at the national level. Maps have also proved vitally important tools to indigenous communities confronting the impositions of logging, mining, plantation and conservation schemes. By use of maps, communities and NGOs have been able to demonstrate conclusively the overlaps between indigenous lands and imposed concessions. They have also been used to expose the incompetence of different line ministries, whose maps are so very often erroneous and have created horrendous confusions in the overlap between different jurisdictions and concessions.

Initial enthusiasm for community-mapping led to it being considered a 'magic bullet' that could resolve land conflicts and promote community-based forest management, in one shot. Experience has quickly taught most of those involved that mapping is just a tool – a very powerful tool

in the right hands – in a much longer struggle to reform land ownership systems, indigenous self-governance and government systems of administration. To be effective, mapping exercises need to be integrated into long term community strategies and be clearly linked to broader strategies for legal, policy and institutional reforms. The charge that the mapping 'craze' has diverted attention away from other pressing issues – like political organisation, tenure reform, legal changes and national policy reforms – has some weight. However, the lessons are being learned fast and a more skilled and mature mapping 'movement' is emerging as a result. (By: Marcus Colchester, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management

In May 2002, a number of people attending the 4th Preparatory Meeting for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), decided to group themselves under a common banner in order to influence government delegates on the need for the global community to recognize community-based and indigenous forest management as a viable tool for alleviating poverty and sustaining the Earth's environment. After just a few days of organizing – and despite warnings that they were beginning their efforts too late – they were successful in securing this recognition in text being negotiated by the delegates. The Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management was thus born.

The Caucus, which currently includes more than 200 members from over 30 countries held again a number of meetings and carried out numerous activities some months later at the Johannesburg Summit. Rumours about the Caucus' effectiveness spread, and it was invited to facilitate an open forum on forests, the results of which was formally transmitted to the UN. The Caucus also spent time strategizing for the future, exploring goals such as:

1) Encourage national governments and international agencies to:

- Strengthen local and community governance
- Increase efforts to legalise and protect land tenure
- Strengthen community participation in policy development and implementation

- Expand market opportunities for forest communities and small forest operations
- Increase research into community-based forest management and expand its dissemination
- Discontinue and avoid programs that limit local peoples' access to forests
- Increase forest monitoring and indicator systems that permit the evaluation of deforestation and degradation

2) Achieve recognition for community-based and indigenous forestry as a viable tool for achieving sustainable development, both at home and internationally.

3) Monitor, ensure, and evaluate the implementation of international commitments to community-based and indigenous forestry.

4) Secure political, monetary, and technical support – and respect – from international agencies and organizations, and home governments.

5) Enable practitioners of community-based forest management to share knowledge and experiences, and provide them with a meaningful voice in international discussions, for example by improving civil society participation in United Nations Forum on Forests and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

6) Serve as a resource for governments, organizations, and people interested in supporting community-based forestry.

7) Support people and organisations working on related issues, including (but not limited to) land rights, environmental justice, and sustainable agriculture and fisheries.

8) Work closely with other forest groups, such as Global Forest Coalition and World Rainforest Movement, and support colleagues working in related areas, including (but not limited to) land rights, environmental justice, and sustainable agriculture and fisheries.

At the last meeting, the Caucus agreed to establish provisional regional nodes for the next 6-8 months (see References).

In the coming months and years, Caucus members look forward to joining forces to support community-based and indigenous forestry worldwide, through such activities as sharing knowledge and skills, collaborating on the ground, and providing a meaningful voice for forest peoples in policy development. Some Caucus members have already begun working together on community-based monitoring projects, the challenges of protected areas, and organizing events for the World Forestry Congress in Quebec City next September. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Moving Forward: The Mumbai Forest Initiative

A number of organizations concerned about forests and forest peoples' rights held a strategy meeting at the IV World Social Forum to discuss ways of moving forward on those issues. The result was a draft statement of principles aimed at creating a global movement based on a common approach to forest conservation and to the respect of forest peoples' rights.

All people concerned about this issue are invited to share their views on the draft statement to make comments and suggestions for improvement and to join this process.

The Mumbai Forest Initiative

We, a number of participants at the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai, who believe that forest issues are in essence social and political, and that forest communities are increasingly affected by globalisation, agree on the need to create a global movement to ensure forest conservation and peoples´ rights over forests, based on the following principles:

1. The people living in and using forests for their survival needs are the true managers and governors of these forests and enjoy inalienable rights over forests.

2. The protection and conservation of forests demand that these rights be ensured.

3. The institutional mechanism for the social control of forest people - including indigenous peoples and other forest dependent communities-

over forests will evolve according to the socio-ecological and economic needs of the communities and will take separate shapes according to the varied cultural profiles of the communities in various parts of the world.

4. Governments must ensure an enabling environment for the community management of forests.

5. Governments must ensure that legislation and policies comply with the above principles.

6. Society at large benefiting for the broad range of products and services provided by forests must support forests communities in their efforts to manage and conserve forests.

7. NGOs and other civil society organizations at national and international level committed to the conservation of forests and to the protection of forest peoples´ rights should have a supportive role to peoples´ initiatives to protect and manage the forest.

8. So-called development and conservation projects which lead to deforestation and forest degradation and to the displacement of forest communities and livelihoods, cannot be allowed.

9. Given the past and present record of the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions in the socio-environmental degradation of forests areas, these institutions must have no role at all in forest policy formulation and forest-related projects.

10. The attempt of corporations, governments and international institutions to convert nature and forests into commodities is not acceptable.

This draft statement of principles is intended to be a first contribution towards initiating a global process of solidarity building among movements, groups, and individuals working on forest issues, at local, national, and international levels. We appeal to all of you to share your views on this draft statement, to add to it and to join this process.

Mumbai, 20 January 2004. World Rainforest Movement, Delhi Forum, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers of India, Jharkham/Save the Forest Movement (India), New Trade Union Initiative (India), Friends of the Earth International, WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia. (WRM Bulletin Nº 78, January 2004).

The Time of Truth for the United Nations Forum on Forests

The Fourth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 4) will be held from 3-14 May 2004 in Geneva. The session will consider implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) in five areas: social and cultural aspects of forests; traditional forest-related knowledge; scientific forest-related knowledge; monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions; and criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.

The first two items on the agenda are – or at least should be – at the core of forest conservation: forest communities' livelihoods and culture are dependent on forests and those communities hold the necessary knowledge to use them sustainably. The question is: what have governments done to implement those proposals for action aimed at strengthening communities' rights over forest management? For instance, how have they moved forward regarding the "recognition and respect for customary and traditional rights of, inter alia, indigenous people and local communities" and in providing them with "secure land tenure arrangements" as stated in IPF proposal for action 17a?

Indigenous peoples organizations and members of the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management will be participating at UNFF4, trying to convince government delegates about the need to move forward in creating an enabling environment for sustainable forest management by local and indigenous peoples' communities. Those organizations' arguments were further strengthened by commitments made by governments at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to carry out "actions at all levels" to "recognize and support indigenous and community-based forest management systems to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable forest management." (article 45 h of the WSSD Report).

At the same time, another group of organizations will be presenting an "open petition for the UNFF" to establish a "global ban on genetically-modified trees". The petition states that "instead of establishing plantations of genetically modified trees, we should strive to restore the forest cover of our planet towards its former riches and abundance. Diverse, healthy and vital forests can best safeguard the ability of our living planet to adapt to the ongoing climate change. They also form the best basis for a diverse, healthy and vital forest economy, now and in the future."

The UNFF is defined as "an intergovernmental forum to develop coherent policies to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests." When it addresses the agenda item on definitions, will it define monocultures of genetically-modified trees as "forests" -as it has already done with other types of tree monocultures- or will it have the vision – and the courage – to exclude them as such?

The time has come for the UNFF to define if its work is aimed at conserving forests or at serving the interests of the powerful that continue destroying forests and promoting tree plantations. If the former, it should begin by acknowledging the rights and knowledge of forest and forest-dependent peoples to manage their forests and by promoting the implementation of an enabling environment for the spread of community-based forest management. If this were to happen, the UNFF will have played a central role in the conservation of the world's forests. If it doesn't and if it chooses to ignore the call to ban genetically-modified trees, it will have shown that it does not care about forests or forest peoples. The obvious question would then be: what's the use of having such a UN Forum on Forests? (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Community-Based Forest Management: Beyond "Resources"

What are we talking about when we speak of "community-based forest management"? First, there is the term "management". According to the VOX dictionary, it refers to the "art or practice of training horses" and also "to conduct, control, take charge of." The "forest management" which arose in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was

a corollary of the process of fencing in communal forests and, later, the application of state control over forests. Finally, the term became closely associated with the production of timber for commercial purposes.

Then there is the term “resources”, which so often goes together with “management”. This too is a very culturally specific word. Most communities who use and care for their local communal forests are not “managing” them as “resources”. Management implies control, unilateral exploitation and separation between the subject and the object (the “expert” and the forest to be “managed”). Knowledge becomes fragmented and specialized and techniques to address forests are applied more and more from outside. Integration among systems breaks down, and in the cracks, local knowledge and its ways of relating with the world are buried. Specialized techniques acquire the status of universal paradigms, excluding other practices. What Vandana Shiva calls a “monoculture of the mind” takes root, finding one expression in the separation of “scientific” agriculture and “scientific” forestry, which, in many local knowledge systems, are an ecological continuum.

“Natural resource management” should be recognized as a relatively recent, largely Western construction. “Resources” implies that the significance of whatever is to be exploited rests with an end “product”. It is a term belonging to industrial capitalism, going back to around 1800. Before then, no one spoke of “resources.” Even now, in many parts of the world, if not in most parts of the world, people do not look at trees, land, seeds or water as resources. Communal goods are not resources. They are used, they have a use value as food, housing, medicine, etc., but not in the way in which a resource is used, as a raw material for an industrial market. Furthermore, the term “natural” presupposes a specific industrial form, historically determined, of separating people (“not natural”) from nature.

Talking about our surroundings in terms of “natural resources management” encodes certain ways of valuing, preserving, and exploiting land, water and living things. These values and categories are not universal, and practical problems and conflicts result when this point is overlooked. Local people often have different ways of categorizing, valuing, and exploiting their natural surroundings. This

means that the local population and outsiders arriving with a technical or "scientific" training to "manage natural resources" may not be "talking" about the same thing – even though they may be using the same language.

The vision according to which all stands of trees are "timber resources", for example, is one root of the confusion between industrial monoculture tree plantations and forests that has constantly been denounced by WRM.

The local significance of practices regarding what experts call "natural resources" in a given community will only be fully revealed when they are linked with other aspects forming part of the cognitive world of that community, such as its ways of getting food and shelter, of preserving and transmitting knowledge, of conceiving cycles, of relating to the environment, and of conducting spiritual, family and community life.

Should we then try to adapt the definition of "community-based forest management" to different livelihood practices? Or should we abandon the term altogether as having a dangerous practical bias? What models can link local practices, including local knowledge, to national and international efforts to preserve biodiversity?

To attempt to integrate the concept of "community-based forest management" with contrasting local practices would at least have the merit of forcing "outside" organizations to make implicit definitions explicit, transforming them into an object of debate. Otherwise, it could turn out that communities who are the victims of ideological, economic and historic exclusion – which are often made to appear, from an "expert" or "specialist" standpoint, as "lacks" – would become subject to yet another form of exclusion. People who work to identify, document and reconstruct local ways of forest use must in any case learn to listen in ways that have not yet been institutionalised – that is, to break away from their "monoculture of the mind" to detect not what is known, but what is not perceived because of deafness.

In the great diversity of traditional practices and, in spite of the differences, it is possible to identify some characteristics that are common to many societies in their use of biodiversity:

* They tend to be based on principles of reciprocity and give and take;

* They tend to be holistic, not distinguishing what is material from what is spiritual, perceiving the forest in its complex weave of interacting ecological systems in which the community is yet another element, implying that the forest's significance goes much beyond the confines of economy and maximization of individual profit;

* They generally have a close link with cultural identity and local self-determination. For some peoples, the characteristics of a landscape contain meanings (expressed both textually and orally through folklore, myths and songs) that are an integral part of the way in which they reproduce their culture. Forcibly changing the landscape (by environmental destruction or alteration), or forcibly separating people from their environment, can have devastating effects.

The modern concept of "community-based forest management" includes the idea of "participation". However, "participation" may not be the same as consensus, democracy or self-determination. Attempts are sometimes made to plug this gap through formalities aimed at "prior informed consent", but control may still remain in the hands of external agents (who may be "experts", NGOs, state officials or all of these working together), who often become empowered by local knowledge but do not share their own local knowledge with the community. It must be ensured that this relationship – like relationships with ecosystems – is reciprocal. Genuine "participation" would involve a "dialogue of knowledges."

To quote Vandana Shiva once again, "Alternatives exist, but are excluded. Their inclusion requires a context of diversity. Shifting to diversity as a mode of thought, a context of action, allows multiple choices to emerge."

One way of starting to back away from noxious paths is to become aware of, and to shift, some of the terms we use. In place of terms such as "natural resource management", it can be stimulating to experiment with terms such as "community relationships with the forest" and similar terms that reflect the community ecological practices that

now, more than ever, must be sustained and built on, not only for the welfare of forest communities, but to safeguard what is left of the biodiversity on which we all depend. (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Forests and Communities: Idealization or Solution?

Why was it that millenary practices for forest use, now known as “Community Forest Management” arose in traditional communities? Why have these practices been so natural for them?

Perhaps we should start by talking about the ecosystem. Fritjof Capra, in “Ecology, Community and Agriculture,” defines it very clearly: “An ecosystem ... is not just a collection of species but a community, which means that its members all depend on one another. They are all interconnected in a vast network of relationships, the web of life.”

The following concepts – summarized from Capra’s work – allow for a better understanding of the issue.

For the community to perpetuate itself – says Capra – the relations it maintains must be sustainable. Since its introduction in the early 1980s, the concept of sustainability has often been distorted, co-opted, and even trivialized by being used without the ecological context that gives it its proper meaning. What is sustained in a sustainable community is not economic growth, development, market share, or competitive advantage, but the entire web of life on which our long-term survival depends. In other words, a sustainable community is designed in such a way that its ways of life, businesses, economy, physical structures, and technologies do not interfere with nature’s inherent potential to sustain life.

Furthermore, when we begin to understand the principles of ecology at a deep level, we see that they can also be understood as principles of community. Indeed, you could say that ecosystems are sustainable because they are living communities. So, community, sustainability, and ecology are inseparably connected.

This is taken up by western science in the new systemic theory, in the recognition that there is a basic pattern of life that is common to all

living systems. That basic pattern is the network. There is a web of relationships among all the components of a living organism, just as there is a network of relationships among the plants, animals, and microorganisms in an ecosystem, or among people in a human community.

Systems theory is not needed for this understanding. Throughout the ages without developing a scientific framework in our sense of the term, Indigenous cultures have had an ancestral systemic understanding of nature and of their place in it – an understanding in terms of relationships, connectedness, and context – what some have called 'systemic wisdom.' They based their relationships on this knowledge, following a model of cooperation, partnership and networking that made the beginning of life possible three billion years ago.

The above concepts developed by Capra serve to establish a theoretical framework for the concept of "Community forest management" and to dissipate doubts that it originates from a romantic vision – that presently would not be "politically correct."

The world has changed. Globalization has reached nearly all the corners of the planet to convert nature into just another merchandise; forests have been invaded, altered and deteriorated – if not destroyed – and traditional cultures run the risk of being demolished. This cannot be ignored.

Many of us watch this process with alarm and put our efforts into identifying the causes of this state of things. Delving deeply into the underlying causes enables us to reflect on the path we must take to find a way out. We know that situations are diverse and all have their complexities, but it is also true that along the path with its many branches, a point is finally reached where a simple and dramatic option is faced: this way or the other, yes or no. We say this to explain positions that may sometimes seem Manichaean or simplistic.

Our point of reference is forest protection in the broad sense, with a political and social vision, integrated to the peoples who have belonged to the forests, who have depended on them. These peoples forged the diversity of their cultures around the forests, they achieved their

livelihoods conserving them, and they hoisted up their identity and dignity. Now, still in a common destiny with the forests, they are persecuted, displaced, robbed.

It is now these communities that, in preparing strategies for forest conservation or restoration, can contribute with their traditional knowledge, their culture, their sustainable practices for the use of nature. WRM does no more than follow them, support them, and amplify their voices. We are not demanding that the communities continue living in the same way as their ancestors did – it is possible that some now no longer want to. There is no doubt that modern life has brought amenities to which an equitable access would be valid. But although we are conscious that at this point in many cases the proposals for community forest management will only be partial solutions to totally deteriorated situations, this does not prevent us from highlighting – and a theoretical framework is useful for this purpose – what we consider to be the ultimate causes of destruction, thus tracing a generic referent in the search for solutions.

It is not a question of goodies and baddies. Applying a systemic analysis makes it possible to analyze the relationships established by the actors in our planetary community. In this respect, at the root of the processes of forest and culture destruction, time and time again we have identified the artifices of globalization with all its ingredients: large-scale production, uniformisation, loss of diversity, market monopolization, capital accumulation, mega-projects, profit and commercialization invading all spheres of life, together with all the impacts we endeavour to denounce in our bulletins, publications and information material.

Likewise, the intention is not to dictate solutions (each case will search for its own) but to identify what we consider to be the ingredients of these solutions: the establishment of structural conditions to recreate the values of cooperation and partnership that enable communities to exist, redefining relationships between individuals in conformity with those values (this is where equity, inclusion and participation come in) and with the environment (which is equivalent to evicting commercialism from nature with its corollary of exploitation and degradation on the one hand, and to restoring cycles, exchanges, interrelationships and diversity, on the other). This is what we are working on. (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Two Initiatives for Community-Based Forest Management

In 2002, a number of organizations and individuals working together to influence the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), created the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management, which was successful in influencing government delegates to "recognize and support indigenous and community based forest management systems to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable forest management." (article 45h of the WSSD Report).

The overall goal of the Caucus is "to create political spaces to advance community based forest management at the local, national and global level", within a vision where "local communities and Indigenous Peoples assert their rights and assume their responsibilities to manage and use their forests. The stated mission of the Caucus is to advocate and promote "the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples to manage their forests and forest resources in ways that are socially just, ecologically sound, and economically viable.

In January 2004, a number of organizations concerned about forests and forest peoples' rights held a strategy meeting at the World Social Forum to discuss ways of moving forward on those issues. The result was the Mumbai Forest Initiative, a statement of principles aimed at creating a global movement based on a common approach to forest conservation and to the respect of forest peoples' rights. That approach is detailed in a set of 10 principles, the first of which states that "the people living in and using forests for their survival needs are the true managers and governors of these forests and enjoy inalienable rights over forests.", while the second principle underscores that "the protection and conservation of forests demand that these rights be ensured. (see above article "Moving forward: The Mumbai Forest Initiative".

These two recent processes are a ray of hope in a world where mainstream forestry continues empowering power and disempowering local communities. Regardless of their different origin and possible differences, they clearly share a common approach and aim at similar objectives. Welcome both! (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Community Forests' On-going Battle with Corporate Forestry

A long way from the tropical rainforests of Amazonia, British Columbia (BC), the western most province in Canada, has been characterized as "Brazil of the North" for its rate of forest liquidation. The British Columbian forests are dominated by large corporate tenures and large scale extraction. But there is a glimmer of change as community forests emerge, and with them, a new way of doing forestry and forest management. One of these community forests belongs to Kaslo, a small town on the shores of Kootenay Lake, in south-east British Columbia.

In 1997, the Kaslo community was awarded a community forest, giving the people of the community a greater say in managing the local forest. This forestry operation started with a wide range of people, much wider than the people traditionally involved in BC forests (BC forests are about as male dominated as a bachelor party, with only the token female stripper). One of those people is Susan Mulkey.

Susan Mulkey came to the Kaslo community forest as facilitator with a background in social work, with no direct experience in forest management. As a board member for five years, Susan helped the community forest get off the ground – and put her facilitation skills to work. The Kaslo community forest operated using consensus for decision-making to negotiate between the vastly different perspectives that make up small communities.

The Kaslo Community Forest began to have some success: they were profitable, improving participation and democratic involvement, managing for a diversity of values including ecological, consumptive water use, visuals and recreation, and primarily local people were employed in the forest – directly benefiting the local community. The old boys club dominating management decisions began to slowly include broader and more inclusive perspectives.

But this was not a smooth transition, as Susan explains it, "The dominant groups in the community, the ones who have traditionally held control – the mill owners, contractors – many were, and some still are very threatened by our work. Here I am, a short, female social

activist, talking about doing things differently in forests, talking forest management, talking consensus, talking diversification. The old guard is terrified of all that stuff." Some people in the community, particularly ones who have traditionally held all the power, strongly resisted these changes, resenting the so-called "women's build relationships approach", which was less valued, and often seen as soft, or unnecessary.

The corporate, industrial forest forces are still very strong in Kaslo, as in all of British Columbia. At the last Kaslo Community Forest election, the 'old boys' managed to wiggle their way onto the board (the main decision-making body), and now they are once again dominating the local forest, bringing a totally different approach to forest management than the past few years.

So, what happens when industrial forestry takes over the community forest? One thing is for certain, the Kaslo community forest is definitely at threat of remaining a 'community' forest, as Susan Mulkey reports: "All those things that make a community forest different than corporate forest management are being eroded – the decision making system, stewardship education, gentle forest management approaches, increased public consultation and participation." But, Susan goes on, "This has been an enormous learning experience. We have learned how important governance is, and setting up governance regulations in a way that will not allow one interest to dominate over all the others. We should have built in mechanisms to avoid this sort of situation, while remaining attentive to the need for a democratic process. For example, we should have entrenched in our by-laws the governing principles and values such as consensus decision making process, mechanisms to ensure diverse community representation."

For some of us it is difficult to view community forests, or community based forest management as a threat, when it seems to be the ideal way to put democracy, social justice and ecology back into forestry. But to some of the people and institutions who have profited and gained from old corporate forestry, community forests and the new people they can bring to the decision making table (particularly women) are threatening. The challenges for changing forestry and forest management does not stop at gaining community forestry tenures, or

increasing participation in management. Challenges are on-going – particularly to ensure that community forests, or community based forest management do actually mean something different in the relationships of people at the community level; to ensure that they truly are contributing to a democratization of forestry. (By: Jessica Dempsey, WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Community Forests in International Processes

For years governments have been discussing about forests and making "legally-binding" and "non legally-binding" agreements with the stated aim of protecting the world's forests. It is therefore a useful exercise to look into those agreements in relation with community-based forest management, to see what role – if any – governments have assigned to the communities actually living in or depending on the forests.

The 1992 Earth Summit

The forest crisis was one of the major issues at the root of the global concerns that gave rise to the convening of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit), which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, what governments did commit themselves to do on forests (Chapter 11 of Agenda 21) was totally insufficient and so was what they actually did not agree to make commitments on (the Forest Principles). One of the reasons for finding those two documents so poor is precisely the fact that they practically ignore the rich experience in forest management held by indigenous peoples and local communities.

Agenda 21, Chapter 11: Combating deforestation

Agenda 21 was the plan of action agreed upon at the Earth Summit to deal with some of the major environmental and social problems being faced by humanity. It contains 40 chapters, among which number 11 is specifically focused on the issue of deforestation. This chapter is divided in 4 programme areas, the second of which deals with "Enhancing the protection, sustainable management and conservation of all forests, and the greening of degraded areas, through forest rehabilitation afforestation, reforestation and other rehabilitative means".

One would assume that this is where communities would come into the picture but, unfortunately, that assumption is wrong: communities are only assigned – at best – a marginal supportive role or – at worse – are perceived as part of the problem.

The term "community forestry" is in fact only used once and only in the context of "Carrying out revegetation in appropriate mountain areas, highlands, bare lands, degraded farm lands, arid and semi-arid lands and coastal areas … "

As an example of marginal supportive role, the first point in the section on "management-related activities" states that "Governments, with the participation of the private sector, non-governmental organizations, local community groups, indigenous people, women, local government units and the public at large, should act to maintain and expand the existing vegetative cover wherever ecologically, socially and economically feasible, through technical cooperation and other forms of support."

Another example: the need to undertake "supportive measures to ensure sustainable utilization of biological resources and conservation of biological diversity and the traditional forest habitats of indigenous people, forest dwellers and local communities" is only addressed within the framework of protected area systems.

Shifting cultivation is highlighted as part of the problem when chapter 11 states the need of "Limiting and aiming to halt destructive shifting cultivation" and of "including data on shifting cultivation and other agents of forest destruction." The solution is simple: "to support … in particular women, youth, farmers and indigenous people/shifting cultivators, through extension and provision of inputs and training." However, that "solution" implies that shifting cultivation is not perceived as a traditional and sustainable system used by communities throughout the tropics and that they need to be "educated" to make them abandon that system.

Government delegates that negotiated this chapter, while unwilling to empower local communities and indigenous peoples, did acknowledge that they hold knowledge and one of the activities to be implemented is to carry out "surveys and research on local/indigenous knowledge of trees and forests and their uses to improve the planning and

implementation of sustainable forest management." The question then is: if they do hold knowledge, why are they not empowered to manage their forests?

The Forest Principles

At the Earth Summit, governments did not manage to reach an agreement on a Convention on Forests and they eventually made public a "Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forests." The length of the title does not correspond to the depth of its substance. As in Agenda 21, community forest management is not mentioned as the solution to the problem of deforestation.

On the contrary, the solution lies on States, which "have the sovereign and inalienable right to utilize, manage and develop their forests ... including the conversion of such areas for other uses within the overall socio-economic development plan and based on rational land-use policies." Which basically means that governments have the sovereign right to destroy "their" forests – which in the tropics were owned by local communities before the modern states even existed.

Forest people can of course – if the government so wishes – be allowed to participate: "Governments should promote and provide opportunities for the participation of interested parties, including local communities and indigenous people, industries, labour, non-governmental organizations and individuals, forest dwellers and women, in the development, implementation and planning of national forest policies." However, the true managers of the forest are not only put in the same basket as those who destroy it (industry), but they can only "participate" in decisions to be taken by government.

The Forest Principles do go a step further than Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 as regards to forest communities by stating that "National forest policies should recognize and duly support the identity, culture and the rights of indigenous people, their communities and other communities and forest dwellers. Appropriate conditions should be promoted for these groups to enable them to have an economic stake

in forest use, perform economic activities, and achieve and maintain cultural identity and social organization, as well as adequate levels of livelihood and well-being, through, inter alia, those land tenure arrangements which serve as incentives for the sustainable management of forests."

Although not clearly evident, the above can be understood as meaning that indigenous peoples and local communities should be assigned clear rights over forests as a means of ensuring forest conservation. If this were so, it would have meant a major step in the right direction. However, this approach was not promoted in the international processes that took place during the following ten years.

The Forest Principles also go beyond Chapter 11 on indigenous peoples' knowledge when they say that "Appropriate indigenous capacity and local knowledge regarding the conservation and sustainable development of forests should, through institutional and financial support and in collaboration with the people in the local communities concerned, be recognized, respected, recorded, developed and, as appropriate, introduced in the implementation of programmes. Benefits arising from the utilization of indigenous knowledge should therefore be equitably shared with such people." Here again the question: if indigenous peoples' knowledge is so important, why not put them in charge of managing their forests?

United Nations processes on forests

In 1995, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), which in 1997 came up with a set of Proposals for Action regarding the conservation of forests. Subsequently, in 1997, ECOSOC established the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), which finalized its work in 2000, with an additional set of proposals for action. Although not legally-binding, these proposals were the result of long negotiation processes that governments agreed to implement.

Neither the IPF nor the IFF put community forests at the core of the solution to the forest crisis. Although they do include some aspects that were totally absent in the Rio processes, they are clearly

insufficient for ensuring forest conservation through community involvement. In this respect, it is interesting to note, that while the IPF contains a section on “Proposals for action to enhance private-sector investment”, it does not include a section on enhancing community forest management.

The IPF proposals include some positive wording regarding the “recognition and respect for customary and traditional rights of, inter alia, indigenous people and local communities” and “secure land tenure arrangements”, which we strongly believe to be the starting point for enhancing community forest management, but the IPF waters down its own wording by adding “in accordance with their national sovereignty, specific country conditions and national legislation.” The translation of this UN language is that those countries whose legislation does not recognize customary rights can use this excuse for not respecting those rights and that “national sovereignty” will be used to counter any international pressures to do so.

Governments are of course “encouraged” to allow participation – “where appropriate” – of “indigenous people, forest dwellers, forest owners and local communities in meaningful decision-making regarding the management of state forest lands in their proximity, within the context of national laws and legislation”, which is basically meaningless in the vast majority of tropical countries, where the land where those communities have lived since time immemorial is considered – by national laws and legislation – to be state land.

Much emphasis is put in article 40 on TFRK (Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge), but not as a reason for handing over forest management to those who actually possess that knowledge. On the contrary, TFRK is perceived as something very useful that should be handed over to government experts for the planning, development and implementation of national forest policies and programmes. Of course, government delegates visualize knowledge as money (intellectual property rights) and dedicate a number of points to discuss how to share that money and with whom.

Indigenous peoples, forest dwellers and local communities are given a larger role in the most difficult –and economically less attractive–

areas, such as in countries with low forest cover "to promote the regeneration and restoration of degraded forest areas", including them in their protection and management.

The farthest the IPF is willing to go is to "invite" (the weakest possible wording in UN language) governments "to consider supporting indigenous people, local communities, other inhabitants of forests, small-scale forest owners and forest-dependent communities by funding sustainable forest management projects, capacity-building and information dissemination, and by supporting direct participation of all interested parties in forest policy discussions and planning."

The following forest forum (the IFF), did little to ensure the implementation of the IPF proposals and added little in the new set of proposals it put forward.

As respects to the issue we are analyzing, one of the few points that deserve highlighting is one that calls on governments to "Support appropriate land tenure law and/or arrangements as a means to define clearly land ownership, as well as the rights of indigenous and local communities and forest owners, for the sustainable use of forest resources, taking into account the sovereign right of each country and its legal framework." But here again, it uses the weakest possible language ("support") and adds the usual wording on sovereignty and national law to enable governments to disregard this proposal.

The same type of weak wording is used in another apparently positive proposal to "Support and promote community involvement in sustainable forest management through technical guidance, economic incentives and, where appropriate, legal frameworks". The last two words of this proposal (legal framework) are watered down with the addition of "where appropriate". Will it ever be appropriate?

World Summit on Sustainable Development

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa in August-September 2002. Ten years had passed since the Earth Summit, forests had continued to disappear and what was needed was a new approach to the issue. None of this happened at the summit and the section on forests of the WWSD report is probably the weakest of the four analysed here.

There is however an exception in article 45 (h), where governments commit themselves to carry out “actions at all levels” to “Recognize and support indigenous and community-based forest management systems to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable forest management.”

This is the first and only such clear statement from governments on this issue.

That would appear to be a major step forward and should be the starting point for government action in forest conservation. However, the fact that it is included as paragraph “h” (and not “a”), is already showing that the issue is not at the top of the agenda. Nevertheless, it is important for forest campaigners to bear this article in mind when dealing with international processes and actors related to forests to ensure that it is taken on board.

Conclusions

The obvious conclusion resulting from the detailed analysis of the main international agreements and processes on forests is that community-based forest management is basically absent in the governmental approach to forest conservation. Even the positive article highlighted above that came out from the WSSD (45 h) was not the result of an internal change in approach by governments but the outcome of lobbying by the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management, that managed to introduce that article in the process’ last PrepCom in Bali.

However, it is very clear that in most cases it is communities that protect the forests, usually struggling against government decisions that open up forests to unsustainable exploitation.

It is difficult to believe that so many government delegates – and their advisors – who have been discussing the problem for so many years, can still be so ignorant on the causes of deforestation and on the actors that either protect or destroy the forests. It is much easier to believe that they have opted to ignore reality and to play the game expected from them: to favour national elites and corporations.

This would explain why processes supposed to be dealing with forests have put so much emphasis in the promotion of monoculture tree plantations disguised as “planted forests” (which are big business for corporations) and so little emphasis in addressing the direct and underlying causes of deforestation (whose ultimate beneficiaries are also corporations). It would also explain why they insist in empowering governments (that have proven to have completely failed in forest conservation) instead of empowering those local communities that are both able and willing to protect the forests.

One overall conclusion therefore seems to be that that little can be expected from government-led international processes unless a strong community forest movement at the grassroot level is able to put sufficient pressure on national governments to completely change course and devolve ownership and management of forests to communities -where it should have always stayed. (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

SHARING LOCAL EXPERIENCES

AFRICA

Africa: Steady if Hesitant Movement Towards Devolution

Key trends among the plethora of early participatory forest management (PFM) developments have been observed. These include increasing empowerment of local communities in forest management, and emergence of these populations as a cadre of forest managers in their own right. It has been noted that this stems in part from local demand, crystalised through participation. It also arrives through recognition by forestry administrations of the heavy and perhaps needless time and investment incurred through sustained operational roles themselves and/or supervising community roles.

Whilst some programmes have begun with power sharing in mind, most have come to this position through learning by doing, and increasingly, some degree of observation as to what works and does

not work in neighbouring states. This manner of transition has been quite evident in the changing character of projects in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Malawi, Burkina Faso and Mozambique. It is likely to continue as PFM practice continues to refine. This may well include programmes in Zambia, Ghana and Ivory Coast where committees so far established are more for consultation than sharing decision-making, naming of those efforts as 'joint forest management' notwithstanding.

Indisputably, the flagship of this transition (and PFM overall) is the Community Forest. As already observed, the construct is most developed in Cameroon, The Gambia and Tanzania but the construct exists more widely and with increasingly legal definition. Whilst the overall notion of 'community forests' is fairly consistent around the continent, its development is still curtailed in a range of ways.

First, for example, whilst most communities define the community forest area themselves, in some states, limitations are placed upon its size (Cameroon).

Second, declaration of Community Forests is almost everywhere accompanied by important socio-institutional developments at the community level, in the form of variously constituted bodies, mandated to implement the forest management plan agreed to or devised by community members.

Third, whilst community tenure, albeit of usually a customary and unregistered nature, is implied, formal recognition of this is still rare and/or expressed in ambivalent terms. A main exception is The Gambia where a formal transfer of tenure is integral to finalisation of a Community Forest.

Fourth, in both legal and operational terms, fully autonomous community jurisdiction is rarely attained.

Most Community Forests come into being only with and through the formal agreement of the state and under terms largely set by it – the case even in The Gambia. In countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo, Malawi, Ghana, Benin and Mozambique, recognition of local tenure is conversely overlaid by quite stringent state control over how

the forest is actually used. Nonetheless, Community Forests represent a significant departure from twentieth century forest management practice and related classification of forests. Inter alia, they open the way for a widening range of gazetted non-government forest estates. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Benin: Community-Based Forest Management in the Igbodja Forest

In most of the African countries, claims concerning community-based forest and natural resource management have arisen as a reaction to the repressive nature of natural resource laws inherited from Colonial times. Forestry laws in force in the post-Colonial period compromised local community rights to forest ownership. Licences and other forms of taxes so far unknown to local communities were imposed to control the exploitation of forest products that the local inhabitants had had free access to previously, either for their domestic consumption or for marketing.

With the increase in the population, the demand for arable land also increased. In the Igbodja region, four communities occupied the forest, mainly composed of Tchabê peoples. These welcomed other peoples from the South and the North (the Fon, the Ahoussa and the Peulh), which in turn set up twenty more communities. The struggle for survival then became increasingly difficult. Forest destruction has been aggravated over the past years by the numerous population seeking a means of living, without respecting minimum conservation rules.

To palliate this situation the authorities of ACTION Plus NGO, after obtaining economic support from the IUCN Dutch Committee to carry out a study on this forest, encouraged the inhabitants of the zone to launch activities aimed at implementing community-based forest management.

In order to initiate the population in community-based forest management and management of other natural resources, needs were identified and participation was planned and work was done on awareness building; visits to the stakeholders were made and agreements and protocols established with a view to obtaining the

greatest local participation possible in this process. The identification of the real owners of the land was an important step. The local populations are going to carry out surveys to prepare a plan of the zone covered by community-based forest management. In the framework of the study on endogenous flora and fauna, the inhabitants participated in the plantation of 15,000 stands of Senegalese Khaya. The village of Igbodja, bearing the same name as the forest, will make available to the population a community space of 5,000 hectares to initiate true community-based forest management. The other four villages are still at the discussion stage but we believe that each village will have its own space integrated into community management. Additionally, all have their own nurseries.

The breeding of hedgehogs (*Thryonomys swinderianus*) has started and beekeeping has been introduced in two villages to halt the frequent plant fires in the region.

In order to carry out this project, it is necessary to be able to read the texts of laws. For this purpose, a literacy programme in the local language was set up, involving 60 people per village, with a total of 300, directed by local teachers.

At present, latent conflicts are related with degradation of agricultural biodiversity. Large-scale, non-native roving farmers plant new areas every year, thus destroying more and more forest areas. The native inhabitants complain about the situation and threaten to throw them out. These roving farmers cannot plant trees as they are considered as tenants and tenants are not allowed to plant trees on other people's lands. In the framework of our task, all must have their own roles and nobody should be left out. The contribution of all to community-based forest management is a necessity.

From our work, it has become evident that our legislation on forest matters is inappropriate. We have approached the Forestry and Natural Resource Office officials asking them to prepare suitable laws on this matter, taking into consideration the workshops held in Gambia in 1999. A national workshop is expected to be held with the participation of all the stakeholders, including NGOs. Thus, we will be able to generalise the technique of community management and progress from being

merely a pilot project. The population will then fully participate in the sustainable development of forest resources and this gap will be bridged when the mayors take on management of their respective localities as stipulated in the law, interrupting forest degradation. It is a desire that has repeatedly been expressed by the population. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Cameroon: Unequal Equality Between Community Forests and Logging Companies

According to Cameroonian law, both local communities and industrial logging companies have the right to obtain and manage a portion of a forest. However, this apparent "equality" is extremely unequal regarding the extension of forest lands and the legal obligations associated with tenure rights.

Regarding management obligations for instance, in the case of community forests the management plan has to be submitted before any activity starts. This constitutes a major constraint because communities face great difficulties to raise the funds to elaborate their management plans, and should therefore be authorised to at least cut a limited number of trees to finance the preparation of the plan.

For industrial logging companies the situation is totally different, as can be identified in the two existing concession models: "ventes de coupe" and UFAs (unité forestière d'aménagement). The former, defined as a logging area of a maximum size of 2500 hectares to be logged within three years maximum, requires no management plan at all. The latter are 15-year renewable concessions covering a surface area of up to 200,000 hectares, and in this case a management plan has to be submitted within the first three years. However, during this period the company has the right to already start logging – without any management plan at all – in order to secure financing for preparing the management plan! To make things worse, not a single management plan has to date been approved by the administration, although the first concession allocations under the 1994 forest law date back to 1996.

Penalties for illegal activities show a similar pattern of inequality. For instance, illegal activities by logging companies can lead to different

types of sanctions, such as fines, exclusion from future biddings, or suspension of operation. However, it has so far never happened that a valid logging title has been withdrawn from a company as a result of illegal activities. For the communities, the penalties are much more far-reaching, and any mistake or infraction committed will lead to the cancellation of the community forest.

The law thus appears to benefit industrial logging, in spite of the fact that community forests have a higher potential for sustainability than commercial logging. The promotion of community forests should hence be supported as a means to ensure social and ecological sustainability. The so-called “pre-emption right” could have helped to achieve this objective, because it would have given the communities priority in their access to forests against commercial logging. Yet the draft regulation which would have established this right to the benefit of the communities has not yet been signed.

In its study on the Cameroonian forest sector (October 1999), the World Bank’s Operations Evaluation Department points at the same direction when it states that “the international logging companies that dominate the sector continue to have a free hand in the development and use of the forest resources of Cameroon. Local communities were left out of the reform process despite the declared objective to include them in forest resource management.” (WRM Bulletin Nº 48, July 2001).

Cameroon: Development of Community Forests

Community forests are a new kind of mechanism of progressive local community responsibility for forest and forest resource management. So far, thirty-five community forests have been allocated by the Ministry of the Environment.

The results of management models developed so far have been discrete and limited, and experience is fairly recent. Most of them are still at a learning stage.

On a social and cultural level, the model developed in community-managed forests in the region is one of partnerships. Following some questioning, this model has recently reached a certain degree of

stability, with the exception of the Bimboué forest, where it is subject to conflicts that are progressively being solved.

The main advantages of such a model are the following: the functionality of the partnership model, the beginnings of an improvement in the habitat, children's education, learning through action, dissemination of the activity, the capacity to defend their rights, the strengthening of minority communities (the Baka, women, etc.).

However, problems do exist: the communities' model of organisation, in spite of its relevance and functionality in the local sociological context, remains foreign to local social structures which hold attributions and power regarding natural resource management (incompatibility of the present model of partnership with the endogenous form of representation and the social structure, much incomprehension due to the appearance of new structures in the villages as the communities do not recognise themselves in the model developed, non-integration of women in decision-making).

From an economic standpoint, the management models developed had both positive and negative impacts. For example, they facilitated the creation of jobs in the village – with a subsequent reduction in rural exodus – the payment of debts, the strengthening of a forum, the training of local experts and technicians, the beginning of a process towards improving the habitat, the construction of chapels, health help and care, the building of outpatients clinics, etc.

However, various problems arose at that level: current financial management of income generated by community forests is not sustainable. It is not based on any scientific management system. Most of the activities undertaken with financial income generated by exploitation of community forests do not respond to income management planning prepared prior to the arrival of funds in the communities.

Most of the actions undertaken so far were not initially foreseen in the simple management plans and are not always aimed at a community objective.

Finally, on a technical and ecological level, two technical approaches to exploitation have been used so far in the community forests: industrial exploitation and artisan exploitation.

Industrial exploitation has been carried out by the Bimboue community (East Cameroon) in collaboration with forestry companies selected by the directors of the association. Through this modality, they were able to exploit the timber potential of the community forest and generate funds for use in community works. However, this means of appreciation of community forest resources suffered many setbacks, mainly due to conflicts of interests and of power regarding the management of income from logging. It has been prohibited by the forestry regulations presently in force.

Artisan exploitation is presently the sole and unique form of exploitation practised in community forests. For example, it is operational in five community forests in Lomié in East Cameroon. Most of these forests are implementing a second contract with the beneficiaries; however in some cases such as that of Ngola, they do not have a formal contract with the partner. The first contracts were not performed for various reasons: non-compliance with deadlines for payments, poor use of the timber logged, ridiculously low prices for the cubic metre of timber, insufficient training of local technicians.

Progress made was: respect for the minimum diameter of exploitation, existence of monitoring commissions, protection of multiple use essences (wild fruit-trees and others), family exploitation of non-timber forest products and of the fauna, the preparation of an inventory covering 100% of the area open up to exploitation, community participation in prospecting, short-term contracts with partners (3 months), training in basic forestry techniques, an isolated case of manual opening up of roads, transportation of timber on men's heads.

The problems are: lack of materialisation of external boundaries; lack of respect for boundaries (related with the method of partner exploitation); weakening of the monitoring commission in some communities; lack of control over exploitation of non-timber forest products; awareness-building does not always achieve the expected effect (risk of not carrying out rotation); prospecting plan not available in the community

context; absence of a programme; sacrifice and risk associated to transportation of timber on men's heads (risk of accidents); lack of data on other resources (non-timber forestry resources); lack of a hunting plan for fauna management (fauna exploitation continues on an individual and domestic basis).

However, in spite of the limitations found in the process, real enthusiasm is observed on the part of local communities. This enthusiasm reflects the increasing desire of village communities to participate in forestry resource management and in this way, through forest management, contribute to improving their living conditions. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63,October 2002).

Côte d'Ivoire: The Sacred Forest, a Community Protected Area

The village of Zaïpobly is located in Southeast Côte d'Ivoire, in the western outskirts of Taï National Park. This park covers an area of 454,000 hectares and is the largest remnant of the original humid tropical forest in West Africa. It was designated Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1978 and was inscribed on the Natural World Heritage List in 1982, because of its extraordinary specific wealth and because of the numerous endemic species inhabiting it. At the beginning of the last century it was a uniform forest zone, but agricultural systems of cultivation introduced later and over-exploitation of the forest have reduced it to the present small forest islets.

Most of these relict forests have survived because they are considered to be sacred. A sacred forest is a place that is venerated and reserved for the cultural expression of a community. Access and management are governed by traditional powers.

The sacred forest of Zaïpobly is located in the eastern hinterland of Taï National Park. It covers an area of 12.30 hectares and is unrestrictedly accessible to all; however the flora and fauna are strictly protected. The forest is very much linked to life in the village of Zaïpobly, on the southern border of the forest. For village dwellers, the forest fulfills many functions: it serves as protection, provides them with medicinal plants and food and is a place for the conservation of flora and fauna. It

creates a favourable damp microclimate for rural activities in the surrounding fallow lands, it is a place for important socio-cultural meetings and serves as a last living testimonial for future generations of what a true forest is.

The main actors within the village society involved in conserving the sacred forest are:

Kwi society, originally a jurisdictional and police institution, but lately more the latter, as a result of the disintegration of traditional structures, the introduction of new religions and changes in mentality; traditional authorities, depositories of knowledge; the grass-roots community, on which the success of the system depends.

The daily administration of the forest falls on the Kwi society; they also exert psychological dissuasion over the population. Traditional authorities are the prolongation of the founding ancestors and they are responsible for deciding on a site being considered as sacred. They are finally responsible for the sacred site and are its moral guarantee.

Impoverishment of society, progressive soil erosion, introduction of other ways of thinking and of production, and monotheist religions (Islamic and Christian) opposing the practice of traditional rites, judged to be diabolical, have contributed to weakening the sacred forests and therefore are factors threatening their existence, because the establishment and protection of sacred forests are mainly based on local cultural and religious beliefs.

It has been shown that traditional systems of African culture, far from constituting an obstacle to environmental protection, are the best guarantee in the protection of ecosystems and conservation of biodiversity. And this experience shows that sacred places can become real biodiversity reserves in the African continent. For this reason many Africans are conscious of the importance of safeguarding and re-valuing the communities' cultural knowledge, showing that Africa knows how to organise itself to care for what is precious.

At a time when globalisation is swallowing everything up and converting it into merchandise, it is timely to look at these examples, where

biodiversity, the forest, is seen in a wider dimension than that of its mere components. This makes it possible to establish a link and it would be healthy for each society to re-edit it, from the position of their history and culture. (WRM Bulletin Nº 60, July 2002).

Eritrea: Sustainable Forest use Threatened by Government Policies

The Western Lowlands of Eritrea are the easternmost extension of the Sahel, lying between Eritrea's border with the Sudan and the Eritrean/ Ethiopian highlands. Their hills and plains are mainly covered with semi-desert scrub and savannah woodland and interrupted by three river valleys clothed with remarkably dense woodland, some of it mixed acacia and dom palm and elsewhere almost pure stands of dom palm (*Hyphaene thebaica*).

Six ethnic groups live there, amounting to several hundred thousand people with their distinct survival systems characterised by flexibility to face the numerous natural and human-made plights which have played havoc in the past forty years. Major droughts and war have led to a collapse of the farming system, many deaths and mass exodus of the population as refugees. In 1998-2000, the Lowlands were invaded by Ethiopian armies.

At all times, forest products play a crucial role in people's livelihoods. All the tribes rely largely on the forest to meet their subsistence needs (housing, tools and some food) and dom palm fibre is the principal source of cash income for the majority of the Lowland population (belonging to the Tigre, the Beni Amer and the hidareb tribes).

Also, in peacetime and when rainfall levels allow at least some cropping and herding, the poorer members of the community or those who cannot farm land – such as the many war widows – make a living on cutting, weaving and selling palm. Also dom palm nuts are a food of last resort in the hungry season before harvests, and in drought years they become a staple food for many.

One ethnic group – the Kunama – has a distinctly different approach to the forest. They cut very little palm for income, but collect food from

twenty or more tree species. These include the dom palm and others that they value as food reserves for drought years when their crops fail: for them the riverine forests are their insurance, rather than a regular income source.

The resilience of the farming system is given by forest harvesting which enables poor farmers to survive and entire communities to face bad years. However, the agricultural extension services of the Eritrean government have collided with the traditional system, partly because of the unfounded belief that palm leaf cutting is carried out in ways that damage the tree, but mainly because the government has other priorities: the forests occupy fertile land with high water tables, which is ideal for irrigated agriculture of cash crops such as onions and bananas. Increasing production of these is a high priority for the government, in order to raise hard currency through exports, and to attract investment.

On the other hand, the local population values the forest highly, which has until now been a major factor in its conservation. They have established harvesting patterns governed by informal regulations and they have a deep understanding of the nature of dom palm regeneration and growth. These systems prevent over-cutting through restricting access and over-frequent cutting, and have for generations proven to be sustainable. (WRM Bulletin Nº 50, September 2001).

Gambia: A Case of Community Forest Management

Gambia used to be covered by very dense forests. However, the country has undergone a severe deforestation and degradation process. In 1981, about 430,000 hectares were classified as forests – 45% of the total land area. Seven years later, the forest area was reduced to about 340,000 hectares.

Gambian forests have also undergone a degradation process that implied the conversion of many closed forests into a poor quality tree and shrub savannah category, according to the national forest inventory of 1998.

The institutional framework implemented in the 1950’s, with the aim of protecting the remaining forests gave the state overall power over the

national forest resources, depriving the rural population of responsibility for forest management.

In the mid-1980's, awareness grew about the state of forests and the potential of natural forest management, leading to a new approach. The Department of Forestry realised that its efforts would be futile unless local communities were committed and involved in the process. Also, that was a long-term demand by the local communities, so the change in the government approach matched with the needs of the population.

In 1990, the first community forestry interventions were implemented in what has been perceived as a process of confidence building and demand driven. Each village has to establish a Forest Committee, generally formed on the basis of the already existing village institutional structure, with representation from both the male and the female members of the community.

Traditional leaders are involved from the beginning of the process, and their participation ensures the customary ownership of the forest land by the community, helping to stem any future conflict between different villages which jointly manage community forests.

Gambian authorities recognise that the practice of community forest management is not without problems. The difficulty to create the sense of forest ownership among the villagers is the result of mistrust about governmental actions and policies. To build it up, the use of financial or material incentives is avoided. No compensations are given to the villagers for the protection and plantation work they are accomplishing in their forests. A task decided by the forest committee and executed by the villagers without external support strengthens the perception that they are the real owners of their work and therefore of their forest.

A long consultation process of the Gambian community forest management policy and legislation has reaffirmed the need to return authority for forest management to the local communities.

The undertaking has contributed to an important extent to poverty alleviation within the project area – the entire Central River Division, one of five administrative regions of The Gambia – by the sustainable

improvement of the economic revenues of the local population. The empowerment of the communities as well as their support to the Forestry Department in the management of the forest will, in the long run, also contribute to and strengthen decentralisation within The Gambia.

As the director of Forestry, Jatto Sillah, puts it: “Unlike the past, governments must start involving the population and communities in decision making, in designing and implementing programs. In order to facilitate better coordinated actions, the best tool for sustainable forest management should be ‘the bottom-up approach’. In simple terms, the people should be mandated to work out their preference of resource management, and institutions (Government, NGOs) would provide the technical assistance.”

The change in the approach of the Gambian authorities which has led to a combination of political will and local community participation is an interesting progress towards the sustainable management and utilisation of the forest resources, which deserves to be taken into account by the rest of the region. (WRM Bulletin Nº 60, July 2002).

Ghana: Ancient Tradition in Community Forest Management

A country with an annual deforestation rate of 1,71%, which in 17 years (1955-1972) lost one third of its forests and further 5,6 million hectares from 1977 to 1997, Ghana also holds ancient keys for a meaningful model of forest conservation.

However, government attempts at dealing with biodiversity loss have applied a reductionist approach which has implied the establishment of protected areas at the expense of people. Experience shows that this eventually fails to achieve the proposed goal.

And the solution is out there, in old systems which until recently remained extremely effective. Long before official organisations were established to carry out sustainable forest management and conservation, there were traditional community resource management systems. A prominent feature of such systems is the setting aside of patches of forest by traditional authorities for sustainable resource use and the preservation of vital biodiversity. These areas have different

names in different cultures, but are often referred to as sacred groves, fetish groves, local forests or community forests. Some such forests are designated as burial grounds for chiefs or as the home of local deities. But in most cases they are intended to protect watersheds, fragile ecosystems, and plants and animals of conservation importance to local communities.

Traditional authorities are usually the title holders of such areas, and exercise general administrative functions over them. But the management, defence and preservation of such lands are the responsibility of the entire community.

Societies issued controls and sanctions to protect them, and these reserves are intact today in places where culture and traditional religions remain strong. In such reserves, the community forests or sacred groves now support a much larger variety of plant and animal life than do surrounding areas, providing vital products and services such as building materials, timber products, fuel wood, fruits and nuts, bushmeat, snails, mushrooms, and most importantly, plants that are used as traditional medicines. Harvesting is strictly selective there, controlled and allowed only at time intervals that benefit and satisfy the entire community.

On its part, the community adheres to traditional norms and regulations governing the management of these forests, as well as local norms and beliefs governing sacred or fetish groves which prohibit harvesting forest products. Entry is allowed only on specific days or periods for the performance of rituals. Most such groves are believed to contain the “earth god” or spiritual beings that promote peace and prosperity and check antisocial behaviour, and have resulted in remnant patches of primordial forest even in densely populated areas.

However, modernisation, urbanisation and the spread of Christianity and Islam have weakened once revered traditional religions and cultures, changing belief systems in most communities. Many of these sacred groves are being encroached upon and destroyed, leading to a loss of livelihood for local communities that depended on forest resources for survival.

In Ghana, sacred and community forests that have contributed immensely to biodiversity conservation are also now under serious threat. Once found dotted throughout the different vegetation zones of the country, their presence ensured that endemic species restricted to that zone were protected from extinction. Remaining reserves include, to name a few, the Buabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, the Aketenchie Community Forest, and the Akyem Community Forest at Akyem Takyiman. The Buabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary is a Ghanaian forest of global importance, home to the endangered Mona monkey and other endangered animal and plant species. It has also become a major tourist attraction, generating revenue for local communities and the nation. (WRM Bulletin Nº 60, July 2002).

Kenya: Using Participatory Forest Management Plans

Among practices that are emerging in the conservation of Kenya's forests is the participation of communities in forest management. Although the communities are at the moment being involved at a minimal level, many communities living next to forests now want to make decisions and benefit from sustainable use and management of forests.

This desire for participation has been fueled by provisions of the soon to be enacted Forest Bill that will replace the current Forest Act, as well as the work of non-governmental organizations such as the Kenya Forests Working Group (KFWG).

Kenya's forests fall under different management and have different legal status. However, the majority of the closed canopy forests are gazetted forest reserves under the Forest Act managed by the government's Forest Department, to the exclusion of other stakeholders including local communities.

Exclusion from forest affairs has resulted in communities' perception of forests as belonging to the government. This has led to increased illegal activities in forests, as communities look the other way. At the same time the Forest Department is limited in resources to manage forests on its own.

The challenge of rapidly declining forests has thus necessitated rethinking of the best approaches to forest management. This has led

to the thinking that forest adjacent communities and other stakeholders should be involved in forest management and conservation. This is what the new Forest Bill now supports.

The Bill however still considers the Forest Department or Service as the forest authority and requires that a stakeholder wishing to participate in forest management should have a management plan to accompany an application to the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF). The Bill has gone through all stages of development and is awaiting publication for enactment in Parliament.

In anticipation of the enactment of the Bill, KFWG has been working with forest communities in five forest areas to prepare participatory forest management plans to guide future conservation efforts in these forests. Forest adjacent communities in Eburru, Kereita, Rumuruti, Ngangao and Kitobo have benefited from this assistance. Ford Foundation has supported the work.

The management plans seek to involve the communities and other stakeholders in forest management and to facilitate the improvement of community livelihoods through improved forest management and building of social capital. The plans are jointly prepared with the communities involved, putting the local needs in the forefront and making use of local resources. The vision and objectives of forest management are set by involving the community and the process requires that there is consensus on the proposed activities.

The plans are now at an advanced stage. As the Forest Department is in the process of developing guidelines for participatory and collaborative forest management, agreements have been drawn in line with these guidelines – to be effective once the Bill is passed – to enable these communities to participate in forest management.

One outcome of this process has been the formation of cohesive local communities institutions that did not previously exist to manage forests. There is also a marked reduction in illegal activities in the forests with communities willing to participate more in their protection. Although the delay in enacting the Bill has sometimes discouraged the communities involved in planning, as a whole the process has led to

both forest authorities and communities considering community-based forest management as an alternative to the single authority management of earlier days.

It is hoped that the plans will assist to manage, conserve and utilize the five forests in a sustainable manner, while furthering the concept of community-based forest management. Small steps perhaps compared to the strides made by neighbouring countries such as Tanzania, but steps nevertheless. (By: Liz Mwambui, WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Senegal: Women's Project Restores Nature and Benefits the Community

Two different natural ecosystems go to make up the Popenguine-Guéréo natural reserve, located 45 km to the south of Dakar, capital of Senegal: a continental part with rugged hills covered by a primary forest and a maritime part, mainly consisting of a rocky habitat where fish come to spawn.

The zone was classified in 1986 as a natural reserve with a view to reversing degradation from deforestation, depletion of meadows and successive droughts that had led to a considerable loss of biodiversity.

In 1987 and as a community response, 116 women voluntarily and spontaneously set up the Popenguine Women's Gathering for the Protection of Nature (RFPPN, its French acronym) as a way of contributing to the conservation and restoration of the zone's biodiversity. These women have risked their reputation and even their marriages, because they have used their time and energy in establishing a natural reserve for the community when, in the eyes of their neighbours, they should have stayed at home and devoted themselves to the domestic tasks of Senegalese wives and mothers. But the dynamic women of the village of Popenguine and its surroundings have finally convinced those who were against them. Slowly, they have shown that they can regenerate and conserve their environment, encourage eco-tourism, ensure forest restoration and survival of the flora and fauna, while benefiting the community as a whole.

Year after year, they have introduced thousands of trees from the indigenous flora. Slowly the fauna was reconstructed and thus 195

species of birds, gerogryphic antelopes, duikers or small grey antelopes, striped jackals, mongooses, algalia cats, and monkeys of the callithrix family (titis or tamarins) have reappeared.

With time, strictly environmental objectives have evolved and now the socio-economic demands of the women involved (inter alia, generation of income, solving the demand for cereals and fuel) have also been integrated. A programme for sustainable development has thus been created, ignoring models imposed from the outside and on the contrary, basing itself on the conservation of the local environment from a grass-roots, empiric approach.

Since 1995, the group has extended its action and joined efforts to restore a vital space of some 100km2, known as the Ker Cupaam Community Space, in homage to the feminine spirit protecting the site. This space includes the whole Popenguine-Guéréo Reserve and the territories of eight villages surrounding the reserve. The villages are represented by the Women's Economic Interest Groups (GIE), integrating the 1555 member strong COPRONAT cooperative for the protection of nature.

The present RFPPN programme is linked around:

a) Management of forest restoration: establishment in each village of nurseries for timber tree indigenous species as a source of fuel, and fruit trees and ornamental plants for sale; management of the village forest, creation of a network for the distribution of fuel to avoid logging timber tree species.
b) Health management: organisation of the collection and classification of domestic waste, treatment and transformation into compost, construction of latrines.
c) Food management: establishment of cereal banks and family vegetable plots.
d) Training in community management of protected zones: training on waste treatment, horticulture and management of natural spaces, initiation in computer science, the catering trade, construction of a training centre, computer and audiovisual equipment with a view to training young people.
e) Tourist management: extension and equipment of the tourist camping zone.

To reverse erosion, stone barriers and contention dams were built to lessen the speed of rainwater. Another objective is the rehabilitation of the mangroves on Lake Somone, at the southern limit of the territory.

The women of Popenguine proudly show off their work: the shiny mangroves and the full lagoon in spite of the scant rainfall. A decade ago, regeneration of Lake Somone and the Popenguine region was a dream. Woulimata Thiaw, president of the women's cooperative is proud of the results of their work. She smilingly repeats that success has had its price: hard work and that sustainable development means "to be conscious all the time of the effects of our actions on the future and on the future of our children and grandchildren. This is sustainability: the decisions we take. We have to be sure that there is continuity." (WRM Bulletin Nº 67, February 2003).

Tanzania: Traditional Knowledge in Forest Restoration

Forest restoration has become a necessity in many parts of the world, particularly where local communities are suffering from the social and environmental impacts resulting from deforestation. The success of this activity depends on the involvement of the communities themselves, based on their traditional knowledge regarding resource use and conservation. The following example serves to illustrate this.

The Shinyanga region lies in central Tanzania, south of Lake Victoria, and is occupied mainly by the agropastoral Sukuma people. They have provided a key tool for forest restoration, with their indigenous natural resource management system called "ngitili", which involves conservation of fallow and range lands by encouraging vegetation regeneration, particularly for browse and fodder. The Sukuma have had to deal with erratic and poorly distributed rainfall with high variability between seasons, so they have developed a response to acute fodder shortages caused by long and frequent droughts.

The Shinyanga region used to be extensively forested with dense woodland and bushland species, and good cover of understorey grasses. But, massive clearing of forests to eradicate tsetse flies between 1940 and 1965, and impacts of intensive cropping leading to clearing of land for agricultural expansion, rapidly declining land productivity, and

shortages of herding labour, have prompted the establishment of communal ngitilis – with an average size of 50 hectares – which together with individual ngilitis now cover over 70,000 hectares of restored woodland.

The traditional ngitili system of the Sukuma people provided a good entry point for forest restoration through local community efforts. Objectives of ngitili have been expanded to cover other wood products and services required by the community while retaining the original objective of providing fodder for the dry season. Currently, traditional and scientific experiences are shared in management of ngitilis to facilitate restoration of forests and improvement of community livelihood.

Ngitili areas have led to soil conservation and reduced soil erosion, consequently contributing to improvement of agriculture and livestock production. Important naturally regenerating indigenous trees are being left and managed on farm and grazing land. To ensure that the ngitili were guarded and respected, traditional law known as mchenya was applied, supervised by the village security committee.

This example proves that forest restoration is not a technical issue but one of community involvement and adaptation of traditional knowledge systems. The revitalisation of ngitili has thus contributed to improved livelihood security through the restoration of woodlands which now provide a wider range of goods and services for the local people. (WRM Bulletin Nº 57, April 2002).

Tanzania: Community-based Forest Management as a Way Forward for Conservation

Biodiversity rich and varied African ecosystems, including tropical rainforests in central and western regions, were disrupted when the European powers landed and encroached on those territories. This disruption extended to customary social structures which were subordinated to a central decision-making organisation to handle regulation and management of natural resources exploitation.

Later, independent processes in many African countries failed to change this imposed centralised model. However, Tanzania is an

exception. In the 1970s, during post-independence, the government began to devolve power and control over natural resources back to local authorities for community based development. Through a process of “villagization”, the management authority was vested in elected local governments of village lands. The 1975 Villages and Ujamaa Villages Act, further supported by the 1982 Local Government Act, regulated the village system for community-based natural resource management encouraging common property as a legal form of ownership.

According to 1998 data, out of a population of 30 million people, 25 million live within one of the 9,000 registered villages. Each village has a legal and institutional base, a defined perimeter boundary, and an elected village council – which acts as Trustee or “Land Manager” of communal village lands, and is the controlling authority over management decisions on water sources, grazing land and forests.

Village Forest Reserves cover more than 19 million hectares. A number of Public Land Forests and National Forest Reserves are being transferred to communities for management. The 1998 National Forest Policy promotes Village Forest Reserves and inter-jurisdictional collaborative management regimes between local communities; the 2000 draft forest bill goes even further providing delegation of authority “to the lowest possible level of local management”, further empowering the community.

The new law sets out three types of community-based forest management:

- Village Land Forest Reserves: forest land ownership is vested in the entire village community;
- Community Forest Reserves: forests owned and managed by a sub-group of the village community; and
- Village Forest Management Areas: areas of government reserves placed under community management, not ownership.

Within this pattern, the village is the “manager” of the forest, while the central government provides technical advise, liaison between central and local governments, and mediation in dispute among village forest managers, acting as a watchdog on progress.

The restoration of the deteriorated Duru-Haitemba national Forest Reserve under the community forest management approach demonstrates the success of the Tanzanian model: the state Forest Department agreed to work with the eight neighbouring communities which began to manage the forest themselves, upon discreet management areas governed by local by-laws. The communities have successfully monitored and enforced these rules with visible improvement in the forest.

The Tanzanian experience shows a promising way ahead for a conservation pattern which takes into account power relationships and control over land – it tries to decentralise management, regulation and control – while increasing citizen participation at the community level. (WRM Bulletin Nº 58, May 2002).

Tanzania: Joint and Community-Based Forest Management in the Uluguru Mountains

Recent changes in the Forest Policy of Tanzania (1998) and the forthcoming new Forest Act which further operationalises that Policy, have paved the way for several changes in the way that forest conservation might be achieved in Tanzania, including guidelines on the development of Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) and Joint Forest Management (JFM). These changes also mean alterations in the potential roles of the Forestry Department, the local communities and various conservation NGOs.

The Uluguru Mountains cover a huge area of rugged terrain rising to over 2500 m a.s.l. located within parts of 6 Political Divisions. There are four government forestry staff with responsibility for 13 Forest Reserves on the Ulugurus, containing over 200 sq km of forest. The tops of the large mountain peaks are found in two large Catchment Forest Reserves (Uluguru North and South) managed by the Catchment Forestry Project under the central government Forestry and Beekeeping Division. These two reserves were the most important source of water in the country as they supplied water to Dar es Salaam and also held globally important biodiversity values. There are also Catchment Forest Reserves on the lower slopes of these mountains, and a few smaller forest reserves owned by the local authority and managed by the District Forest Officer through the District Council.

The project chose a focal area in Mkuyuni Division that contained part of the Uluguru North Catchment Forest Reserve, the largest (former) area of General Land Forest and some Local Authority Reserves. As these forest areas are (or were) contiguous with the forests of the Uluguru North Catchment Forest reserve they are hence ecologically similar and surrounded by people practising similar lifestyles, and it was believed that they could provide a good test area for involving local people in forest management.

As part of the project, some activities were carried out in the General Lands (CBFM) and Local Authority Reserves (JFM) in the focal area:

- a workshop on JFM involving all village leaders to create awareness amongst these leaders on environmental conservation and issues pertaining to the new vision for forest management contained in the 1998 forest policy.
- exchange visits to other parts of Tanzania where there are working examples of these management systems.
- the use of aerial photographs and field surveys enabled the forest cover to be mapped in the project area to identify the remaining forest.
- village meetings in the project area to inform participants on the environmental importance of the Uluguru Mountains, and the new changes in Forest Policy which would allow them more control over forested land in their village lands (through Village Forest Reserves - CBFM), and also allowed them opportunities for discussing with the government on user rights for Forest Reserves (JFM agreements).
- the promotion of local management authorities development.

The work on CBFM and JFM in Mkuyuni Division of the Uluguru Mountains is still at an early stage. Presently most effort is being put into getting the remaining Kitumbaku forest reserve declared as Village Forest Reserves for management by six different villages. It will be a major achievement to stop the last of the forests on the Kitumbaku/ Kitundu Hills being converted into banana plantations, and to also safeguard the drinking water supplies for the six surrounding villages. Part of the boundary is already surveyed and all four villages have accepted the need for the reserve to protect their water sources through the creation of a Village Forest Reserve.

The following lessons learnt in the General Forest Lands and Local Authority Forest Reserves on the slopes of the Ulugurus have a direct bearing on the development of future JFM in the Uluguru North and Uluguru South Catchment Forest Reserves, as well as other areas:

- the most important forest areas on the Ulugurus are under the authority of Catchment Forestry who have a mandate to protect the nationally important water catchment functions for Dar es Salaam and Morogoro towns, and the globally important biodiversity values in the forests.

- it has been noted the lack of information available to design and then implement JFM in the Ulugurus. In 10 villages in one Division sufficient data were collected to move CBFM and JFM forwards over a period of three years. However, it is difficult to understand the land ownership patterns sufficiently to ensure that the agreements made with village governments will be respected by Luguru clan groups, or other land ownership and management bodies on the Ulugurus.

- mapping of Ward and Village boundaries, has shown that 50 villages border the two large Catchment Reserves within 19 Wards and 6 Divisions. The villages on the Uluguru Mountain slopes and adjacent lowlands contained a total population of around 400,000 people in 1988, and probably somewhat more than that now. The experience of defining village use zones for 6 villages within a single piece of forest on the General land indicates that defining boundaries for 50 villages within the Uluguru North and South Forest Reserves will take considerable time to negotiate successfully. Methods for marking these boundaries also need to be devised.

- the positive attitude of some local people who would like to have forest areas under their own management, to better protect the forests and especially their water supplies. However, there are also power struggles within each village between elements of village government who would like to allocate forest land for farming, and the newly created forest committees who would like to establish management systems for those forests.

Although the work at the Uluguru Mountains is still at an early stage, all means and efforts have been made since it has been initiated, to

make it a success. We hope it will encourage other communities all around the world to practise similar lifestyles. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Tanzania: Improving Forest Management Through Joint Management with Communities

Many independent states have shown little interest in revitalizing local level systems of authority, which were purposely destroyed by past colonial regimes. The new independent governments, just like past colonial regimes do not like very much the idea of local political forces challenging its legitimacy. Thus, many forests became the property of the state, as in the case of Tanzania. This responsibility was assumed by the Tanzanian state despite other pressing problems like: governance, economic development, self reliance and political stability. Given that limited available resources were mostly directed towards addressing those issues and that managing forests was not accorded priority, the result was that forests were left to deteriorate.

Much attention to reform management of natural resources like forests has focused on either increasing powers and responsibilities on the government or on privatization. Rarely has attention focused on management of resources by communities or managing them as common property, been considered. Communities can achieve this aim with the help – rather than control – from the government. This is the idea being proposed in the new forest policy: making communities responsible for managing forest resources as common property in Tanzania whenever possible.

Widespread people's participation in forest management, owning the forests as common property, is the current thinking towards forest management. Common property refer to a particular property rights arrangement in which a group of resource users share rights and duties toward a resource. This term therefore refers to social institutions, and not to any inherent natural or physical quality of the resource.

In this arrangement, a particular group of individuals share rights to a resource, e.g a forest. User rights are common to a specified group of individuals, not to all. Thus, common property is not access open to

all but access limited to a specified group of users who hold their rights in common. When the group of individuals and property rights they share are well defined, common property should be classified as a form of shared private property. The property rights in a common-property regime can be very clearly specified, they are by definition exclusive to the co-owners (members of the user group), they are secure if they receive appropriate legal support from the government.

It can be noted that while the Tanzanian government and international agencies have overestimated their own capabilities for forest management, they have underestimated the value of local governance over those resources. Local communities who depend on forests for many commodities and services not just timber, are more sensitive to their protective functions and the wide variety of goods available from them in sustainable harvest. But when the governments overrule traditional use rights to forests, local communities and individual households are unable, and less willing to prevent destructive encroachment or overexploitation. In effect, these de jure state forests are turned into de facto open access. Environmental degradation can occur where there is an increasing lack of synchrony between the community and its natural environment, and the implied solution is to restore harmony to environment-society relations.

Restoring or awarding such rights to local groups would induce them to attend to the possibilities of sustainable long term production from the forests. Sustainability of forests depends on local rules, use patterns, and incentives created by international, regional, national and local institutions. Indeed, if ecological conditions are the same, major structural and biological differences between local patches of forests may be almost completely the consequence of human rules and use patterns.

Statements of intent on global environmental problems issued in the 1992 Earth Summit, including Agenda 21 and the Desertification Convention, strongly advocate as solutions a combination of government decentralization, devolution to local communities of responsibility of natural resources held as commons, and community participation.

According to the new forest policy, to abolish open access in public lands, covering more than 19 million hectares in Tanzania, clear ownership for all forests and trees on those lands need be defined. The allocation of forests and their management responsibility to villages, private individuals or to government will be promoted. Central, local and village governments may demarcate and establish new forest reserves.

Communities are best suited to manage and regulate resource use because of four main reasons, which are:

1. Empowering a community to manage and regulate the use of a resource will reduce the pressure on the resource because by the mere fact that it is owned by a certain community it will not be an open access. Potentially, there are many users of a resource e.g. a forest and if one group retain exclusive use of a resource there is high possibility that more sustainable practices are likely to be implemented.

2. A community living near a resource and depending on it for livelihood, and knowing that it will enjoy the benefits of the resource for a long time, is more likely to refrain from misusing it. People rooted in one locality which they call home, will use a resource more carefully because if they deplete it they have nowhere else to go. They are different from a commercial corporation which is always on the move, and depletion of a resource in one place means moving to another place and continue with the same trend.

3. The limited resources of governments in terms of personnel and finance to police resources means that this task is better placed in the hands of local people which will do it for their own benefit with no burden of payment on the part of the government.

4. Traditional users of a biotic resource like a forest are more likely to have developed techniques which will enable them to use the resource sustainably. Other groups or companies with less knowledge of the resource are more likely to exploit the resource to extinction with the aim of short term gains. (WRM Bulletin Nº 64, November 2002).

Uganda: Collaborative and Community-Based Forest Management are not Synonymous

Forests and woodlands cover about 24% (or 5 million hectares) of the total land area of Uganda, of which 80% is woodland, 19% moist high forest and 1% commercial plantations. Approximately 30% of such forests and woodlands are gazetted mainly as protection forests directly under various forms of government jurisdiction. The 70% outside the gazetted forest domain exist under various forms of private and customary control.

Forests and woodlands are land-based resources and thus land tenure has important implications on access to land and its resources. Although no formal (written) policies were in place during the pre-colonial era, localized tribal kingdoms reputedly ensured environmental regulation through a system of customary controls that were informed by local indigenous knowledge systems. Without necessarily romanticizing, human-environment relationships in typical Ugandan pre-colonial societies evidence largely appears to suggest the context of people living in some form of “harmony with nature”.

The incipient phase of the colonial period saw a marked influx of foreign forces including explorers and missionaries, and later fortune seekers and business interests, and it culminated in colonial conquest and the advent of capital led development policies. In the forest sector, new entrepreneurs sought to expand their fortunes through the commercial extraction of timber, wild rubber and coffee, which in the absence of some form of regulation, resulted in rapacious destruction of forests. The introduction of cash crops and taxation further aggravated forest destruction through clearance for cultivation and other cash generating activities. Protected forests were invariably created through the eviction of some peasant communities from their ancestral homelands.

Forest policy during the early post-colonial period (1962-1980s) was “more of the same”. Later, in 1988, a policy review apparently instituted at the behest of external donors, emphasized on new initiatives to halt deforestation, the need for forest sector rehabilitation, the creation of awareness on environmental issues and a multiple stakeholder approach, which is thought to have spawned the emergence and mushrooming of local environmental NGOs.

Uganda collaborative forest management policy reflects a conceptual bias that appears to equate community forest management with collaborative forest management, a spatial bias that appears to focus on the forest margin zone, and a project bias. Because of their project proclivity and related requirements, including the need to demonstrate tangible impact within restricted timeframes, collaborative forest management initiatives lose a considerable measure of the flexibility of social-learning experiments that they are supposed to be.

The collaborative forest management policy was further enhanced by an emphasis on decentralized governance, whose initial phases appear to have been dominated by the political and fiscal aspects of the policy, with environmental aspects apparently occupying backstage. On the ground, collaborative forest management in state forests under the Forest Department is being pioneered at 7 sites, with all of them using project-based approaches relying on donor funding.

There are two types of forest reserves when discussing management powers decentralized under collaborative forest management arrangements. There are those forest park reserves such as Mt Elgon Forest Park, which have been closed to commercial exploitation. Here communities can access some subsistence resources, whose extraction is deemed environmentally benign, through collaborative community management schemes. Here power over the forests is either under Uganda Wildlife Authority or Uganda Forest Department. Collaborative management schemes are kinds of agreement in which ultimate directive power rests with the state wildlife and forest bureaucracies.

The second type of forest reserves are those from which commercial harvesting of resources can be undertaken. Power over the management of these forests is supposed to be distributed between the central government and the local governments. The latter is supposed to be responsible for forest reserves less than 100 hectares in size while the state deals with those of bigger sizes. Even in this arrangement no effective decision making powers have been devolved to the local governments. Power over what can be exploited, who can exploit and when, is in the hands of the central government forestry officials.

Decentralisation under collaborative forest management arrangements, therefore, largely does not go beyond allowing communities' access to a circumscribed range of resources. In spite of the rhetoric of community empowerment, the gulf between the interests of the so-called local communities and other stakeholders is more often than not quite conveniently understated. For instance, the European Economic Community made the eviction of peasant communities that had encroached onto protected areas a condition for the disbursement of funding support for collaborative resource management activities.

In Mbale National Park, collaborative forest management involved restoration and conservation of the forest through tree planting in an initiative supported by the Uganda Wildlife Society – Forests Absorbing Carbon Emissions (FACE), funded by a Dutch electricity generating consortium. An audit of how much carbon dioxide had been sequestered was then done in response to which the sequel Greenhouse Gas Verification Project was commissioned. In commenting on how such ideas were so out of sync with the realities of their everyday social life, Kanyesigye and Muramira (2001:35) quote a 75-year old villager arguing "…we grew up and found our parents and grandparents depending on the forest. The forest is our father, our mother… How can some stranger come and pose as one who knows more about what has long been our own".

The impact of collaborative forest management initiatives on poverty has been weak. It is generally the relatively richer farmers that have been able to invest land, labour and cash who have been able to benefit from these initiatives, which it seems have not reached the poorest of the poor.

The above excerpts from Mandondo's research clearly show that, although collaborative forest management may in some cases improve local peoples' livelihoods, it has very little in common with community-based forest management, where people are empowered to make decisions on the management of their forests. (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

ASIA

Asia: The Initiative on Good Forest Governance, In Support of CBFM and Wider Processes

The seed for the initiative on Good Forest Governance (GFG) in Asia was planted at the Forest, Trees and People Program (FTPP) meeting held in Daman, Nepal, April 2000. Partners at that meeting recognized the need to involve civil society more actively in community-based forest management (CBFM), as well as the possible roles of a regional association to support this process.

Two years later, the GFG seed began to germinate with the support of a Ford Foundation grant to the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) aimed at testing:

* The feasibility of a GFG program with existing and new RECOFTC partners
* Whether a regional association or alliance to support GFG would be needed
* Whether the GFG initiative could be linked to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) process to gain mutual leverage

During the past months, a series of planning events in Thailand – coupled with GFG workshops and related events at the WSSD PrepCom IV in Bali and the Summit in Johannesburg – have led to the development of workplans, new partnerships, and the launching of an Asian Alliance for GFG.

GFG Framework and Objectives

The underpinning rationale, conceptual framework and possible functions of the GFG initiative were articulated in a draft position paper.(1)

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(1) "Moving Towards Good Forest Governance in Asia and the Pacific: A Draft Position Paper Prepared as Part of Indonesian People's Forum During PrepCom IV of WSSD to stimulate dialogue and interest in GFG." RECOFTC, Bangkok, May 2002.

The GFG framework (see below) has been adapted from the 'governance map' developed by Hobley and Shields (2) for analyzing and improving the relationships among key actors in CBFM– forest users, natural resource management (NRM) agencies and the political environment.

Through various consultations and refinements, the main objectives of the GFG initiative have evolved into the following:

1. To understand the practice of and factors contributing to good forest governance, and to serve as a clearinghouse for best practices, lessons learned, and other information relevant to GFG.

2. To support GFG initiatives at different levels in Asian countries, and to monitor the effects of wider political processes on forest governance.

3. To develop effective channels of communication to (a) enable forest users to increase their voice and impact, and (b) improve the relationships among a diverse group of stakeholders.

Networking and Information Support

In an effort to disseminate relevant information and stimulate discussion and interaction among those interested in Good Forest Governance and community-based forest management RECOFTC has set up the following communications channels:

* A web page devoted to the GFG initiative (http://www.recoftc.org/forgov.html)
* A listserv for GFG partners (gfgasia@yahoogroups.com)
* A listserv for members of the Global Caucus on CBFM, which emerged during PrepCom IV in Bali and now comprises nearly 200 people worldwide (globalcbfm@yahoogroups.com).

It is hoped that these channels, along with the WRM website and bulletin, will be used routinely and frequently by GFG and CBFM partners to promote networking, information sharing and peer support.

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(2) Hobley, M. and Dermott Shield. 2000. "The Reality of Trying to Transform Structures and Processes: Forestry in Rural Livelihoods." Working Paper 132. ODI, London.

GFG Workplans

The various planning and workshop events have enabled the formulation of GFG country-level workplans by partners from Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. These represent a rich array of activities at the local and national levels, focusing on themes such as:

* developing and institutionalising arrangements for learning
* strengthening community forest user federations
* improving relationships among users, forest departments and policy makers
* sharing of field processes
* building capacity for GFG and CBFM
* contributing to policy development
* building upon decentralisation, devolution and democratisation processes

Together, these country activities provide a solid foundation upon which regional activities may be developed for greater synergy and complementarity. Four regional activities have emerged as priorities:

* Compiling and analysing national/local level assessments of GFG
* Developing criteria and indicators for GFG processes
* Forging regional/international linkages to leverage local processes
* Designing and testing GFG training

Next Steps

Partners emerged from Johannesburg with a shared vision and shared commitment to GFG. Among the next steps agreed to were the following:

1. Move ahead with local and national activities. For example, Nepal is implementing plans for a national workshop on GFG, development of criteria and indicators for GFG in Community Based Forest Management, and training of facilitators on user group formation with GFG principles.
2. Consolidate GFG work-plans, finalise terms of reference for interim working group and facilitator, and mobilise human resources to get things moving.

3. Focus on the passage of the Thai community forestry bill. This movement has greatly benefited from letters sent to the Thai Prime Minister from CBFM Global Caucus and WRM members.
4. Continue to link with the CBFM Global Caucus. For example, notable progress on identifying people and activities (e.g., protected areas) for the World Forestry Congress in Quebec in 2003.
5. Use GFG framework to analyse country situation and adapt as needed.

RECOFTC has offered to host and support an interim secretariat for GFG during the initial two-year feasibility phase. Efforts are underway to mobilise:

* An interim working group to provide overall governance and guidance; and
* An interim facilitator who can assist the working group and interim secretariat.

(By: Chun K. Lai, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Cambodia: Timber Concessions vs Community Forests

Massive logging has been identified as Cambodia's main environmental problem. Since the 90s, the timber sector, replicating the globalised forest management pattern that prioritises short-term financial profit to ecological stability, aggressively exploits Cambodian forests. Virtually all forestland, except for protected areas, has been allocated as concessions to mostly foreign companies. Additionally, the mid-nineties were characterized by large-scale uncontrolled and illegal logging activities throughout the country. It is estimated that 90% of the logging activities in 1997 were illegal.

An Asian Development Bank-funded forest sector review conducted in 1999 and released in 2000 described the situation as a "total system failure." The report expressed that "The scenario is clear: the industry wants to cover its investment costs rapidly and continue earning as long as the resource lasts. In permitting this level of forest exploitation, Cambodia displays a classic example of unwise forest resource utilization. The country may soon turn from being a net exporter of timber to a net importer."

Faced with the possibility of a moratorium on logging, the timber industry opted for a “voluntary restructuring process”, which included re-negotiation of contracts that clearly defined responsibilities and rights of the industry and the government, the payment of overdue deposits and minimal royalties and the submission of new management plans according to standards set out in a new model concession agreement.

However, the structures put in place to ensure credible monitoring and law enforcement were grossly inadequate. Since the Prime Minister’s announcement in 1999 to crackdown on illegal logging, the government agency in charge basically adopted the view that Cambodia is now free of the illegal logging problem. Illegal logging is by now considered small-scale timber theft, that is still widespread and, from time to time, publicly suppressed by the authorities. Law enforcement activities are so far not targeting organized businesses and very rarely military personnel involved.

The introduction of the Forest Crime Monitoring Project has not fulfilled expectations, partly due to technical and logical set-up failures, but mostly because of the lack of institutional support and political will on the government side. The agencies in charge lack capacity and motivation to consistently follow the progress, or shortcomings, of the reform process. In-country capacity to guide and supervise the process was – and is – extremely limited. In particular the World Bank’s approach of focusing on “illegal” logging instead of actively reducing the underlying system failures has reduced the momentum for change since 1999.

An international panel of experts reviewing the sector assessment underlined the report’s findings, but explicitly stressed the fact that the report concentrates heavily on the narrow view of forestry from an engineering and timber harvesting perspective, without adequately addressing overall strategic land-use planning issues such as community forestry, environmental and social values, which are fundamental to forest management planning.

More and more the values and benefits of a different approach and understanding of “forest management”, for local communities as well as for the overall economic and social development of developing countries, are widely recognised.

The concept of industrial timber concessions to utilise tropical timber resources, developed in the seventies, especially if run by foreign companies, has proven to be unsatisfying and in some cases disastrous in numerous countries in the region and beyond.

In the case of Cambodia, it is promising that after years of preparations, false starts and stalling, a new Sub-Degree on Community Forestry is finally on its way. Experiences with the Forest Crime Monitoring Project have shown that communities play a crucial role in monitoring and safeguarding Cambodia's forests. Facing destruction and loss of their livelihood, communities are starting to organise themselves with petitions, demonstrations and direct confrontations with loggers and the military, with sometimes surprisingly successful outcomes.

The time is right for the Cambodian government and the international community to actively encourage and support this process. (WRM Bulletin Nº 53, December 2001).

India: Gender Bias and Disempowerment in World Bank-funded Forestry Projects

Elected forest councils (Van Panchayats) have been the only existing example of reasonably autonomous legal space for community forest management in India. After having managed for years demarcated village forests in Uttarakhand, the hill region of Uttar Pradesh, Van Panchayats are being replaced by top-down "participatory" forestry projects pushed by the World Bank.

In the village of Pakhi in Chamoli district, from where the Chipko movement against commercial forest exploitation had begun in the early 70's, neither the women nor the poor – targetted as primary beneficiaries of these new forestry projects – were consulted and their existing management system was not even taken into account.

The village forest is rich in biodiversity, with mixed species dominated by oak and rhododendron, and a sprinkling of deodar (Himalayan cedar). Its primary benefits have been fuelwood, fodder, leaf litter for animal bedding and other non-timber forest products, rather than cash income. These have been critical for sustaining local agro-pastoral livelihoods,

still predominantly subsistence based. Collection of fuelwood, fodder and water is almost exclusively women's work in the hills. Decisions about when to open the forest for grass, leaf and firewood collection, the rules for collection, the fines for violation, etc. were taken by the women, ensuring that forest product collection did not conflict with periods of heavy agricultural work. As no external funds were available, the women used to repair the forest boundary wall with voluntary labour.

Although pleased with having appropriated control over the village forest, the women had expressed resentment over the men leaving all the forest protection work to them on the grounds that only women need the forest. However, when important village related decisions are made, the women are often kept in the dark.

This complaint became starkly true with the introduction of "participatory" village forest joint management (VFJM) under a World Bank funded forestry project in August 1999. The offer of a significant budget for the village forest led to a rapid gender based shift in power and control. The same men, about whom the women complained of leaving all forest protection work to the women, suddenly became over enthusiastic for it. Three watchmen were employed and initially they even monopolised wage work in the project financed nursery. Only after strong protests by the women were some of them employed.

But the men too are losers. They have a similar loss in local decision making control to the Forest Department. According to the president of the council, the new VFJM reduced the villagers' role from being responsible for forest management to providing information for preparation of the microplans and working as paid labour for forestry operations. The microplans are cast in the mould of plantation projects and reinforce the Forest Department's claim to being the monopoly holder of technical forestry knowledge, as well as the pattern of forestry as the best land use even for the remaining commons. This is despite its historical lack of experience in biodiverse forest management for enhancing livelihoods and ecological security.

In the words of one of the worried women, "In their lure for money, the men have made a deal over our village forest with the Forest Department", which has in fact become the only winner. These World

Bank-funded projects have thus disempowered local women and men who have protected the forest while empowering a Forest Department with a long history of forest destruction. (WRM Bulletin Nº 49, August 2001).

India: Indigenous Peoples and Joint Forest Management

India's experiments with Joint Forest Management (JFM) grew out of attempts by forestry officials to accommodate 'tribal' demands to manage their own forests. [The indigenous peoples of India are officially referred to as 'Scheduled Tribes']. Under JFM forests remain the property of the State under the jurisdiction of Forest Departments but local communities are contracted to manage the forests and retain a portion of profits from the sale of harvests. The extent to which profits are shared with the communities varies considerably from state to state in India, as does the degree of forest department intervention.

However, JFM is notable for the low security of tenure it provides to participants. In most states, the Forest Protection Committees established to co-manage forests with the Forest Departments lack legal personality and have no status outside their relationship to the government agencies. Many of those involved in JFM thus see the process as just another means by which the Forestry Departments are able to organise local labour to improve public lands. However some in the forest service have argued that State intervention is crucial to ensure that the weaker sections of communities benefit from and are not further marginalised by JFM.

In the mid-1990s, large-scale foreign assistance, notably through concessional loans from the World Bank, was provided to help 'scale up' joint forest management. Notionally, the programme now embraces the whole country. However, the programme has begun to run into serious problems. One set of problems derives from the lack of real political will in some States to implement the programme. In Indian states where the programme was 'home grown' and implanted by leading foresters, the scaling up has been relatively successful. In these states, the existence of a least some committed foresters, active social movements pressing for reform and a network of concerned NGOs, has ensured that mechanisms have developed to monitor

progress and provide accountability. However, in other states which have accepted the programme mainly as a result of national policy change and the provision of outside funds, these checks and balances have been lacking. Forestry Department officials have resisted what they see as an erosion of their authority. Joint Forest Management schemes have thus been implemented half-heartedly, with inadequate community preparation and with too much authority being retained by officials. In these circumstances scope for the application of local institutions, knowledge and initiative has been frustrated and enthusiasm for JFM has been correspondingly weak.

A second set of problems has come from the inflexible application of the JFM concept. JFM was originally conceived by foresters as a way of encouraging the rehabilitation of degraded 'forest' lands. The programme is thus only applied in areas where natural forests are already lost and local communities require help to restore forest cover and achieve (or regain) a more sustainable forest management system. Ironically this has meant that those communities which have not significantly depleted their forests do not qualify for the programme. Many of the tribal groups in Central India have been caught out by this Catch 22.

In other areas, tribals have felt excluded from JFM because opportunities to participate have been monopolised by higher caste groups who have been able to use their greater access to officials to secure participation in the JFM scheme. Marginalised and technically landless groups like the tribal peoples have thus seen 'degraded lands' and 'wastelands' that were important to their livelihoods annexed to JFM, leaving them further impoverished.

Surprisingly, despite its policy on indigenous peoples, World Bank support for JFM, has not helped focus attention on the special needs of indigenous peoples. In January 2000, the World Bank abruptly pulled out of the Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project after tribal groups frustrated at the way JFM was being imposed on their traditional lands without their rights or interests being accommodated travelled all the way to Delhi to visit the World Bank office and voice their complaints. Denied access to the building, the tribals camped in the compound until the Bank accepted a petition from the group. World Bank staff privately

admit that the project was not developed in accordance with its policy and was thus indefensible. Alarmed by this experience and facing complaints through the Inspection Panel, World Bank staff in India have discussed whether or not they should wind up their involvement in JFM altogether.

Among the lessons learned from the JFM experience are the following:

* communities can only benefit if they also have adequate lands for subsistence outside forests
* long term benefits require that a major share of the profits be retained by the communities
* forestry officials need re-training and given incentives to devolve decisions to communities
* forestry department commitment must be real and not a token response to aid agencies
* arrangements should be fitted to local forest management traditions not prescribed from above
* the programme should be extended to include healthy forests
* special provisions are needed to accommodate the needs and rights of indigenous peoples

In general, however, most indigenous peoples in India see JFM as an (inadequate) first step towards the restitution of their rights. (By: Marcus Colchester, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

India: Oppose World Bank and Save Forests

At the end of a National Conference on Community Ownership of Forests (April 2-4, 2004), organised by Jharkhand Save the Forest Movement, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers, and Delhi Forum, held in Chalkhad, a forest village in the Indigenous Peoples majority State of Jharkhand in eastern India, around two hundred indigenous Munda (a central Indian indigenous ethnic group) representatives resolved in unison to “Oppose World Bank: And Save Forests”. Chalkhad is the ancestral village of the legendary Munda rebel leader Birsa Munda who led a struggle against the British colonial government in 1899-1900 popularly known as the Ulugan (great tumult) of Birsa Munda against erosion of khuntkatti (community ownership rights to forests) in Jharkhand. Birsa Munda was arrested and died in Ranchi prison.

When the British foresters came to this tribal area more than 600 Munda villages were already enjoying khuntkatti rights and had the control over management of the forests. The communities had formulated strict rules and regulations about how to manage and use the forests. Livelihoods depended only on that amount of produce including timber regularly harvested from forests that would be replenished every year. The guiding principle appears to have been what we now call sustainability. It was not a mere coincidence, therefore, that the British found vast areas of forest in prime condition.

The basic colonial approach was to declare forests state property and curtail forest people's rights to areas with commercially valuable species. Clear-felling of vast areas of forest was the method of forest operations, followed by complete closure to grazing and other human activities such as collection of firewood, fodder, medicinal plants, bamboo, etc. A Forest Department was created in 1868 to oversee these operations.

Colonial rule and its accompanying commercialization affected tribal societies in a variety of ways. It strengthened penetration of tribal areas by outsiders from the plains (moneylenders, traders, land grabbers, labour contractors, etc.). It enforced alien concepts of private property. It forced sale of land out of sheer desperation of those in the vicious grip of debt. It ruthlessly exploited indigenous people as cheap indentured labour. It led to alienation that was not just economic or material, but cultural, spiritual and identity-related as well. Ulugan of Birsa Munda was the culmination of a series of revolts in response which forced the British to think back and devise some safeguards and protection for the indigenous people and forest communities resulting in the enactment of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908.

Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (CNT) prohibits transfer of land to non-tribals and ensures community ownership and management rights of forest communities over khuntkatti areas. In essence, the private forests under the zamindars (landlords) were reverted back to the Munda community. But, immediately after the independence, by dint of the Bihar Forest Act, 1948 (this area of Jharkhand was within the State of Bihar till September 2000), the khuntkatti land was converted into private protected forests thereby depriving the Mundas of their

ownership of and management to the forests. The entire land belonging to 600 villages was vested to the State Forest Department (FD). Although the subsequent Munda resistance forced the State Government to give the community back its land, management still rested with the FD.

The next forty years was a story of loot and plunder of the forests in Jharkhand with active connivance of the FD officials and gradual alienation of the indigenous people from their forests. The primary forest cover was almost destroyed.

In the later part of the twentieth century, since the mid-eighties, when the movement for a separate Jharkhand State gained momentum, the question of social, economic and cultural rights along with political autonomy was also raised by the indigenous people. The forest dependent indigenous community started asserting their rights over the forests. On many occasions the FD officials were not allowed to enter the forests and the villagers themselves initiated measures to save and regenerate forests. This movement was particularly strong in the khunkatti villages of Ranchi and West Singhbhum districts. The initiative also spread to other areas of Hazaribagh and Santhal Parganas inhabited by Santhal, Oraon and Ho tribes with no such khuntkatti rights.

With the new Jharkhand Government not fulfilling the forest communities rights over forests, the movement took the formal shape of Jharkhand Jangal Bachao Andolan (Jharkhand Save the Forest Movement). With its objective of restoring community ownership and management of forests, the movement is spreading like wildfire in the State. Forest communities in non-khuntkatti areas are also demanding implementation of the same khuntkatti model in their areas and are resisting encroachment of the FD. Simultaneously, forest protection committees have been established in villages which meet once a week and implement the ground rules established regarding usage of forest produce by the community including timber for fuelwood.

The deliberations in the three-day National Conference in Chalkad, attended by more than 300 representatives of indigenous forest communities from several Indian States, reflected the threat posed by

the forthcoming World Bank forestry project, particularly in the context of the khuntkatti system in Jharkhand. The World Bank project to be implemented in Jharkhand during the next 16 to 18 months, talks of participation of forests communities in conservation of the forests and in the same vein proposes alternative livelihood for these communities to alienate these communities from the forests to save and conserve them. In other words, the World Bank programme, rather than empowering the forest communities with ownership and management rights, aims to deprive them and economically, socially and culturally alienate from the forests.

Therefore, the forest communities in Jharkhand today, have decided to oppose and resist World Bank demanding:

a) restoration of the khuntkatti system;
b) implementing the khuntkatti model in other forest areas of the State; and
c) vesting the management of the forests to the gram sabha (lowest tier of the village self-governance model) in the indigenous Fifth Schedule Areas as per the Central Act of 1996 (extension of panchayati raj in scheduled areas). (By: Souparna Lahiri, WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Indonesia: The Alternative Approach of Community Forest Management

The NGO Down to Earth has recently concluded a special report titled “Forests, people and rights”, which provides very detailed analytical information on the forest situation in Indonesia. The following paragraphs have been extracted from the chapter “Community forest management: the way forward” and we recommend our readers to access the full document (see details in References).

According to the study, forest peoples have been regarded by Indonesia’s powerful wood industry and successive governments in Jakarta as an obstacle to the profitable exploitation of the forests and their skills and knowledge were unrecognised, until very recently.

However, community forest management provides an alternative approach which puts forest peoples at the centre of decision-making

and sees them, not as a problem to be dealt with, but as a key part of the solution. In Indonesia, the community forestry movement starts from the premise that the domination of the state, the centralised nature of forest management and the state's refusal to recognise adat (indigenous) rights are the major causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

Community-based natural resource management seeks to guarantee access and control over forest resources for people living in and around forests who depend on them for their economic, social, cultural and spiritual well-being. Forests should be managed to provide inter-generational security and increase the likelihood of sustainability. It is based on three principles:

* the rights and responsibilities over forest resources must be clear, secure and permanent;
* the forests must be properly managed so that there is a flow of benefits and added value;
* forest resources must be transferred in good condition to ensure their future viability.

Communities wanting to retain, construct or develop community-based management schemes face major challenges: the wider political and economic imperatives of international financial institutions which prioritise revenues from timber; central government policies entrenched in the past; rampant corruption; the threat of violence and intimidation arising from the weak judicial system coupled with a military and police force which continues to act with impunity.

Forest peoples face internal challenges too. Decision-making within traditional indigenous communities may be hierarchical. Women, the poorest members of the community – particularly the landless or low status families – and seasonal forest users may not have a say in how resources are apportioned. And they also undergo changes: people who practised subsistence forest farming and had little need for cash even a generation ago now want money to pay for clothing, medical care, outboard motors for canoes (and diesel for them), school uniforms and books. Transport and accommodation costs incurred during visits to lobby local and central government officials are becoming a common budget item for forest peoples.

The forests on which these traditional lifestyles depend have also changed. Large tracts of forest formerly reserved intact as insurance for hard times or as a legacy for future generations have been at best logged over and at worst cleared for plantations. The valuable resins, rattans and forest fruits which used to be traded are becoming scarcer, as are the medicinal plants used by shamans for traditional healing. As the forests disappear, so do the skills and knowledge of indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities are not the only ones living in and around what remains of Indonesia's forests. Migrants from other areas – even other islands – peasant farmers dispossessed by plantations and urbanisation, transmigrants and miners are all laying claim to these lands and resources. Some may have lived there for several generations. Negotiations between all these groups must take place to avoid conflict.

Indonesia's forest peoples are well aware of the need to adapt their institutions to a changing world and are discussing such issues as identity, sovereignty and legal representation both within their own communities and with others. They are using new opportunities provided by the regional and national indigenous peoples' alliances (AMA and AMAN) to move these debates forward.

Civil society organisations and a growing number of funding agencies in Indonesia and abroad recognise that consistent support for forest peoples to develop their own strong, dynamic, inclusive and democratic organisations is vital to gain wider support for community-based forest management and effect a shift away from 'the timber-mining' regime that has proven so disastrous until now. (WRM Bulletin Nº 60, July 2002).

Indonesia: Towards Community Forestry

Forests in Indonesia have been rapidly depleting since the 1960s when the practice became prevalent of handing out logging concessions to military commanders. Logging quickly expanded to supply cheap logs to the Japanese timber industry principally to produce plywood. Under heavy pressure from government-directed colonisation programmes forest loss escalated, a process further exaggerated by large-scale schemes, some developed with foreign

assistance, to expand tree crops in 'conversion forests'. In the mid-1970s, the Indonesian government restricted and then banned the export of unprocessed logs which had the effect of providing a protective market for a domestic plywood and timber processing industry, which developed a voracious appetite for timber. Demand soon outstripped supply and hastened the extension of the logging frontier into the remoter parts of Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Moluccas and 'Irian Jaya' (West Papua). By the late 1980s, NGOs were estimating deforestation in Indonesia at around 1 million hectares a year, a figure long denied by the government. Recent studies put the rate of forest loss even higher – at some 3 million hectares per year – and note that over half of all timber is being extracted illegally.

As the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry has noted: "In the early 1980s, in what could be considered one of the largest land grabs in history, the government implemented a forest zonation system that classified most of the Outer Islands as forestlands. Seventy-eight percent of Indonesia, or more than 140 million hectares were placed under the responsibility of the Department of Forestry and Estate Crops. This included over 90% of the outer islands. Estimates place as many as 65 million people living within these areas. According to the Department of Forestry, the creation of the State forest zone nullified local 'Adat' rights, making thousands of communities invisible to the forest management planning process and squatters on their ancestral lands. As a result, logging concessions, timber plantations, protected areas, and government-sponsored migration schemes have been directly overlaid on millions of hectares of community lands, causing widespread conflict. Yet, in fact for many local people, traditional law, or 'hukum Adat', still governs natural resource management practices."

Since the fall of Suharto in 1998, the political protection afforded to his cronies has gradually been eroded and reform-minded politicians and officials have begun to push, tentatively for wider reforms in forest policy. Under pressure from NGOs and a civil society that grows daily more confident of itself, the Forestry Department has felt obliged to give way, at least in part, to demands for community access to and control of forests.

One area of dispute focuses on exactly which areas are classified as State Forests. Recently released official figures show that only 68% of

the areas claimed as State Forests have actually been fully demarcated and gazetted, but no clear maps are available to help communities find out if they live in the gazetted areas or the remaining 32% which formally still remain under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Agrarian Lands. Besides many communities are now questioning the legality by which the forest lands were demarcated and gazetted. Formally required procedures to consult the local administration and affected communities were often not run through, opening up the possibility that the annexation of community lands to establish State Forests could now be challenged in the courts.

A vigorous civil society movement has emerged to challenge State control of forests including several broad alliances of NGOs and other civil society elements such as the Coalition for the Democratisation of Natural Resources (KUDETA), the Communication Forum on Community Forestry (FKKM), the Consortium for Supporting Community-Based Forest System Management (KpSHK) and the Alliance of the Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN). While their tactics and priorities vary, all have called for a devolution of control of forests to local communities. All these initiatives have benefited from considerable financial support from development NGOs and foreign foundations.

The Forestry Department has taken various steps to accommodate this pressure. In January 1998 it passed a special decree recognising the rights of communities in Krui in West Lampung to have permanent control of their forests under community management. In mid-1999, the Government engaged in a consultation exercise with NGOs in drafting a new Forestry Act but the process broke down when it transpired that while a more-or-less open external drafting process was underway which involved civil society groups, the Ministry was simultaneously drafting its own version internally. It was the internal draft which was submitted to Parliament and ratified despite widespread objections including from former Ministers of the Environment and of Forests. Shortly after another piece of law was also passed in the period, Ministerial Decree, SK 677/1999 (revised in 2001 as SK 31/ 2001) which establishes a process by which communities can set up as cooperatives and secure 25 year leases to forests subject to government approval of the local management plans.

Although many NGOs are critical of the limited progress that these pieces of law represent, others consider them to be important steps towards a recognition of community rights in forests. The struggle for a reassertion of community forestry in Indonesia is really only just beginning. (By: Marcus Colchester, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Indonesia: Changes and Challenges of the Community-Based Forest Management Movement

The Indonesian NGO movement has been supporting Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) start since 1995. The main message of the start-up phase was that most of the CBFM models that developed in a sustainable way were based on community wisdom, culture and custom.

The culture and customs of forest communities in Indonesia are influenced by the outside environment, including technology, public regulations and trends in global culture. Globalisation and development speed up the influence of the global culture on customary communities, which are usually found in the remote areas. These new cultural influences are usually more materialistic and individualistic than existing community culture and customs. The CBFM model, which used to be managed with a spirit of communality (both in communal or private land), has been changing towards individualism, from eco-ritualism to the money-orientation. The social, cultural and customary values of land and forest are slowly but surely changing towards commercialisation.

The change towards individualism and materialism is seen in the increasing conflicts over land, forest and other resources among community members. The conflict happens because the rapid changes are affecting the culture of land allocation and management.

Not all communities have changed as described above, but I believe that sooner or later, all community groups (including indigenous and customary communities) will change in this direction.

What should NGOs supporting CBFM do?

When we are aware about this situation, then the question is what should we do? Should we stay promoting the old CBFM model, do we have to find the new model, or, should we go back to the conventional model (the state-based systems of land management)?

In my opinion, I would like to say that we have to promote the CBFM model with some improvements. There are three reasons for that opinion, which are: First, the governance system in Indonesia is not well-managed; and state-based forest management therefore cannot be implemented properly. If the government tries again to force the state-based model of forest management on communities, then there will be more and more conflict in natural resources management between communities, the government and the private sector. Also, we will have more and more corruption, collusion and nepotism in the forestry sector, which in the end will speed up the destruction of the forests. Second, local communities inside or adjacent to forests have a history binding them to that area, making them more responsible in sustaining the forests. Third, local communities have indigenous knowledge which can be a basis for achieving sustainable forest management.

Therefore, the CBFM movement in Indonesia must continue to face a lot of challenges. The supporters of the CBFM movement must be aware about the trends of cultural change in rural communities to avoid wrong assumptions and inappropriate actions.

In facing the challenges in CBFM development, we found some obstacles, which are:

1. *The weakness of local institutions (especially lack of conflict resolution mechanisms and enforcement systems)*

Based on our experiences, it is difficult for local community institutions to adapt to the new changes and opportunities. There are a lot of community groups who cannot deal with the new changes. That raises a lot of internal conflicts which remain unsolved. Also we found a lot of weakness in the enforcement system. Very often community groups ask the government to solve their conflicts, while the government also has little or no capacity in conflict resolution.

2. *The limit of technology and methodology on CBFM*
Most of the forest management practices in Indonesia are based on big-scale operations and investment. The CBFM model is based on small-scale and small-investment approaches. Most of the technology and methodology of forest management available in Indonesia only suits big scale operations which imply road building and heavy equipment, and produce big-volumes of wood, and so on.

Based on our experiences of a community sawmill, we had to order most of the equipment from overseas, at great expense. Also, in small-scale forest management it is often difficult to find technical solutions to problems such as how to define the annual allowable cut, rotation, enrichments, etc. Most available experts are familiar with the big-scale pattern but not with small-scale community forestry. We found similar experiences in rattan resources management and processing. In summary, we do not have appropriate technology and methodologies for supporting CBFM in Indonesia, where communities want to produce for a wider market.

3. *Lack of Supporting Systems*
A support system is needed to help communities with access to market information, capacity building, technical assistance services, credit facilities and development of supporting regulation. To enable the success of CBFM, we have to re-arrange the public services system in Indonesia to meet those needs, and develop the skills to support small scale, community-based forest management. (By: Ade Cahyat, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Indonesia: The Dayak People in the First Co-managed Protected Area

The Kayan Mentarang National Park situated in the interior of East Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo, lies at the border with Sarawak to the west and Sabah to the north. With its gazetted 1.4 million hectares, it is the largest protected area of rainforest in Borneo and one of the largest in Southeast Asia.

The history of the natural landscape of the park is inexorably intertwined with the history of its people. About 16,000 Dayak people live inside or

in close proximity of this National Park. The communities living in and around the park are still largely regulated by customary law or “adat” in the conduct of their daily affairs and the management of natural resources in their customary territory. The customary chief (*kepala adat*) administers the customary law with the help of the customary council (*lembaga adat*). All elected officials at village level and prominent leaders of the community sit on a customary council. Traditional forest areas with protection status or strict management regime exist. “Tana ulen”, for example, is land whose access is restricted, limited. It is an expanse of primary forest rich in natural resources such as rattan (*Calamus spp*), sang leaves (*Licuala sp*.), hardwood for construction (e.g., *Dipterocarpus spp, Shorea spp, Quercus sp*), fish and game, all of which have high use value for the local community.

The Nature Reserve established in 1980 had a strict protection status, meaning that no human activities are allowed inside the protected area. WWF together with LIPI (Indonesian Institute of Research) and local people ran a long-term social science research program (“Culture and Conservation”, 1991-1997) and conducted experimental community mapping to show that the communities were dependent on forest resources and had rightful claims to the land. The results provided the necessary evidence to recommend a change of status from Nature Reserve to National Park in 1994 (where traditional activities are allowed).

The issue of social entitlements, and particularly lack of tenure security, was identified by the WWF team as a key issue and priority area for intervention in the period 1996-2000. Although Dayak people had been living in the area and made use of forest resources for centuries, the forest they inhabited and managed was “state forest” with a situation of open access, whereby the state could decide to allocate exploitation rights or decide to establish a conservation area without prior consent of the local communities. Local communities had very little power in trying to defend the forest or secure the source of their economic livelihood against the interests of logging companies, mining exploration, or outside collectors of forest products.

Under these circumstances, the WWF Kayan Mentarang project developed a strategy and program of field activities that would lead to

the legal recognition of "adat" claims and "adat" rights so that indigenous communities could continue to use and manage forest resources in the conservation area. Activities included: community mapping; qualitative assessments of the use and availability of forest resources with economic value; workshop for the recognition of "tana ulen" or forest under traditional customary management; participatory planning for zonation recommendations and the redrawing of the external boundaries of the park; drafting of "adat" or customary regulations for the management of the national park; strengthening of local organizations and institutional development.

Following several meetings and discussions among the ten "adat" leaders from the customary lands around the park area, the Alliance of the Indigenous People of Kayan Mentarang National Park (FoMMA), was formed and formally established on October 7, 2000. The main objectives were to create a forum for conveying the aspirations of the indigenous communities and debating issues concerning the management of the National Park and natural resources in the customary lands of the park. FoMMA is concerned with guaranteeing protection of the forest and the sustainable use of natural resources as well as protection of the rights of indigenous people, and also concerned with increasing their economic prosperity. FoMMA now legally represents the indigenous people on the Policy Board of the park, a new institution set up to preside over the park's management. The Policy Board includes representatives of the central government (agency for Forest Protection and Nature Conservation), the provincial and district governments, and FoMMA. The operating principles of the board emphasize the importance of coordination, competence, shared responsibilities, and equal partnership among all stakeholders. The board was formally established in April 2002 with a Decree of the Ministry of Forestry, which also spells out that the park is to be managed through collaborative management (a first in Indonesia).

After decades of marginalisation and dispossession, recent developments in the Kayan Mentarang National Parks offer hope to the indigenous communities of Kalimantan. It is becoming increasingly evident that conservation objectives can rarely be obtained or sustained by imposing policies and projects that produce negative impacts on indigenous peoples and local communities. Alternative and progressive

approaches that genuinely take into consideration local peoples' needs and rights and secure their full involvement in biodiversity management and decision making can provide a more solid basis for ecological protection and improvement of people's livelihoods. There is hope that the co-management arrangement being developed in Kayan Mentarang will fulfill these objectives. (By: Cristina Eghenter, WRM Bulletin Nº 73, August 2003).

Indonesia: The Contribution of Communal Ecosystem Management Systems

Indigenous communities have been practicing sustainable community-based ecosystem management for centuries. These systems incorporate local knowledge and beliefs that are based on the wisdom and experience of past generations. They also contribute to the economic well being of local communities, as well as to the well being of the Indonesian nation.

By growing paddy rice on their farms, sago palm in the "dusun sagu" (areas within the villages in the coastal areas in West Papua and all over Molluccas designated by the communities for sago trees to grow), as well as an array of other edible crops such as sweet potatoes, indigenous people are contributing to national efforts to achieve food security and self-sufficiency. Without support from any government sponsored agricultural extension services, they have been cultivating rattan, rubber, and tengkawang, raising honeybees, and collecting swallow nests.

Most indigenous communities have also been managing the resources communally, a fact that does not imply the absence of individual customary rights. These communities rely on indigenous systems of natural resource management, which include adat or customary laws for allocating, regulating, and enforcing property rights.

Indigenous ecosystem management systems are based on community knowledge about appropriate and productive land and natural resource use. Most indigenous communities have developed specific terms for different uses of land and other natural resources, including terms for different types of vegetation and tenurial arrangements. For example,

in central Sulawesi an indigenous community called the Kaili have developed zoning and land use systems within their adat system. There are designated areas known as tana polidaa for rice fields and tana pobondea for orchards. Tana popamba refers to home gardens and herbs, popa tana to burial places, suakan ntotua to forests, pancoakan rodea to extractive forests, viyata nubulu to sacred areas, suaka viyata to sacred forests, etc.

Indigenous ecosystem management systems vary, and each community is different. Although well known within a community, there has been little written documentation about indigenous natural resource systems, as well as traditional land tenure rights and practices. A collaborative customary land tenure study coordinated by the Agrarian Reform Consortium was conducted in 1997 with some indigenous communities in Bali, Lombok, West Papua, Central Sulawesi, East Kalimantan and North Sumatra. One of its major conclusions is the need to recognize and respect the pluralistic nature of Indonesia's indigenous natural resource systems and tenures. This will require Indonesia to develop pluralistic agrarian and forestry legal systems, instead of uniform ones.

The problems, rights and potentials of Indonesia's indigenous people, however, have yet to be officially acknowledged or addressed by the government.

At the same time, Indonesia's indigenous and other local people continue to play an important role in the conservation and sustainable management of the nation's forests. As Indonesia has reeled under a deepening economic and political crisis, including spreading food scarcity, many indigenous peoples and communities have been faring relatively better than other rural Indonesians. The Baduy community in West Java, for example, managed to have ample food stocks and reserves. Their rice barns were full. That this oasis of food abundance have existed amidst spreading food scarcity is largely due to the Baduy's local knowledge and ecosystem management. They have been consistent in following the philosophy of their ancestors such as "lojor teu meunang dipotong, pondok teu meunang disambung." This can be translated as meaning: "things which are too long should not be cut off, and things which are too short should not be added to". (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Nepal: An Experience of Community Based Forest Management

Until the late 1970s, the approach to community based forest management in Nepal implied community resource relations along the lines of the indigenous system of forest management prevailing in Nepal's hills.

During the 80s and early 90s, community based forest management became a government priority programme and the new policy framework set up implied an interface between communities, natural resources and government bureaucracy.

Further on, community forestry has been understood and conceptualised in terms of stakeholders relationship. There has been an increasing emergence and growth of mutually influencing community forest user groups, service providing agencies and organisations with diverse interests.

The present legal framework has legitimised the concept of Community Forest User Group (CFUG) as an independent, autonomous and self-governing institution responsible to protect, manage and use any patch of national forest with a defined forest boundary and user group members.

CFUGs are to be formed democratically and registered at the District Forest Office, with a CFUG Constitution, which defines the rights of the users to a particular forest. The forest is handed over to the community once the respective members, through a number of consultative meetings and processes prepare the Operational Plan, a forest working plan, and submits it to the District Forest Officer for approval.

There are now around 12,000 Forest User Groups (FUGs) formed in Nepal during a period of 14 years, with nearly 1.2 million household members, which account approximately 20% of the country's population who have taken over responsibility to manage about 850,000 hectares of forest areas, nearly 16% of the total forest land of the country.

The process of community based forest management has contributed to the improvement of forest conditions as well as to a reduction in the time spent for collecting forest products, thus improving community

livelihoods. It has also increased social cohesion, integrating those who have been excluded from mainstream social and political processes, and has increased knowledge and skills related to forest and organisation management, as well as community and leadership development through several training, workshops and exposure visits at community, government and non-government level. FUGs have been able to generate financial capital from the sale of forest products, levies and outside grants. In turn, many of these FUGs have established low interest credit schemes as well as grants to poorer household members.

However, there are still gaps to fill in the implementation of community forests which reflect weak FUG level governance in many cases. Examples of that are measures which have reduced access to forest products and forced allocation of household resources for communal forest management with insecurity over the benefits, or marginalisation of groups in multi-stakeholder settings which have often been excluded and under-valued, with the perception that they have less ability to make and act on decisions. Further innovation, reflection and modification in community forestry is needed according to local contexts to address social issues such as gender and equity.

In spite of those shortcomings, the Nepalese experience is a source of inspiration to all of us working for sustainable forest management and users' rights, since it has proved that communities are able to protect, manage and utilise forest resources sustainably. (WRM Bulletin Nº 64, November 2000).

Philippines: Community Forestry, the Response to Forest Depletion

The rapid depletion of Filipino forests by logging, mining and settler encroachment was officially acknowledged as requiring a policy response in the late 1980s. The need to limit and regulate logging and to promote community forestry alternatives was accepted by government by the end of the decade. In 1990, the government adopted a Master Plan for Forestry Development which entailed an attempt to 'scale up' previous community-level initiatives in forest management.

Under the plan, communities were entitled to leaseholds of State-owned forest lands under Forestry Stewardship Agreements which gave them rights to plant trees and market forest products over a 25 year period. Concerns were expressed early on in the process that Forestry Stewardship Contracts made no provisions for unresolved indigenous land claims and might even be used to extinguish native rights. Modifications were subsequently introduced to reassure indigenous communities entering into contracts that their historical claims were unaffected.

During the 1990s international assistance was poured into the forestry sector by bilateral and multilateral agencies. The Asian Development Bank gave substantial support to plantation development and the World Bank provided additional funds to overall forest sector development. Both lending programmes were modified to accommodate the Forestry Stewardship initiative, while the interests of communities in the face of plantations were promoted through ‘contract reforestation’ initiatives by which individuals, co-operatives or communities could secure financial and technical assistance for tree-planting schemes. At the same time, USAID targetted community forestry through two large Natural Resource Management Projects which provided special funds for the Department of Energy and Natural Resources to provide outreach to the rural poor. Although indigenous peoples made up at least 30% of the rural poor inhabiting Filipino forests, specific provisions for indigenous peoples were not prominent in the overall programme.

Despite the good intentions on the part of the donors, the overall impact of the forestry reform programme for the rural poor in general and indigenous peoples in particular has not been a great success. The main beneficiaries of the programme have been the plantation and seedling companies that have developed the plantations. Contract reforestation has been less successful in servicing local markets than anticipated and most of the contract reforestation schemes that have endured have been out-grower schemes for large-scale pulp and paper mills such as PICOP. In northern Mindanao, contract reforestation has actually drawn settlers onto indigenous lands and provoked serious conflicts.

NGOs and indigenous spokespersons note a number of other unhappy results of the forestry reform programme. One has been that the

sector has become almost entirely dependent on donor support and is deprived of funding and political support from central government. As a result the programme has not been 'rooted' in domestic processes of policy or institutional reform and the connections between the aid-funded reform and local political processes have been weak or absent. Community forestry has thus become a donor-driven enclave within the political economy, tolerated as a way of capturing foreign exchange rather than one promoted to achieve sustainable development. Consequently, the affected communities have been further distanced from national reform politicians and instead of being empowered and better connected to national policy processes find themselves burdened by the new community forestry bureaucracy which has expanded massively thanks to the foreign funding. The overall verdict of many NGOs and community activists is that forestry reform has suffered from too much top-down money. The donor-driven programme tried to build on an incipient civil society initiative before there had been any real institutional change nationally. The result was a programme which swamped the national reform process and which has left indigenous peoples less empowered than before. (By: Marcus Colchester, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Philippines: Lessons on Gender From Community Based Forest Management

Many community-based forest management projects are implemented in the Philippines aiming at increasing community involvement in forest management and at providing employment and livelihood. Although there are many examples of successful cases, we decided to choose a less positive one, as a means to show how the exclusion of women or lack of gender awareness can lead to increasing gender inequalities, both within communities and in households.

An evaluation of a community-based forest management project in Pagkalinawan, Jala-Jala, in effect since 1972, shows that despite several positive impacts on peoples' livelihoods, the project had negative impacts for women.

Its failure was rooted in the fact that it did not recognise women's knowledge and the gender divisions of labour in the community and in

the household. The project issued land use certificates and land titles – to improve land tenureship – only to men, who thus became the ones to have access to and control over resources.

The project had the insidious effect of reinforcing patriarchy and establishing gender inequality in the community:

- Men had more opportunities to become representatives of the community and the market and to become powerful leaders in Pagkalinawan.

- Men, and not women, had links to external agencies (e.g., markets) through the credit facilities of the project.

- Men, and not women, had links to other economic and educational opportunities.

Community customary rights, land use and allocations were undermined upon the implementation of a pattern of privatisation of resources. Gender unbalance was thus linked to a hierarchical and male model rooted in dominion and control of nature along the lines of the globalisation "development" goal. From this experience it becomes clear that for a community-based forest management project to succeed, the inclusion of the gender dimension based on acknowledgement of women's knowledge, views and participation is a must. (WRM Bulletin Nº 58, May 2002).

Thailand: Forests Communities to Renew Struggle for Rights

More than ten years of negotiations between government officials, local community groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have led to a draft community forest bill which would be Thailand's first legislation recognising the legal status of communities living in and around Thailand's National Forest Reserves to use, manage and protect their forests in co-operation with the Royal Forestry Department.

Last year, the bill had been passed by the Lower House but subsequently was blocked by the Upper House (Senate) which proposed amendments

that would basically subvert the intent of the bill and could lead to the resettlement of local communities, particularly ethnic minorities, living in protected forests areas such as national parks. After the Senate (Upper House) amended the draft bill, the draft has been returned to the Lower House (LH) for consideration. Although the bill should have come up for consideration by the Lower House in end September, it has now been postponed to January 2003.

A recent Cabinet reshuffle including the establishment of a new Ministry of Natural Resources, as well as some uncertainty with the political fall-out if the Bill is passed, have supposedly been the reasons that led to the postponement of consideration of the bill, according to some sources within government. When the Lower House does consider the Bill, it has two choices: agree to the Senate's amendments and pass the Bill, or disagree in which case a joint parliamentary committee will be set up to consider the bill. Fortunately, the second option seems more likely at this stage. If the joint committee is set up, it is expected to take a month to consider the amendments, make revisions and send the bill back to both houses of Parliament for consideration.

The Senate's amendments to the Bill have also slowed the whole process down, resulting in frustration for local community groups who needed the Bill to be passed as soon as possible to prevent potential displacement from their homes in forest areas.

Local community groups and NGOs in North Thailand are organising a large conference on community forests and inviting the Minister of the newly-formed Ministry of Natural Resources and other politicians to muster political support. In Bangkok, academics organised a seminar for academics to support the original draft Bill passed by the Lower House. NGOs and academics in Bangkok and elsewhere are starting a postcard campaign, and have printed 60,000 postcards supporting that Bill. About 1,000 academics all over Thailand have already signed a letter supporting the Bill. International support from NGOs and academics was also received. All these signatures and support letters were presented to Parliament on January 2003. (By: Noel Rajesh, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Thailand: A Diversity-based Community Forest Management System

Among at least 400 modern "community forest" systems in the hilly upper Northern region of Thailand is that of Mae Khong Saai village in Chiang Dao district of Chiang Mai province. The system features 57 hectares of agricultural fields in which at least 10 different types of paddy rice are grown in stepped fields in the valley bottoms. Some 10 varieties of dryland rice are also cultivated in hill fields, which rotate on a cycle of 3-5 years.

Some 643 hectares of community use forest are carefully distinguished from 980 hectares of protected forest, between them encompassing six different native forest types. Some 58 herbal medicines on which villagers depend are locally cultivated, some in a protected pharmaceutical garden in the middle of the forest. Altogether, forest food and medicine yield the equivalent of US$700 per year for each of the village's 22 households. As well as providing wood for local use, the forests also help preserve the nature of the streams that lace the area, which provide water for agriculture and drinking, as well as the 17 carefully conserved species of fish which supplement the local food supply.

All aspects of the system – agriculture, community-use forest, protected forest, fisheries – are interdependent. The whole pattern, meanwhile, relies for its survival on local villagers' protection. For example, the use of fire is carefully controlled by locals so that devastating blazes don't strike the local forest, as they often do the surrounding region's monoculture tree plantations.

Regular monitoring, together with a newly-formalized system of rules and fines covering forest, stream and swidden use, helps maintain the local biotic mosaic. Political vigilance is also crucial. In 1969, locals teamed up with concerned government officials to stave off a threat by commercial loggers to devastate the area. Today, Mae Khong Saai villagers are fighting a 1993 government decree ordering them out of the Wildlife Sanctuary which was established in 1978 on the land they inhabit and protect.

Mae Khong Saai's insistence on local stewardship is obviously good for the area's biodiversity. A recent rapid wildlife survey in and around the village resulted in sightings of many species – including a flock of Oriental Pied Hornbills (*Anthracoceras albirostris*) – that indicate that the area is one of the most biologically diverse in Thailand. Animals including bear, dear, gibbon, boar and various wild cats, as well as over 200 species of birds, take advantage of the tapestry of local ecosystems.

Thoroughly integrated with lowland economies, polities and cultures, Mae Khong Saai couldn't be further from the romantic cliché of a completely isolated, self-sufficient community. As well as marketing forest products, many community members periodically take jobs far outside the community, some in distant cities. In their defense of local livelihoods and the biodiversity they rely on, moreover, Mae Khong Saai's residents depend partly on alliances they have fashioned not only with similar communities across Thailand's northern mountains but also with urban-based NGO movements. Arguably, the community owes even its current identity and way of life on the periphery partly to the history of uneasy relations between the Karen people who inhabit it and the modern, nationalistic, racialist Thai state which has developed over the past century. Whatever successes its forest stewardship system achieves will owe much to the way it is able to converse and negotiate with lowland and international powers in renewing its strategies for local control. (WRM Bulletin Nº 40, November 2000).

Thailand: Senate Blocks Draft Community Forest Bill

Thailand's Upper House of Parliament or Senate recently blocked the passage of the draft Community Forest Bill and proposed amendments that would prevent local people having a greater role in managing Thailand's forests and ultimately lead to the eviction of thousands of forest-dwelling communities.

The draft bill was approved by a majority of Members of Parliament (MP) in the Lower House earlier last year. But the senate amendments have forced the draft bill back to the Lower House for review by a committee comprising members of both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament.

The draft bill recognises the legal status of communities living in and around Thailand's National Forest Reserves and proposes the establishment of community forests by rural communities to manage forest areas in cooperation with the Royal Forestry Department.

The result of more than ten years of negotiations between government officials particularly the Royal Forestry Department (RFD), village people and non governmental organisations (NGOs), the draft community forest bill would be Thailand's first legislation recognising the rights of forest-based communities to use, manage and protect their forests.

The draft community forest bill is also one of the first pieces of legislation to use a Constitutional mechanism that allows local people to propose legislation with the support of 50,000 signatures – local people from all over Thailand gathered 52,698 signatures and presented the community forest bill to Parliament in early 2000.

Joni Odachao, a Karen leader, stated: "Village people proposed the draft community forest bill according to the Article 170 of the Constitution. But our senators have disheartened us."

The senate amended Articles 18, 29 and 31 in the draft community forest bill. Article 18 of the draft bill states that the right to propose an area of community forest is limited to groups comprised of at least 50 persons aged 18 and above from a traditional community that is native or indigenous to the area, which has been actively engaged in forest preservation for at least the previous five years. In fact, this Article evolved from Thailand's Constitution of 1997 that supports the participation of local communities in the management of natural ecosystems.

The senators amended the article by excluding communities living in "protected forest areas" such as areas declared as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and classified watersheds.

Supporters of the bill say the exclusion of community forests from protected forests threatens the livelihoods of hundreds of rural people particularly ethnic communities who live in and around national parks and upland watershed areas.

Article 29 allows a community forest group to request changes to the boundaries of community forest areas for the improvement of its management plan, or for the revocation of the entire or part of a community forest, provided valid and clear reasons are provided to the Community Forestry Committee.

The senators voted to prohibit any expansion of a designated community forest area. On Article 31, the senators stated that local communities require the permission of Thailand's Royal Forestry Department in order to gather forest products.

The bill's supporters say the prohibition on expansion of community forest areas and restrictions on forest use would discourage local forest protection initiatives and drastically limit the participation of forest-dependent communities in using, protecting and managing forests.

Senators who voted against the bill included Thailand's leading legal experts such as human rights lawyers Thongbai Thongpao and Sak Koseangreung and members of the Constitution Drafting Council such as Panas Tassaniyanond and Kaewsan Attibhoti.

Explaining his vote, Thongbai stated that he wanted to ensure the bill would not have a loophole to cause deforestation in the future. He told Thailand's English-language newspaper The Nation that: "For the present the forest dwellers could behave well in managing the forest, but in the next ten years when their community grows, how could they survive if they don't encroach on more forest areas?"

Both Kaewsan and Thongbai explained that they were concerned about the rights of people who had occupied plots of forest before the land was declared protected. "The community forest and communities in the forests are not the same issue. They should call on the government to revoke the protected status if they can verify that they occupied the land before the Royal Forestry Department declared the protected area," Kaewsan said.

Surapol Takham of the Northern Farmers Network, a coalition of local community organisations in north Thailand supporting the community forest bill, expressed disappointment with the Senate's views of the

bill. “The public believes that the draft bill will divide and distribute the forests among villagers. In fact, the bill aims to make us responsible for protecting nature in our communities. It doesn’t allow a person or group of people to live in, or make a living in the forest,” he said.

Covering about 15-17 per cent of the total land area, Thailand’s forest areas contain an estimated eight to 15 million people farming a quarter to a third of the country’s agricultural fields. The country’s protected area system comprising 119 national parks (excluding 27 marine national parks) and 55 wildlife sanctuaries cover more than 240,000 hectares.

More than 8,000 “community forests” all over Thailand are being used, protected and managed by local communities, some over several generations. The draft bill was intended to legalise these community forest areas and provide official recognition for local people’s forest conservation efforts.

However, the RFD and some nature conservation groups such as the Dhammanat Foundation in North Thailand have consistently opposed the draft bill’s proposal to establish community forests inside national parks, wildlife sanctuaries or classified watersheds.

For RFD officials and nature conservationists, rural people’s forest-based activities such as gathering forest products, rotational farming or subsistence agriculture are considered inherently destructive.

Stemming from a “science of forestry” with its historical roots in the industrialised countries, the conservationist ideology separates forests from rural societies, local knowledge systems and livelihoods.

Through simplifying and reducing diverse local contexts and natural ecosystems, forests are divided into “wilderness” areas where human activity is strictly prohibited or areas for commercial activities such as logging or establishing commercial plantations for the timber and pulp industry.

The conservationist approach does not allow for a variety of conservation areas and village-level conservation activities that involve rural

interaction and cooperative decision-making on the use and protection of natural ecosystems.

Such type of nature conservation groups and forestry officials therefore prefer village people living in forests to be either resettled or to have severe restrictions imposed on their use of forests.

The conservationist approach, however, has spectacularly failed either to prevent the continuing deforestation of Thailand's remaining forests from widespread illegal logging involving powerful business interests or to support the forest-based livelihoods of rural communities.

The RFD's previous attempts at forcible resettlement of communities living in protected areas have increased the impoverishment of local communities, worsened rural conflicts and caused further loss of forest areas as displaced people clear forests elsewhere.

Given the existing fierce antagonism of the RFD and some nature conservation groups to rural communities living in and using forest areas, the senate amendments pose a serious threat to the livelihoods of thousands of rural communities especially ethnic peoples as they face eviction and the loss of their homes, fallows, fields and forests.

Pinkaew Luangaramsri, an anthropologist in Chiang Mai University, explained that the Senate amendments reflect the increasingly powerful view of an elite in Thai society that is "anti-rural" and seeks to maintain forests for "wilderness conservation" and "recreation".

"The debate on the draft community bill is essentially a class conflict: between rural communities who depend on forests for their livelihoods and an urban-based elite and middle-class that wants to preserve "wilderness" to be used for recreation, trekking and tourism," she stated. (By: Noel Rajesh, WRM Bulletin Nº 57, April 2002).

CENTRAL AMERICA

Central America: ACICAFOC, An On-going Proposal

The Central American Community Agro-forestry Indigenous and Peasant Co-ordination Association, known as ACICAFOC, operates in Central America – involving Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama – and is a community-based social, non profit-making organisation, gathering organised associations, co-operatives, federations and community groups of small and medium sized agro-forestry producers, indigenous people and peasants. These groups are working to achieve access, use and management of natural resources, seeking community food security and economic sustainability in harmony with the environment.

ACICAFOC was formally established in June 1994, as a result of a series of efforts, meetings and exchange among the different community experiences in the region that are working towards natural resource management. As a process, it has its own initiatives, experience, a vision placed on self-sufficiency, clear principles of transparency and trust, promoting tools making natural resource use and management possible.

Among its strategic objectives is the strengthening of technical capacity and local knowledge of natural resource management, the identification of the capacity of socio-productive experience with a view to making a better use of forests as a local development alternative to enhance their living conditions.

The opening up of political fora at a local, national and regional level has strengthened this process in construction and the experience of the indigenous and peasant communities has achieved an enhancement of the context for negotiations with local, national and regional governments. A good methodology has been to share experience among organisations. This horizontal exchange has made it possible to transmit lessons and techniques learnt to improve the process. It has also helped to understand that ACICAFOC is an organisation

promoting local processes that does not represent the groups and does not attempt to substitute them. Its input is to facilitate fora for negotiation with Universities, co-operation bodies, governments and NGOs, and to seek orchestration and dialogue among the parties.

ACICAFOC has launched a new style of impact in the Central American region because it seeks technical and financial support that the groups can access. It is an organisation with socio-productive proposals aimed at strengthening local groups and already has 1:036,670 families involved in the project.

With regard to forest use and management, it should be noted that out of a total of 18 million hectares of forest cover in the Central American region, peasant and indigenous communities participating in the process manage 2:602,425 hectares – 375,749 in agro-forestry systems. Thus, the percentage of forest cover in the region in the hands of ACICAFOC member groups is 14,5 %, reflecting an encouraging situation at a time when increasingly, communities all over the world are struggling to recover access to and management of natural resources, once their source of life, and now taken away from them by the successive central powers.

Based on numerous experiences of peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendants working towards the development of socio-productive proposals strengthening Central American biodiversity, ACICAFOC emphasises the need for recognition of the existence of a Community Eco-Development Corridor (Corredor de Ecodesarrollo Comunitario - CEM), as an on-going proposal which is also a community regional development strategy. CEM is framed in a modern concept of forest conservation based on appropriate use and management of natural resources by the communities depending on them. Experience has shown that this approach is much more effective than demarkating protected areas and excluding the local populations. On the contrary, for CEM, the involvement of local populations in resource management and use is precisely what ensures their long-term sustainability, while improving the peoples' living conditions. (By: Alberto Chinchilla, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Nicaragua: Reforestation as Part of Community-Based Farm Planning in Rio San Juan

The Department of Rio San Juan is located near the southern frontier of Nicaragua, bordering Costa Rica, and the municipality of El Castillo is on the river between the Lake of Nicaragua and the Caribbean. During the eighties, the United States attacked us with a low intensity war that eroded the economy and uprooted Nicaraguan families. At the end of the war, during the nineties, twelve thousand people from Costa Rica and other parts of the country, immigrated to the Municipality. This mass migration made it even more necessary to adequately plan management of the scant community resources: its population and its forests.

A project was implemented to improve the population's conditions and quality of life, providing them with elements and instruments to enhance their living space, establishing the bases for sustainable development and consolidating their settlement in the zone. This was necessary because the two major projects already existing in the region, the oil palm and the medicinal plant *Cephaelis ipecacuanha*, were no longer economically viable due to the speculative drop in international prices for these products.

Logging in the zone is a lucrative activity for the large companies, but not for the peasants, who own the forest. Over the past decade, deforestation has approached 70% of the forest area, causing significant changes in the microclimate, water courses and ecosystems. The suitability of the land for forestation has led to the alternatives of planting trees for water protection and the introduction of fruit tree species.

We decided to work with 250 farms, in a participatory process, considering that the environment is composed of human beings and the rest of the environment. To consider that the environment does not include human beings is a non-scientific absurdity.

Participatory farm planning took place between the farm inhabitants and the resource people (forestry and agricultural/livestock technicians) under the supervision of a woman, in order to strengthen the almost absent gender component. Using seven steps, they defined

the farm of today, the potential farm and the dream farm. This planning made it possible to define the area presently occupied by the forest for its management, the area devoted to agriculture, the area for grazing land and the river-banks having a potential for reforestation.

During the first year, 30 nurseries were established, using seeds gathered locally. This generated income and economic interest in the forest, both in gathering and as a local store of selected biodiversity and its redistribution in the region.

From the start, great interest was shown by the population in planting fruit trees (1). This seemed reasonable and ensured the care of the trees as these have a known use and are of real direct benefit to the producer. As mentioned earlier on, logging in Rio San Juan has essentially benefited the logging companies, as it is hard for the population to obtain logging permits, even in their own farms. The result has been reforestation of 132 has with native wood species and 626 has with fruit trees.

The conjunction of protected spaces by the peasants also made it possible to set up small collective reserves which, although remaining the property of individual peasants, on bordering the outer limits of the farms, de facto became micro reserves (50 to 200 hectares that are not used for livestock, agriculture or forestry activities, due to difficulty in accessing them).

A geographical information system was designed and set up, in order to systematise data from the farms. It has not been possible to consolidate this information because the project only lasted two years and there was no funding to ensure its continuity. More than 700 hectares were planted and large amounts of fruit will be produced. Plans have to be made for the 30 thousand tons of fruit that will be available in the municipality in three years time.

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(1) List of fruit tree species used: Avocado, Mango, Orange, Mandarin, Lemon, Lime, Coffee Shrub, Pear, Cacao, Peach Palm, Papaya, Cachimant, Coconut, Banana

The participatory process led to priorities being established by the population and made it possible to reforest and protect 363 sources of water in addition to the drinking water sources in the settlements of Buena Vista, El Castillo and Laureano Mairena. The school areas in Buena Vista, Marcelo, Marlon Zelaya and Sábalos were also reforested.

One of the problems that arose is that, in spite of having land available for reforestation, the population had its doubts about planting trees and carrying out forest management, as they are sure it will be the logging companies that will benefit from this task. The clearest proof is that 80% of the plants requested by the population were fruit trees, which they can use without interference from external interests.

International processes such as debt swapping for forests or exchange of carbon sinks have been mentioned by officials from the capital city to the local population, but they have their doubts on the validity of these proposals.

If, on the one hand, there were no regulations hindering use of timber by the population that owns the land and, on the other real incentives were given to the producers to plant trees for timber, perhaps a change would be possible. So far, what has happened is that, for example, the Austrian government supports the region in the operation of a saw mill with a view to increase plantation of trees for timber, but when they log they only pay a symbolic US$ 25 per tree to the owner of the farm.

Summing up, reforestation has a potential for participatory processes of social environmental enhancement, both due to its short term effects and due to the results we can expect in the long term for conservation and sustainable forest use, although real incentives need to be generated for the peasants, sharing benefits as required by the Convention on Biological Diversity. (By: Daniel Querol, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Panama: The Experience of Apaquiset in Community-based Resource Management

Bordering with the Republic of Colombia, the Province of Darien is located at the extreme East of the Republic of Panama and is one of

the areas in the Central American Isthmus with the greatest biodiversity. However, at present it is undergoing resource destruction at a fast pace.

The region is inhabited by peoples of four ethnic groups: Afro-Colombians, Embera-Wounan indigenous people, Darienite peasants and settlers from other regions of the country – landless peasants seeking to improve their living conditions.

The Chepigana Forest Reserve, established in 1960, is located in the Southeastern part of the Province of Darien, within the districts of Chepigana and Cemaco (Embera-Wounan Region). It covers an area of approximately 316,840 hectares, with a forest extension of some 75,000 hectares and is considered a major source of forest resources, medicinal plants, water resources, fauna and flora. It also plays an important role in protecting species of fauna and flora in danger of extinction.

In 1994, the law authorising the government to carry out a new demarcation was promulgated. This demarcation was to exclude the land devoted to agriculture and livestock exploitation. In 1996 the Association of Agro-Forestry Producers of Quintin and Seteganti – Apaquiset – was created by small producers from these communities. One of its main objectives at the time was to achieve a new demarcation of the Forest Reserve, excluding the lands devoted to agriculture and stock-raising where their members live, and to develop activities aimed at reconciling the need to produce with that of managing and preserving, seeking new production alternatives for their lands.

Apaquiset promoted sustainable production practices among its members, endeavouring that traditional agriculture and stock-raising be done in such a way as to cause the least damage possible to the natural resources of the Reserve. The Association developed a series of information and advisory activities in the communities involved, with the aim of giving a clear idea of the action to be undertaken to all the people concerned, promoting the creation of a Joint Commission that would include the institutional representatives involved, political authorities and representatives of organised groups and two members of Apaquiset. All this was done to achieve an active participation in the new demarcation of the Forest Reserve in which they live.

After a lengthy series of negotiations, an agreement was achieved with institutions, authorities and the community to define the limits of the new demarcation and the exclusion of agricultural areas. At all events, the group considered that the process had not ended with this achievement, but rather that the struggle had just started, and therefore prepared a strategy for political management to continue with the process and achieve a more adequate management of agricultural and forest areas. A new round of consultations and negotiations was held with the local and institutional leaders to transmit information on progress in the demarcation process, and to put forth the ideas aiming at building up a joint proposal with the indigenous groups, settlers and Afro-descendents, to achieve sustainable community-based management of the area, maintaining it as a Forest Reserve, once the agricultural lands had been excluded.

As a result of the local process, presently steps are being taken towards the establishment of an organisation that will gather Apaquiset and members of all the groups and communities living in the hinterland of the Chepigana Forest Reserve. This will make it possible to set up a broad organisational structure – representing all the communities – to have access to community resources affected by the establishment of the Reserve and to strengthen their negotiating abilities in seeking real mechanisms for co-management of the natural resources it contains.

On starting this process, various challenges arose: the scant training in technical and political issues regarding co-management and the responsible government bodies' lack of clarity regarding a future vision of the protected area intended for co-management; the identification of forest management experiences and development of productive activities in the hands of peasant groups to exchange with the Apaquiset members; the investment of time, energy and money to generate the basic conditions to enable people to see the benefits of a forest management system in forest areas outside their farms devoted to agriculture; the investment in an awareness, information and training process to empower the group, enabling it to implement and propose other possibilities of work and management; the identification and implementation of concrete mechanisms, in common agreement with other local groups involved and with the relevant government authorities; the conservation of water sources and work in reforestation, grassland

management and better agricultural practices, making adequate use of the resources without depleting them.

The members of Apaquiset consider that there is a lot to be learnt from their experience and especially from “doing” as they have done. The “source” where decisions are taken, should always be sought, and it must be approached to convince it to take decisions that the group considers to be advisable and that favour it. Patience and tenacity is required to share information with all those involved, creating conditions of confidence that make it possible to have access – through basic agreements with the various inhabitants and resource users – to the responsible national authorities and to attempt influencing them in their decision making.

Sharing these lessons learnt by the Apaquiset members is an attempt to support those who are about to launch themselves in the experience of community-based management, a process that must be seen as long term, but where joint goals must keep the members of the community united, supporting each other throughout the efforts. (By: Silvia Chaves, WRM Bulletin Nº 64, November 2002).

NORTH AMERICA

USA: Community Forestry, A Growing Movement

Recently some forty locally based community practitioners, academics, graduate students, and NGOs heads met for four days at the Federation of Southern Co-operatives in Epes, Alabama, USA, in order to discuss trends in community forestry (CF) and community-based ecosystem management (CBEM) in the United States. The annual gathering serves as the keystone meeting of the Community Forestry Research Fellowships Program for graduate students involved in CF in the United States, and receives support through the Ford Foundation.

A cornerstone of the program requires that potential student fellows establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with a local

community organization in their study area. This obligation points to a central tenet of the Program: the role of participatory action research (PAR) in undertaking collaborative research in CF in order to effect social change. (A search through Google using “participatory action research” as the topic will link you to many useful websites on PAR).

The projects of the graduate student fellows provide the focal point of discussion and collaboration on CF. This year’s research topics again ranged across the four kinds of lands in which CF can and should take place in the United States: publicly owned and administered lands, private lands, Native American lands, and urban lands. Topics also covered a representative regional focus of CF concerns in the United States.

This year’s topics demonstrated the range of concerns that CF examines. Of particular interest were projects that are examining race relations, temporary guest workers, and the invisibility of some communities. A second topic examined the relationships between poverty and industrial forest extraction, a relationship summed up by participating professor in the compelling question: why do trees cause poverty? Three papers dealt explicitly with social networks in resource access and management. And, as part of a “New Directions” session, two papers demonstrated how rigorous science can serve the social-movement dimension that has long been the foundation of CF and social change. Woman, health, and access to resources and the need to use history in CF rounded out the presentations.

These papers and the presentations by graduate fellows and their community partners provided the framework for more extensive discussions. Recurring themes during the four-day workshop included issues of power, access and control in the context of multi-stakeholder environmental governance, the role of place, identity and access (who is in place and who is out of place), the roots of boundaries and mistrust, and again, race relations and invisible communities.

The Community Forestry Research Fellows Program continues to serve as a key dimension to the growing network of CF practitioners, policy makers and analysts, and researchers in the United States. (By: John Isom, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

USA: The National Network of Forest Practitioners

The National Network of Forest Practitioners (NNFP) is a grassroots alliance of rural people who are striving to build an ecologically sound forest economy whose benefits are accessible to communities that have traditionally depended on the forest for their well-being. NNFP's 500 members include community-based non-profits, small businesses, indigenous groups, forest workers, researchers, agency officials, and landowners. They are engaged in a variety of activities, including watershed protection and restoration, ecotourism, job training, non-timber forest products, and value-added wood manufacturing. As one of the leading community forestry organizations in the United States, the NNFP provides practitioners of sustainable forestry and people in forest-dependent communities with information and technical assistance, a forum for networking and organizing, and a meaningful role in national discussions about forests and rural communities. Together, NNFP members are advocating for a fundamental shift in forestry and forest conservation, toward placing greater value on the long-term well-being of the environment and communities.

Many rural communities across the United States have historically depended on neighboring forests for their cultural, economic, and environmental well-being. Just over a decade ago, faced with a barrage of daunting challenges – including ecological degradation, unemployment, emigration and the decline of community capacity, globalization, and the lack of meaningful public involvement in decision making on public lands – rural communities began to organize to gain greater control of their future, and to ensure that forest management is ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just.

In true grassroots fashion, the groups these communities formed took many shapes and sizes, but most tended to be community-based non-profits or small, "green" businesses. Their activities covered an array of disciplines, including watershed protection and restoration, ecotourism, job training, non-timber forest products, and value-added wood manufacturing. Many groups represented the first efforts by communities to come together to solve difficult problems, and many of these organizations have grown up to become community institutions.

In 1990, these groups joined with forest workers, indigenous groups, and progressively-minded researchers and agency officials to form the National Network of Forest Practitioners.

The NNFP is committed to strengthening the capacity of its members and to building a strong and diverse national coalition in support of rural communities and the forests on which they depend. The Network seeks to accomplish these goals by:

- Providing peer training and technical assistance through workshops, referrals, and publications
- Offering opportunities for members to share knowledge and inspiration through Network gatherings and working groups
- Promoting and practicing respect for all cultures that live and work in the forest, and embracing cultural diversity as a positive force for strengthening communities and conserving forests
- Supporting local and regional networks that can deliver more focused assistance to members on an ongoing basis
- Providing access to policy makers, agency officials, funding sources, research, and researchers
- Helping to build collective clout in the development of national policies by organizing forums on policy issues, legislative trainings, and other activities
- Increasing the national visibility of practitioners by acting as a clearing house for information on community forestry efforts around the country
- Through its National Community Forestry Center, conducting research, and helping people in rural, forest-based communities build their research capacity
- Serving as the North American point of contact for the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

SOUTH AMERICA

Bolivia: Community-based Forest Management in the History of the Indigenous Peoples

In a document prepared in the framework of FOMABO (Forestry Management in the Tropical Lands of Bolivia) – a project arising from an agreement between the KVL University of Denmark and UAGRM-UMSS Universities of Bolivia, with the support of DANIDA – the main characteristics of community-based forest management related with the multiples uses given to forests by the indigenous peoples have been identified. In native understanding, the forest is the "big house" of the indigenous being. "For indigenous peoples, the forest is what a supermarket is for non-indigenous peoples," where they are supplied with all the necessary goods and food and where the different labour and socio-cultural relations are concentrated. In the indigenous cosmovision, the territory is the necessary space to enable reproductive and productive relations to take place with nature, with both these relations making possible the appropriate use of the natural resources existing in forest territories. These characteristics enable us to define community-based forest management as the multiple uses and management of forest resources by indigenous peoples.

Before the arrival along the Rio de la Plata of Europeans to the lowlands of Bolivia in 1535, the indigenous peoples comprised different ethnic communities, with a common denominator based on the dominant relationship nature-human beings, in which human beings benefited from the reproductive cycles of nature, through gathering wild species, fishing and hunting. This system continued throughout time and presently forms part of the systems for management and traditional use of space and natural resources in their respective territories, and is part of the characterization of social identity as indigenous peoples, adopting, assimilating and merging other knowledge from different cultures, while maintaining their own values.

The present indigenous social identity is a result of a whole set of encounters and miss-encounters with other different social sectors and the syncretisation of foreign values: religiousness, organisation

systems (captaincies, chapters, agrarian zones) communal labour systems such as “minga” (meeting of friends or neighbours to carry out some job together, with no other remuneration than a meal when the job is finished), which later became part of traditional use and management: gathering, hunting, fishing and the many uses of the forest. These aspects are collected together in the present cosmovision, presented as the restructuring of their ancestral territories and the interpellation to the State and to Society for development with their own identity, based on occupying national and local spaces of power.

It may be concluded that at the level of communities inhabiting forest areas, practice, production and use of forest products on a village level are usually set in complex social systems regulating resource management, where many of the factors affecting our capacity to intervene with forest solutions do not have a forest nature. These are mainly human factors, related with how people organise land use and the use of other resources. Therefore, they require specific approaches for each situation and cannot be approached with success by means of general solutions or approaches aimed at one element of the situation on its own.

For this reason, initial analyses regarding the nature of the population’s dependency on trees and their products have been incorrect or incomplete in some aspects and therefore, the solutions identified have not been appropriate. This happens in particular with solutions to the decreasing availability of firewood and with attempts to intervene in ways that are contradictory to the social and institutional framework existing in the communities. Even those projects that have attempted to identify the local needs, expectations and possibilities, in practice have based themselves more on the opinion of planners and other external agents than on those of the local population. Very frequently, the dialogue to obtain local participation has started after the project design has been finished and established.

Community-based forest development has suffered from considerable confusion and lack of clarity as to its nature and purpose. On some occasions, the use of this generic term seems to have hidden the great diversity of objectives established for community-based forest development. Often, the design and execution of projects has been

hindered by a lack of clarity regarding which of the objectives is being sought or had priority. Although some of these multiple objectives may be compatible and even strengthen each other mutually, others may be contradictory. It is improbable that the plantation of trees to achieve ecological objectives such as soil protection will be able to produce sufficient marketable goods to be economically attractive to farmers. Similarly, it is unlikely that the plantation of trees to generate income will benefit those who have little or no land. Furthermore, it is improbable that projects originally conceived to achieve a production objective will also be able to serve in achieving a social objective added later on, such as benefiting the poor, unless they are duly restructured.

Community-based forest management is not a discipline or a separate programme, but rather a dimension of silviculture, agriculture, rural energy and other components of rural development. Although other experiences have contemplated community-based forest management as part of the activities of "rural" populations, they have always assigned it a secondary priority, seen as tree plantations and not as a main activity for use and multiple management of forest resources, as now proposed. Finally, the institutionalisation of community-based forest management as multiple uses and functions of the forest is the institutionalisation and recognition of Amazon indigenous peoples practices. (WRM Bulletin Nº 67, February 2003).

Brazil: Community-Based Forest Management in the Brazilian Amazon

Over the past few years, an increase in the participation of rural producers' families and their economic and representative organisations has been noted in activities relating to management and conservation of resources in the Brazilian Amazon. Mainly for traditional peoples – whom the enormous socio-environmental deficit of the Brazilian State has left to economic subordination by capital destroying natural resources – development alternatives based on resistance and the struggle to improve their living and working conditions, involve the appreciation of forest resources and therefore, their management.

The Federation of Social and Educational Assistance Bodies (FASE), has implemented a project for local development in the estuary zone

of the River Amazon, with the rural communities of the municipality of Gurupá in the State of Pará. Working in collaboration with the trade union movement and other local organisations, its objective is to contribute to the generation of development alternatives based on social justice, environmental conservation and citizenship enhancement. For this purpose, its working methodology is based on education of the people through direct action with the beneficiary peoples, the strengthening of grassroots organisations and autonomous collective actors, proposals for public policies, legal defence actions in the public sphere and implementation of relevant projects having a multiplier effect.

Located in the area known as the “Island Region”, between the cities of Belén and Santarén, on the estuary of the River Amazon, the Municipality of Gurupá is very similar to so many other riparian Amazon cities, where isolation and the water regime still determines the rhythm of the social and economic relationships of the people who traditionally inhabit the forest. Gurupá covers a total area of 8,578 km2 and has a population of close on 23,589 inhabitants (IBGE, 2001), with 6,729 people living in the urban area and 16,860 in the rural area.

Social indicators show that the development of Gurupá – in spite of having been an important financial market during the rubber boom at the beginning of the last century – is far from having achieved decent living conditions for the majority of its population. The IDH-M (the Municipal Index of Human Development) of Gurupá is 0.396, with levels of human development similar to countries such as Gambia (0.398) or Rwanda (0.395). The average number of years of schooling in the municipality is 1.29, while in Brazil the average is about 5.8 per inhabitant. Gurupá has less than one hospital bed per thousand inhabitants (the number recommended by the World Health Organisation is four), and one doctor for every ten thousand inhabitants (the WHO recommends ten).

Thanks to the vigorous social movement and to the great variety of forest products – Brazil nuts, timber, Açaí (*Euterpe oleraceae Mart.*), hearts of palm, environmental services, among others – the Municipality can potentially play a strategic role in the construction of sustainability references in the Amazon. Thus, over these three years of activity, the FASE Gurupá Project has worked, not only in the generation of these

references, but also by adding participatory methodologies and concrete initiatives aimed at local development.

Forest management activities carried out by FASE with the Gurupá communities are pioneer activities in the Brazilian Amazon. In the first place by considering that these activities are part of a family and/or community production system, and therefore should be considered within the peasant rationale of production and reproduction. In this respect, it should be highlighted that the use of forest resources is not limited to timber exploitation, but involves the multiple use of the forest by these populations. Secondly, these activities are long-term activities and therefore, guaranteeing land to producer families is a basic condition for their sustainable development. Finally, the preparation, negotiation and adoption of a law that will include community organisations to legalise their forest management activities is necessary, as these were not contemplated in the Brazilian legal forestry system.

Regarding management methodology, FASE also introduced innovations in the planning of timber exploitation, adapting it to the situation of the producer families according to the extraction of the number of trees/ species to be exploited per year and not according to the size of the plot, which is generally what forestry companies do and what is recommended by IBAMA. In this way, forest management is adapted to the amount of resources in Gurupá, and this can be replicated in other neighbouring municipalities.

The adoption of the Plan for Community Management of the Camuta del Pucurui Forests in the year 2001 – the first in the State of Pará – led to other community-based management initiatives in the Eastern Amazon. Actions carried out since 1999 in order to regulate land tenure, preparation and implementation of Land Use Plans for planning, management and territorial control, the preparation of forestry inventories and their legalisation with the organisation regulating this activity (IBAMA), and planning of exploitation and marketing, have resulted in the forestry exploitation of 102 m3 of round wood timber during the first year (2002), marketed at an average price of 80 US dollars the cubic metre, representing an increase of 233% over the price obtained previously by the families undertaking this activity. In addition to the above, monitoring of impacts on the forest show that with the techniques

used in the logging and extraction operations, the average number of trees damaged per hectare, having a diameter over 30 cm (DBH/ diameter at breast height), was 11, which shows the sustainability of low impact exploitation recommended by FASE, as with conventional exploitation this figure amounts to 27 trees per hectare.

As a result of this action, another timber management plan was adopted, the first for the Gurupá quilombolas(*) (ARQMG) in the community of Camatá de Ipixuna. In this plan the offer of products was broadened and for the 2003 harvest it is hoped to obtain 800 m3 of timber, that already has a buyer. At the same time, IBAMA approved plans for the management of the native Açai Palm by two other associations, who are considering the associated extraction of hearts of palm and Açai. It should be noted that the management plans for the Açai Palm recommended by IBAMA are aimed at the exploitation of hearts of palm only, which has generated severe devastation of this palm in the region. Associated extraction of hearts of palm and Açai has made it possible to increase up to 30% the production of the fruit, generating an average gross income per family/month of 124 US dollars, against the 65 US dollars previously earned without this management.

Factors hindering increased community-based forest management, such as the lack of markets and training of producer families, high costs to satisfy legal requirements and regularise land-tenure, still exist. Although the issue of community-based forest management is being discussed and efforts are being made to successfully implement the initiatives in this respect, it is still necessary to overcome the political, institutional and financial obstacles still in force. In this respect, the State carries out a key role, mainly regarding revision of legal requirements for the adoption of management plans, instrumentation of a forest-promotion programme and establishment of special lines of credit for community-based forest management in the Amazon. Furthermore, it should also promote projects that, like the one carried out by FASE in Gurupá, are submitted as isolated, but relevant initiatives, and include them in strategic actions within the regional development programme. (By: Paulo Oliveira, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

(*) This was the name given to the run-away slaves who took refuge in places of difficult access known as quilombos (Translator's note).

Chile: Forest Management by Indigenous Communities

In Southern Chile, near Osorno, lies the Huitrapulli estate – a 20,000 hectare forest, inhabited since time immemorial by Mapuche-Huilliche indigenous peoples. The area is part of the extensive forests of Valdivia, which constitute one of the world's last non-fragmented reserves of temperate rainforests. The area is characterized by its biological diversity and by high levels of endemism.

Local communities have always profited from the use of forest and coastal seaside resources, having developed a gathering economy, which by definition requires large extensions of territory. The area's relative isolation and the limited agricultural value of the land determined that it was spared of the European and Chilean colonization processes suffered by other Mapuche communities during the 19th Century.

However, the expansion of forestry activities in Chile – particularly monoculture tree plantations – during the last decades resulted in a new interest in those lands. The situation reached a critical level when the owner of a neighbouring estate began to occupy lands within the Huitrapulli estate, displacing the Huilliche communities. Such situation resulted in a number of conflicts which lead to the intervention of the police and the judiciary, where the communities and their professional advisors were taken to court accused of land seizure.

In an unprecedented action, the Supreme Court of Justice ruled in favour of the communities and their advisors, pointing out that the lands belonged to the State, while at the same time recognizing the ancestral occupation of the territory by the Huilliche. Subsequently, the ownership of the land was transfered from the Ministry of National Assets to the National Corporation of Indigenous Development (CONADI), as a first step in the land regularization process.

At the beginning of this year, CONADI hired a group of consultants with the task of elaborating a proposal for the regularization of land titling, tied to an associated development proposal. The study, currently under implementation, is being carried out with the active participation of the involved families and will put forward suggestions regarding the boundaries between the communities at the interior of the estate, as

well as on the type of land tenure (individual, communal, or mixed). The development plan will include an evaluation of existing resources and a number of projects aimed at the equitable and sustainable sharing of benefits from those resources.

The case of these Huilliche communities is very important, because it constitutes an exception within the context of the traditional relationship between the Chilean State and the Mapuche people, which has included numerous conflicts regarding indigenous peoples' territorial rights. The success of this experience will be crucial for its replication in Chile and eventually in other countries of the region facing similar problems.

This case is also very important to highlight the role that indigenous communities play in forest conservation. The Huilliche have for centuries used this forest sustainably, while most of Southern Chile's forests were being destroyed by "development". The legal recognition of land ownership constitutes a necessary step to ensure the future conservation of this unique forest by those who are most interested in its conservation: the Mapuche-Huilliche people themselves. (By: Rodrigo Catalán, WRM Bulletin Nº 33, April 2000).

Chile: Community Forestry as an Alternative Model

The Chilean forestry model is known in Latin America because of its use of frontline technology in large scale pine and eucalyptus plantations, the rapid growth of wood-related exports and State subsidies for the promotion of plantations. Little is said of the social and environmental impacts of these fast growing plantations.

The challenge of finding alternatives to this model, having a higher level of sustainability from the economic, environmental and social standpoints and a greater level of cultural relevance leads us to examine other ways of forest management practised by peasant and indigenous communities.

Since pre-Hispanic times, the indigenous communities used their forests to satisfy a wide range of needs. Many products were harvested and gathered including fruit, mushrooms, stems, medicinal plants, firewood, wood and forage. The forests were also part of a cultural

landscape where traditional rules regulated access to forest resources, leaving excluded zones and avoiding the problems of what has been called “the tragedy of the commons.”

Following the colonisation of indigenous territories, only a small part of the native forests remained under community control and deforestation spread extensively in the Centre and South of Chile. In spite of this, there are still wide areas of forest inhabited by indigenous and peasant communities who have inherited part of the tradition for multiple forest use. In a silent way with very little external support, community forestry continues to be practiced and has contributed to the persistence of the communities and of their native forests.

In the multiple use of forests and in the community rules for controlling and accessing this resource, we can find some keys to the sustainability of community forestry. To obtain various products and services from the forests, biodiversity needs to be maintained in addition to healthy ecosystems. If rules exist regulating access to various forest zones and areas, conservation and equity in the distribution of benefits will be easier to achieve.

The continuity of this way of using the forest is no longer guaranteed, particularly in the present context of strong external pressure on forests. The cities in the South of Chile are increasingly demanding firewood for domestic and industrial use, forestry plantations are widespread, surrounding communities and replacing native village forests and major projects are established for the exploitation of native forests for boards or chips.

Furthermore, the indigenous and peasant communities themselves have undergone severe changes. Obtaining income and employment based on the forests is in stronger demand than in the past. The traditional rules for forest use are weaker in the new generations.

The subject is even more complex if we consider the demands made by national and global society for communities to continue preserving their forests because of their increasing value as a source of environmental services such as landscape values, biodiversity, production of water and carbon storage.

In response to this situation, over the past 5 years various initiatives have arisen, supporting community forestry in Chile from international cooperation agencies associated to national governmental and non-governmental organizations. The idea is to set up a different forestry development model that will contribute to forest conservation and improve community quality of life.

This is an incipient movement compared to the predominant model, and requires much systematisation of experience, participatory research, dissemination and promotion. If this initial effort is successful, it will demonstrate the urgent need of support for community forestry, both by the State and by individual citizens. The universities should include it in their curricula and research programmes and consumers should start to prefer forest products and services that are sustainably managed by the communities.

The Chilean situation would not appear to be an exception among the countries with forests in the Southern Hemisphere. In the same way as the industrial forestry model which builds international networks enabling it to exist, community forestry should advance in setting up networks that will effectively contribute to generating a movement having an impact in this field, becoming incorporated into public and private agenda and entering the universities and research centres and installing itself in citizen awareness. (By: Rodrigo Catalán, WRM Bulletin Nº 50, September 2001).

Chile: Is Community-Based Forest Management Possible in the Context of a Neoliberal Economy?

In Chile, 25 years of implementation of the neo-liberal economic model have had a strong impact on native forests and indigenous and local communities in the South. Over two million hectares of pine and eucalyptus plantations feed a large cellulose industry, geared for export. Over this period, hundreds of thousands hectares of native forests were converted into monoculture tree plantations. An accelerated concentration of land ownership, aided by State subsidies to plantations has led to serious territorial conflicts with the Mapuche indigenous communities, still continuing today. Major projects for hydroelectric dams, highways and cellulose plants have multiplied, together with

projects for widespread forestry exploitation with significant private investment, affecting forest territories inhabited by indigenous and peasant communities.

Land ownership and access to natural resources by the communities have undergone considerable changes. At the beginning of the eighties, the community lands of many of the Mapuche communities in the valleys and part of the coastal cordillera were divided into individual properties. In other areas, more isolated and covered by primary forests, the process for regularisation of indigenous lands is still taking place and some communities have chosen community ownership systems, while others are requesting individual deeds and many still live on government lands or on lands of private owners who have never inhabited them.

In spite of the changes, the communities have continued to operate as such, keeping up the exchange of labour, seeds, medicinal plants and traditional knowledge as well as the unity to face threats from the outside. They also maintain diversified use, traditional knowledge systems and a vision integrating productivity, culture and spirituality in their relationship with the forest.

However, their contact with global society has had impacts; the need for income in the communities has been generated, traditional organisation systems have been weakened and there is a marked absence of organisational continuity and a low representativity of the major indigenous and peasant organisations. In some areas, the weakening of these structures, the lack of opportunities and training, and unequal market relations have obliged the communities to destroy their forests to survive.

It was only during the last decade that programmes with support from international cooperation have started to promote forest management and conservation with indigenous and peasant communities. Finally, and as an expression of an international movement, the role of these communities in forest conservation has started to be valued. However, success is on a local scale and changes in mentality are slow in incorporating this new approach among politicians, legislators, public services and universities training professionals and carrying out research.

It is possible that in the medium term, the State will incorporate this approach of community-based forest management and that the university will train professionals and develop lines of research in this area. It is also possible that internationally funded assistance programmes will achieve co-ordination among themselves and with the public services. It is probable that forestry companies and in particular those working with native forests will genuinely associate themselves with village communities. Progress is being made towards community participation in the management of protected wildlife areas. In the medium-term, it can be expected that the National Corporation for Indigenous Development (CONADI) will increase its purchases to return lands to indigenous communities. However, it is worthwhile wondering if the pace of this process is not too slow with relation to the opposite trend of deforestation and forest degradation, inequitable sharing of forest profits and community weakening.

How do we face the inevitable clash of global society, through agents such as transnational companies and enable the communities to find a better standpoint for negotiation, with secure land-ownership and access to natural resources? Negotiation among involved people is a necessary path to be taken, but it requires a certain balance of power, presently lacking, to enable them to operate effectively without negatively affecting indigenous and local communities.

Some changes are faster than we would like, and the conditions to face them very often are not up to the challenge. The responsibility is great for those who have engaged themselves with the communities and the forests on which they depend (as does the rest of humanity). There is no place for divisions, false competence or inefficiency; it is fundamental to work from the grassroots, to have an influence on universities, at national and international political level in a co-ordinated and coherent way. A relationship of collaboration and alliances among the communities, conservationists and eventually, forestry and eco-tourism companies is needed. Creativity in seeking solutions is essential, but beyond this, community empowerment and participation in forest zones is even more important, as they are the first ones concerned by sustainable forest use. For them, community management is certainly desirable and possible, but to make this feasible, in addition to the above, important changes are required in

the economic model, presently based on the support of private companies as a development strategy. The problem therefore does not lie in knowing if the communities can manage and conserve their forests – which they certainly can – but in deciding if the State is willing to establish the rules of the game and provide support to make this possible, working in a co-ordinated way with civil society organisations. (By: Rodrigo Catalán, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

Chile: Private Conservation and Communities

Over the past few years, private conservation has covered close to a million hectares in the South of Chile, surpassing the forest areas under regulated community land tenure, and making it comparable to the previous expansion of pine and eucalyptus plantation companies, today exceeding 2 million hectares.

Unexpectedly, as an explosive phenomenon led by corporate executives and organizations mainly originating from the United States, Chilean society has witnessed the appearance of a private land conservation movement that has spread to large national companies and other groups of Chilean society.

In the surroundings of this land recently acquired for conservation, the communities observe their new neighbours without knowing what to expect. Previous waves of change in land tenure have made them understandably mistrustful.

The challenges for the forest newcomers include overcoming the category of enclaves or conservation strongholds that protected forest areas established by the Chilean State are considered to be. It has taken the National Forestry Corporation a long time to change its image vis-à-vis the neighbouring communities, but it has eventually come to recognize that national parks are not viable if they have neighbouring communities as their enemies, or if they exclude them from conservation plans.

Beyond national parks, from the standpoint of conservation at a landscape scale promoted by international organizations, a set of protected areas, like islands in the sea shared with tree plantations and communities with degraded forests, is not a viable proposal.

According to a report commissioned by WWF on community forest management, conservation without people has shown itself to be unsustainable. This is the situation in wide zones of inhabited forests in the South of Chile and is in no way any exception in the Latin American context. The slogan at the recent World Parks Congress held in South Africa was that benefits must go beyond the limits of protected areas. The active involvement of local and indigenous communities in planning, implementing and managing protected areas must be ensured and the benefits generated by these areas must be shared.

Now, this seems clear, but how is it implemented? What mechanisms should be put in place to make conservation effectively benefit communities that depend on forests? And what incentives are effective to encourage communities to join conservation efforts?

Probably single and simplistic formulas are not the solution; usually a problem as complex as this has many solutions. The way to find them starts by informing and strengthening the communities and their organizations, generating conditions for the establishment of real negotiation, both at local level and at national level, involving community representatives, private conservation promoters and the governments.

Support to communities in these negotiation processes cannot be given from the perspective of the myth of the “good savage” defending the intrinsic conservationist role of forest inhabitants, but rather from the perspective of backing organizations defending the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities and their essential role in the implementation of conservation strategies.

A point that requires special attention in this process is that of the different perceptions of conservation, from the standpoint of the communities and from the standpoint of private conservationists. It is probable that for the inhabitants of forests and forest zones, conservation would appear to be difficult to detach from sustainable use, materialized in community forest management.

Where should private conservation meet community forest management? In conservation landscapes in which community rights

are respected and where these communities share forest-generated benefits. (By: Rodrigo Catalán, WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Colombia: An Example of a Community-managed Forest

The Uitoto peoples in the Araracuara region, in the mid course of the Caquetá River show some common socio-cultural characteristics, among which a production system based on the sustainable use of three spaces: the forest, the river and the “chagra” (a clearing in the forest used for poli-culture plantation).

This system is established on the basis of an organization of knowledge handed down from generation to generation, over thousands of years, on the structure of the forest, alternating with the use of different landscape units, the sowing of a large diversity of species and the indigenous people’s own land-use techniques.

The establishment of the “chagra” culminates after a five-stage process, demonstrating all the knowledge of the indigenous farmers regarding the forest around them. These stages in order are as follows:

1. Election of the soil according to what will be sown
2. Elimination of lianas, small plants, etc.
3. Felling of large trees
4. Burning of the remains of vegetation
5. Sowing of the various traditional species

The forest production and use system is composed of areas with transitory crops, usually for periods of less than 2 or 3 years, known as “chagras,” and areas of stubble in a stage of regeneration.

The community has a production for subsistence and self-consumption, mainly based on traditional crops, hunting, fishing and gathering fruit from the forest. The system is characterised by the presence of a great diversity of species and varieties that they establish in the ecosystem in a staggered way. The result is permanent availability of food and material for other uses.

Iris Andoque describes the process: “One plants cassava over all the ‘chagra’ (sweet cassava, wild cassava and manicuera); manicuera (this

is a type of cassava used to prepare a slightly sweet beverage of the same name) in the lower part, the sweet cassava in the middle because of the animals, and the one to grate on the river banks to be picked quickly. Then we have vegetables: sweet potatoes, beans, old cocoyams (taro), new cocoyams (yautia) and dale dale. These are planted where the land was most burnt and there are ashes. Coca has to be planted in furrows in the high part and transplanted after 3 years. Pineapple is also planted apart. One always organizes work; you have to start at the bottom and work up, never from the hill towards here, at the bottom there is canangucho (a type of palm, *Mauritia flexuosa*) that does not dry up the sources of water, then tobacco in the damp part and also manicuera, in the middle, grapes, guacure and other fruit trees, up on the banks there is no problem, on the hill go and plant chontaduro (a palm with edible fruit)".

Forest management is regulated by their own ecological calendar, adjusted to annual cycles, the phases of the moon and environmental changes – climatic and hydrological changes – showing the capacity for observation possessed by all the indigenous peoples.

The forest is a space that may culturally be defined as the centre for settlement, experimentation, learning, transformation and adaptation of the ethnic peoples who live in the region.

Hernando Castro says: "From the beginning, all things were created and ordered by a father creator, reproduced and harmonized by mother nature and administrated by human people. The creator handed us the word of how to look after and manage it to avoid imbalance".

According to the indigenous vision, the forest originates from the air, the clouds, water and tree-grass, which leads to the traditional knowledge of the Uitoto world, an east, a west, a down (south), an up (north); dimensions that require spaces such as the forest and the river for their definition.

Aurelio Suárez adds that "According to the principles of each ethnic group comes reality; the origin has a single beginning, but the tradition depends on each ethnic group, the clans, it is different; tradition brings management most of all of the soil, the ecological part depends on the

tradition of the ethnic group; the origin is one, both for animals and for humans; naturally mother nature guides, administrates and cares for the knowledge part, the human part is what is guided here".

For indigenous peoples, all is interrelated, all has an origin, a history and a management that must be known and practiced. The animals and plants are intimately related as one comes from the other, making them complementary, and a relationship that is impossible to break because it would attack the vital balance that enables the environment to operate adequately and to prevent diseases from coming.

The capacity of the indigenous groups in the region to obtain their food support from a strip of transformed forest, where they have learnt to manipulate and benefit from seeds, soils and environmental conditions, is yet more evidence of their millenary knowledge, very rich and useful in the context of sustainable forest use.

The indigenous vision of temporal land use makes it possible for species of fruit trees or other species to be found long after the chagra has been installed, even in mature forests, showing the inhabitants' phased management of their surroundings. Diversity is conditioned to the species with most significance and advantages, but even so, there are numerous varieties of fruit-trees to be found in the stubble lands of an indigenous family. This makes them farmers with wide knowledge and very considerable agricultural experience.

The different species are sown year after year in order to obtain a range of plants at different stages of growth; they also intervene on regeneration processes, making them farmers that enrich the forest.

The presence of fruit-trees in the forest in the stage of regeneration is not by chance; the replacement of their wild equivalent is a typical characteristic, responding to the need for reciprocity with nature in the hope of a good yield.

Hernán Moreno says that "When one is going to make a "chagra", one asks for permission, it is like an agreement. In the forest, there are wild grapes, forest calmo, guamo, chontaduro de monte, which is a thorny coconut palm; these fruit-trees belong to the animals. One says

I am going to fell and then replace the trees I felled by domesticated fruit-trees, if I cut a wild laurel tree, I plant laurel, if I cut down palm trees I plant canagucho or chontaduro. So, when these trees grow in the stubble, they are shared with the animals”.

The selection of seeds, the techniques for sowing and distributing the trees in the plantation are the contribution of indigenous farmers to enable these species to be useful resources to the family and the means for the forest to be enriched after it has been restored.

In words of Hernando Castro, “Within the indigenous cosmo-vision, the relationship between human beings and nature is fully appreciated; the territory is our mother, we are her children and therefore we take care of it with the word, the inheritance of our forefathers and food for knowledge, growth and development of life in harmony with nature. The recovery of the traditional knowledge of our elders as to the use of natural resources, taking them to different designs, it is what the elders say: make the word dawn”. (WRM Bulletin Nº 81, April 2004).

Ecuador: The Awa Federation’s Experience in the Management of its Territory

The 21 Indigenous Communities comprising the Federation of Awa Centres in Ecuador (FCAE) have legal deeds for 120,000 hectares in the Northwest of Ecuador, a region of humid forests and great biological diversity, known as the Awa Territory and containing the last expanse of Chocoano forests remaining in Ecuador.

The territorial struggles by the Awa to defend their communal forests from pressure from the timber and mining industries and colonisation, benefited until a few years ago from the difficult access to the North Western part of the country. Over the past years, the opening up and paving of two new highways crossing the region facilitated the activities of several timber companies and the consequent disappearance of the forest.

In spite of this being an illegal activity, the timber companies started with offers to buy the timber. They managed to carry out business with some Awa families, causing organisational problems in several communities and within FCAE.

The Ministry of the Environment, responsible for monitoring forestry management and extraction, has not shown itself to have efficient control over these companies, nor over formal and informal buyers. Over the past two years, FCAE has lodged criminal action against various timber companies for having illegally entered their territory to extract timber. They have also denounced the illegal activities of some Ministry of the Environment officials before the Civic Commission for the Control of Corruption.

Because of this, FCAE decided to launch its own project for community-based forest management, with the aim of providing sustainable income to its communities, conserve its forests and counteract pressure by the companies. In the process of analysis of the forest situation and definition of proposals, the Awa communities established 3 basic items that have served in the development of this project: it must be administrated and led by FCAE; the use of heavy machinery in the extraction of timber from Awa territory will be prohibited; the benefits will be equitably shared on the basis of agreements that the communities will establish with FCAE.

The first task was to reach agreements and consensus over the delimitation of an area of 1980 hectares of communal forest in Mataje, containing a high diversity of endemic wood species. On the basis of forestry inventories, a first forestry management plan for this zone of communal forest was prepared. A group of young Awa were trained to become a forestry team, hoping that in the future they will be the managers of their own development. This team made an identification of botanical specimens and later prepared the Community Forestry Management Plan according to Ecuadorian forestry rules. The Plan takes into account the criteria for certification in the framework of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The project has been visited twice by the Smartwood certifying company and is currently in the course of obtaining FSC certification. Other management plans for family zones in the Communities of Guadualito, Balsareño and Pambilar were developed.

The Awa started with a low intensity extraction of between 5 and 7 trees per month, using innovative extraction systems by aerial cable and preparing and marketing their timber directly to a company from

Quito, the capital city, without using intermediaries. Various timber companies, with the intention of entering Awa Territory have increased their illegal attempts to put pressure on the Awa to sell wood to them.

In order to add more value to their forestry products, FCAE is seeking a market abroad for some products prepared by the Awa in Ecuador and they expect this to be possible in the year 2003. With this same objective, at the end of 2002, FCAE will be purchasing carpentry machinery to train their own people in this art and in making furniture for the national market.

The Awa experience has taught the following lessons:

1. The need to train community representatives right from the start in all aspects of forestry management.
2. The importance of a strong and representative organisation, able to manage a forestry project through all its stages and facilitate planning and assessment processes with its member organisations.
3. The community limits and its areas of forest management, either family or communal, must be agreed on and physically delimited in the forest.
4. The communities involved in the project must participate actively in the programming and assessment of activities related to forest management.
5. Care needs to be taken to avoid creating false expectations in the communities regarding the possible price of the timber extracted and the time and effort required to carry out a good forestry management plan. Transparency must prevail at all times.
6. Forestry management and timber marketing should not be considered as the only productive alternatives for the community, but rather as part of an integrated system for family and community maintenance including agro-forestry, animal breeding, handicraft production, etc.
7. The process for forestry certification is costly and complex. Although FCAE has managed to find resources to cover the costs of the visits by the evaluators, the question needs to be asked whether all the communities interested in certifying their forestry operations will manage to cover this cost.

From the above it is clear that community-based forest management is not exempt from problems, but it is also clear that these can be

solved. The Awa's experience may be of great help to enable other communities to develop similar processes – adapted to their own conditions – aimed at making forest conservation compatible with the improvement of the living conditions of all those who inhabit these areas. (WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

OCEANIA

Melanesia: Community-Based Ecoforestry Protecting Forests

Melanesia, which includes Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kanaky (New Caledonia), Fiji, East Timor and West Papua (Indonesia), is unique in the world in that 95% of land is still under community ownership by the indigenous people. The forests they control are part of the largest remaining rainforest in the Asia Pacific region and the 3rd largest tropical forest on Earth after the Amazon and Congo. Illegal and destructive industrial logging is rampant, mainly by Malaysian companies who have moved from Sarawak and elsewhere in Asia as the forests were exhausted. Associated with logging comes poor governance, corruption, lack of control and monitoring, and a situation where landowners receive very little financial benefit and suffer disastrous social and environmental impacts.

In response, for the last 15 years NGOs have targeted community forest management as a solution to the crisis in the forests and to support the customary forest owners. There is a wealth of successful examples of community forestry programmes as well as some that didn't last but were instructive in discovering the formula for success. Programmes have included: Village Development Trust, Pacific Heritage Foundation, Foundation for People and Community Development (FPCD), and EU Island Regional Environment Programme (all Papua New Guinea), Solomon Western Isles Fair Trade, and Solomon Is Ecoforestry Programme (Greenpeace and SIDT).

Most programmes have focused on training and marketing support. The Solomon Is Ecoforestry Programme has trained 56 landowning

groups and is currently supporting 'ecotimber' production and exports providing a net value to communities of US$520,000 in the last 5 years. The some 14,600 people in the communities are now enjoying improved housing, education, transport, communication and health services, as well as protecting their 40,000 ha of forest from logging.

The social benefits from ecoforestry are often overlooked, explains Geoff Mamata Dennis of Greenpeace in Solomon Is, "Better understanding and good relationships between members in the communities is increasingly harmonious."

"This makes people to be more responsible for their own lives. Eco-forestry projects have been successful in providing an alternative solution to large-scale foreign-owned logging operations in the Solomon Islands and more people are becoming aware of the benefits eco-forestry provides," said Geoffrey Dennis.

According to landowner Reedle Gebe, project manager of the Lobi Village Eco-forestry Project in western Solomon Is: "Eco-forestry is much better than logging. I prefer eco-forestry because it does not spoil our sea, land, rivers and water catchment."

In Madang province of Papua New Guinea, FPCD has been working with a landowner association with 80 members who want to mill timber themselves from their forests. They have been focusing on exporting to achieve prices that recognise the hard work involved in community forestry.

Bon Leon, a member of the landowner association, says the people are very happy with ecoforestry: "We protect our ground and make money. I used to work for the [logging] company. I think if a big company was to come it would wreck our place."

In Papua New Guinea NGOs are now focusing their attention on supporting landowners in the huge western forest areas that are the current target of logging companies. After ejecting the Malaysian logging company Concord Pacific (a subsidiary of Samling) from their lands, the Lake Murray Resource Owners Association is looking to community forest management and support from NGOs as the answer for the

protection of their 1.4 million hectares. (By: Grant Rosoman, WRM Bulletin Nº 82, May 2004).

Papua New Guinea: Small-scale Sawmilling a Good way Forward

The richness of PNG's forests is well known, and so is their level of destruction due to industrial logging. This unsustainable activity – in most cases related to high levels of corruption – has provided large revenues to corporations while at the same time has left local communities without their sources of livelihoods.

Local Non Governmental Organizations – organized under the Papua New Guinea Eco Forestry Forum – together with local land owners are pushing forward another model of forest management.

Eco-forestry, can include different activities inside the forest, such as fruit and butterfly collection, rattan and medicinal plant harvesting, scientific research and eco-tourism, together with small-scale logging, linked to community based small-scale sawmilling.

This latter activity is based on the use of small-scale portable sawmills which are relatively simple and affordable to local communities. They can be carried into the forest and used to mill timber at the specific site where the tree has been felled. Small-scale saw milling has many benefits, among which the following:

- The type of technology used is appropriate to the rural community situation;
- The operation brings training and new skills to local people;
- The business provides local employment and wages;
- Sawn timber can be sold or used in other development projects;
- The operation of the sawmill builds esteem and local capacity; and
- The level of harvesting does not threaten the forest ecosystem.

Local NGOs – among which the Pacific Heritage Foundation – provide support and training to the local people. Local communities are required to become a legal entity, to have a land use plan, and people must be trained on how to fell the trees and operate the sawmill. At the same

time, NGOs are also putting pressure on the Government to encourage and promote eco-forestry rather than industrial logging ventures.

Although the sawmills are mostly operated by men, women play an important role in the administrative part of the business. Additionally, this community-based approach not only consists in the extraction of timber but also in the collection of a wide range of non timber forests products and women here play a major role.

All these activities generate financial benefits to the locals. In some cases, monetary incomes are equal to the ones that they used to earn when allowing companies to log their lands. But even when those incomes may be less at an individual level, the community as a whole shares the full range of monetary and non-monetary benefits. Equally importantly, in all cases these activities guarantee community participation and control over their forest and long term sustainability of forest resources. (WRM Bulletin Nº 66, January 2003).

Solomon Islands: Eco-forestry, A Ray of Hope

Solomon Islands in the western Pacific have been ravaged by nearly three years of civil conflict. The economy is in tatters, the main city Honiara is run by militant groups, and most education, health and public service functions are not working. In this climate the corruption ridden, destructive and often illegal industrial logging sector has continued unabated.

At the village, where most people live in Solomons, the former small businesses of eco-tourism, copra, cocoa and marine product exporting have all but come to halt due to a lack of visitors, markets or logistical problems. However, community-based eco-forestry has managed to continue, and more people are turning to it to generate a sustainable income instead of the possible option of destructive logging. NGO eco-forestry support programmes have been going for more than 10 years in Solomons, including a joint Solomon Islands Development Trust/ Greenpeace Ecoforestry Programme – so the lessons have been learned, and they know how to make village projects a success.

Key lessons and critical success requirements include:

- have a clear set of non-negotiable support programme entry requirements, such as undisputed land tenure or rights, a functioning community organisation and decision making body, equitable decision making and income sharing, and rejection of destructive activities.
- only invest in supporting projects that meet the 'success' requirements otherwise it will end in disappointment on both sides.
- ensure the support programme has integrated activities from village and forest level support to marketing and certification.
- translate any external standards requirements (e.g. FSC) into simple check-lists that are easy to use and understand.
- plan to provide field support and monitoring to village projects for 5 to 10 years.
- pay particular attention to social indicators in support and monitoring, especially how money is shared and spent.

However, NGO programmes struggle to get the funds they need to maintain and expand their programmes. Due to the security situation in the country donors such as the European Union are staying away, and potential donors such as the World Bank and AusAid hide behind rhetoric.

With the ongoing conflict in Solomons it is remarkable that any village eco-forestry projects are able to continue operating. This is a measure of the commitment and ingenuity of the village people, and the NGO field staff who support them. Eco-forestry offers one of the few hopes for forest conservation and to oppose rampant destructive Malaysian logging. (By: Grant Rosoman, WRM Bulletin Nº 63, October 2002).

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Wilderness Parks or Community Conservation?

- By: Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme, e-mail: marcus@fppwrm.gn.apc.org
  For extensive case studies and other documentation on this subject see http://www.forestpeoples.org.
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Community Forests: Emancipatory Change or Smoky Mirrors?

- By: Jessica Dempsey, International Network of Forests and Communities, e-mail: jessica@forestsandcommunities.org

Women and Forest Resources: Two Cases From Central America

- By: Iliana Monterroso, FLACSO-Sede Académica Guatemala, e-mail: imonterroso@flacso.edu.gt

Mapping as a Step for Securing Community Control: Some Lessons from South East Asia

- By: Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme, e-mail: marcus@fppwrm.gn.apc.org

Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management

- Regional nodes established by the Caucus: ASIA/PACIFIC: RECOFTC (Karen Edwards, e-mail: okaren@ku.ac.th), AFRICA: Forest Action Network (Dominic Walubengo, e-mail: dwalubengo@fanworld.org), AMERICAS: ACICAFOC (Alberto Chinchilla, e-mail: oficinaregional@acicafoc.org), National Network of Forest Practitioners (Thomas Brendler, e-mail: thomas@nnfp.org), EUROPE (provisional): Global Forest Coalition (Miguel Lovera, e-mail: lovera2@conexion.com.py), INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT: World Rainforest Movement (Ricardo Carrere, e-mail: wrm@wrm.org.uy)

Moving Forward: The Mumbai Forest Initiative

- To send comments or to sign on, you can either send an e-mail to wrm@wrm.org.uy (including your name, organization and country), or do it through our web page at: http://www.wrm.org.uy/statements/form_Mumbai.html

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- By: Jessica Dempsey, e-mail: jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca , based on an interview with Susan Mulkey, a member of the Kaslo Community Forest, and an executive member of the British Columbia Community Forest Association.

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- Martin Labo, Alliance of the Indigenous People of Kayan Mentarang National Park (FoMMA), e-mail: dolvina@indo.net.id and Maurizio Farhan Ferrari, Forest Peoples Programme, e-mail: mfferrari@pd.jaring.my

India: Oppose World Bank and Save Forests

- By: Souparna Lahiri, Delhi Forum, e-mail: delforum@vsnl.net

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- By: Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme, e-mail: marcus@fppwrm.gn.apc.org

Indonesia: Changes and Challenges of the Community-Based Forest Management Movement

- By: Ade Cahyat, Director in East Kalimantan Foundation for Supporting CBFM (SHK Kaltim), e-mail: cahyat@samarinda.org

Indonesia: The Dayak People in the First Co-managed Protected Area

- By: Cristina Eghenter, WWF Indonesia Kayan Mentarang Project, awing@samarinda.org; Martin Labo, Alliance of the Indigenous People of Kayan Mentarang National Park (FoMMA), dolvina@indo.net.id and Maurizio Farhan Ferrari, Forest Peoples Programme, mfferrari@pd.jaring.my

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- By: Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme, e-mail: marcus@fppwrm.gn.apc.org

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Thailand: Senate blocks draft community forest bill

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- By: Alberto Chinchilla, Regional Resource Person, Central American Community Agroforestry Indigenous and Peasant Coordination Association (Asociación Coordinadora Indígena y Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria Centroamericana - ACICAFOC), e-mail: oficinaregional@acicafoc.org , web page: http://www.acicafoc.org

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- By: Daniel Querol, e-mail: gme@tmx.com.ni

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NORTH AMERICA

USA : Community Forestry, A Growing Movement

- By: John Isom, Ph.D. Student, University of Wisconsin-Madison, e-mail: jeisom@earthlink.net
  You may also contact Dr. Carl Wilmsen, Program Director for the Community Forestry Research Fellows Program e-mail: cffellow@nature.berkeley.edu
- For further information: http://www.nnfp.org and http://www.ncfc.org
- Federation of Southern Co-operatives, http://www.fsclaf.org
- Community Forestry Research Fellowships Program for graduate students involved in CF in the United States, http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/community_forestry

USA: The National Network of Forest Practitioners

- For more information or to become a member, please contact Thomas Brendler, Executive Director, e-mail: thomas@nnfp.org) or visit
  http://www.nnfp.org . Visit NNFP’s biweekly e-mail newsletter at http://www.topica.com/lists/nnfp-fcn@igc.topica.com

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Brazil: Community-Based Forest Management in the Brazilian Amazon

- By: Paulo Oliveira, Executive Coordinator of FASE Gurupá, e-mail: gurupa@amazon.com.br

Chile: Community Forestry as an Alternative Model

- By: Rodrigo Catalán, e-mail: catalanr@terra.cl

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OCEANIA

Melanesia: Community-Based Ecoforestry Protecting Forests

- By: Grant Rosoman, Greenpeace Forests Campaigner, e-mail: grant.rosoman@dialb.greenpeace.org

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Solomon Islands: Ecofrestry, A Ray of Hope

- By: Grant Rosoman, Greenpeace Australia Pacific, e-mail: grant.rosoman@dialb.greenpeace.org

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