

POSTER ABSTRACTS

THE POTENTIAL OF INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS FOREST SPECIES INTO AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS FOR NORTHERN THAILAND

Richard Burnette and Jamlong Pawkham¹

Controversy rages as to whether hill tribe inhabitants of northern Thailand are really friends or foes of the region's fragile and fragmented upland forests. Some groups advocate that these forests must become completely free of human presence and interference, with the exception of forest management and tourism. Yet, other sectors, also concerned with healthy, upland forests, advocate a continued forest-based lifestyle for the region's indigenous people. However, to better position upland residents to participate in forest stewardship, as well as to reduce human pressure in protected forest areas, allowances must be made for the primary needs of the forest inhabitants (e.g., adequate agricultural land and access to traditional forest products). Therefore, in addition to its ongoing emphasis on sustainable upland agriculture, the Upland Holistic Development project has recently begun partnering with hill tribe villagers in northern Chiang Mai province to evaluate potential agro-forestry systems. Such systems are located on degraded forest plots in which the majority of existing forest trees and shrubs are preserved. Within the plots, narrow strips of undergrowth (approximately 1.5 meters wide) are removed in 6 meter intervals to facilitate the establishment of various indigenous forest species of local value (e.g., nutritional, economic, medical and other). To further supplement incomes from such plots, selected, non-invasive horticultural crops that tolerate forest conditions are incorporated. Additional evaluation is needed to determine a wider range of indigenous species that are suitable for integration into local, upland agro-forestry systems.

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THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY BASED TROPICAL FOREST REHABILITATION IN FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

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The need for tropical forest rehabilitation drives research direction and motivates government and community involvement in groundwork. Three major landscape linkage projects and a range of other smaller projects are currently underway and focus on biodiversity conservation and improved land management practices in highly strategic conservation areas. In recognition of the importance of nature conservation outside protected areas, The Centre for Tropical Restoration works closely with agricultural land managers to demonstrate the mutual benefits of revegetation for conservation and primary production. Our nursery facility at the centre currently produces around 50,000 trees per year, which are established in degraded areas using the 'framework species method' developed by the centre.

A range of collaborative and independent research projects are undertaken by the centre, in conjunction with other research institutions and assisted by community volunteers. Research topics include investigations into recolonisation of flora and fauna in revegetated areas, potential gene flow through re-established linkages and efficacy of different revegetation methodologies in weed management.

An extensive education and training programme is delivered by centre staff and TREAT (Trees for the Evelyn and Atherton Tableland) volunteers. Programmes range from environmentally-based learning activities for school children to intensive 6 month training packages for international forestry or restoration students. TREAT members take advantage of the varied and interesting field and training days where they can increase their knowledge of their local environment, nature conservation and better land management.

The centre has an almost 20 year history with the community tree planting group TREAT. This unique relationship manifests itself in a range of hands-on activities for the 500 TREAT members to get involved in. Activities include nursery working bees, tree plantings, field trips, school programmes and monitoring birds and small mammals in revegetated areas. TREAT members carry out the majority of nursery tasks and pot up on average 1,200 tree seedlings every Friday morning.

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THE YMCA FOR NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME

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By using an innovative multi-religious and multi-cultural approach, the YMCA for Northern Development Foundation seeks to mobilise the energies of the traditional beliefs and wisdom of northern Thailand in combination with the benefits of modern technologies:

- to use natural resources in a sustainable way
- to combat slash-and-burn agriculture and deforestation
- to reduce destruction of watershed areas and contamination of soil.

In the Community Forest Program, the YMCA for Northern Development Foundation supports small communities of different ethnic groups by strengthening community solidarity and self-management capabilities of villagers to manage and protect their own forest resources.

Cultural and religious events or ceremonies like tree ordination, offering ceremonies for the forest spirits and also thanks-giving ceremonies are utilised to revive spiritual feelings of the people and to enhance their respect for nature.

Through the promotion of agro-forestry and organic farming, it is hoped that villagers will move towards more self-sufficient life styles, which will help reduce their expenditures and at the same time ensure a better protection of the environment and its resources.

The Foundation facilitates dialogue and co-operation among Buddhist monks, villagers, government officials, military and NGO's to create understanding and appreciation of nature and to enhance mutual support for the Community Forest Program.

Since 1993, the Foundation has assisted in the establishment of 10 Community Forests in Chiang Dao District of northern Thailand. The Love Chiang Dao Community Forest Group, which was created with support of the Foundation, acts as the network centre and co-ordinates all activities of the program; for example organising exhibitions and campaigns, establishing new community forests, administrating forest control and providing training on sustainable forest management.

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COMMUNITY FORESTRY IMPACT MODEL FOR THE NEPAL- UK COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROJECT

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The aim of the project is to develop a conceptual model which demonstrates the benefit of moving from a relatively passive, protectionist level of community forestry management, to active intervention by communities. It was initially developed for the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project in 1994 as a tool to inform policy-makers on the need for ongoing support to Forest User Groups so that the forest resource under community management could provide its potential biodiversity and socio-economic benefits. The model focuses on the transition from the former to the latter management system. It has three purposes:

1. To improve the understanding of the potential benefits which communities might realise in order to inform and improve their decision-making.
2. To maintain a strategic model of the community forestry intervention, initially for Koshi Hill, but potentially for the whole of Nepal, in order to inform policy makers and others of the relative importance of community forestry in the national economy.
3. To maintain an evaluation tool to determine the cost and benefits of interventions and to inform project advice.

The conceptual model is of use for other practitioners to use to help identify the ecological as well as the socio-economic implications of community forestry.

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