

INTRODUCTION

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Forest restoration efforts are often complicated by communities occupying degraded land. Resolution of this situation requires combining scientifically devised techniques with management of communities for successful forest restoration programmes. In the past, plantations of single, commercially valuable and often exotic tree species were established for timber production. Such plantations, however, did not address community needs, as they did not perform the same ecological roles, nor offer the same diversity of forest products, that are crucial to villagers' lives. Currently, with increasing opportunities for the public to become involved with forest policy, a more holistic approach that involves communities in the decision-making process has taken precedence. Conservation has become inevitably linked with sustainable rural development with a participatory management goal. In order to integrate science with community development, low-cost local technologies must be implemented, with benefits linked back to the community. By focusing on the community's local knowledge and needs, villagers can become valuable partners in forest restoration and wildlife conservation.

Working models of sustainable forest and community management are described in the three papers presented here. In order to be successful, a positive relationship between villagers and project co-ordinators must be established. This can be achieved by working with a pre-established organisation that has already nurtured trust between the villagers and authorities. In turn this fosters community cohesion and empowerment, bringing value and worth back to the community by conferring respect in themselves and pride for their resources. The initial step in paving the path towards successful conservation is alleviating village poverty, as this establishes good rapport between villagers and project co-ordinators, strengthens the community and diminishes pressure to destroy forests. The first paper in this section reviews Dr. Somsak Sukwong's ability to support the village revolving fund and introduce agro-forestry and community forests in Khao Paeng Ma. Thereafter, McQuistan and Wright present alternative income-generating activities in order to decrease forest exploitation pressures. Information exchange through open discussions will uncover local motivations based on a community's needs and subsequently must be incorporated as the main objectives of the project. During the small group discussions participants revealed numerous motivating factors for villagers to become involved in forest restoration projects, such as improved food security, increased opportunities for financial support, security of land tenure, employment, augmented income and improved quality and quantity of water. This bottom-up approach must involve villagers from all sectors of the community, not just the local leaders and officials as described in McQuistan and Wright's paper. This includes the poorest villagers, as they are usually the ones most reliant on forest resources. Finally, to achieve sustainable rural development and conservation there needs to be capacity building undertaken and community organisations established so that villagers can develop their own ideas and take the initiative in managing their resources.

The recent development of "Rainforestation Farming", as described in Dr. Paciencia Milan's paper, attempts to simultaneously fulfil both forest restoration goals and improved food security for the community. Her research in studying the impact of providing structural diversity in Rainforestation Farming areas is valuable scientific data for restoring forests while also providing for the needs of the community.

Many problems are frequently encountered in community forestry. An authoritarian management approach where confrontation rather than co-operation is adopted and where activities are dictated according to state ambitions will fail. Long-term monitoring of the change in sustainable use of forests by villagers is essential for assessing project success, but is often prematurely terminated due to limited funds. Inequalities in the village can appear if everyone does not benefit from the scheme, causing community dissension. Villagers from all social and economic levels must be involved in the project so that relevant needs, such as the motivating factors discussed previously, can be identified and incorporated into the project objectives of achieving forest restoration with sustainable rural development. The fact that development of a community

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does not necessarily follow conservation of the forests provides evidence that a plethora of problems must still be explored.

Evidence of flaws, such as villagers continuing to practice slash and burn, as presented in McQuistan and Wright's paper, in community forestry management prompt a critical need for more work needing to be undertaken in several areas. For example, zoning systems need redefining and reclassifying to reduce land-use conflicts, an issue which posed as a main obstacle in both Dr. Somsak Sukwong's case studies. The needs of local people must be taken into account when choosing tree species by identifying species of use for both local communities and wildlife, which was touched upon in the Upland Holistic Development Project poster abstract. We need to seek alternatives to government funding for community-based forest restoration, such as NGO's like YMCA for Northern Development Foundation included in the poster abstracts. It is necessary to investigate effective methods to exchange information with all social and economic levels to better understand local community's needs and problems, as conveyed in McQuistan and Wright's paper. Appropriate criteria for assessing whether the project goals have been met must be developed so that community responses can be evaluated after implementing the restoration scheme. Data collection prior to starting the project and monitoring during and after management are crucial for identifying which activities are appropriate for the villagers and to check its relevancy to the people, adapting as necessary. Sound scientific tools must be further enhanced, as seen in Dr. Paciencia Milan's paper, to maximise the success of systems to restore both forest ecosystems and livelihoods of rural communities. More field data must be collected to determine the effect of restoration and community development efforts on the forest and wildlife, making changes as necessary.

By working with villagers through community participation, they should be able to take responsibility for sustainable resource management, and in turn preserve Earth's precious resources.