

Local People's Attitudes towards the Community Forestry

-The Case Studies in the Central Dry Zone of Myanmar-

Laboratory of Forest Policy; Aung Kyaw Soe

1. Introduction

In Myanmar, the forest resource is one of the most critical and principal supplier for the livelihood of the people and the national economy as well (FAO 2009). Having the total forest cover of about 32 million ha (48% of the total land area) in 2010 (FAO 2010) and the total population of 57.5 million people in 2008 (CSO 2008), the extent of the forest resource represents about 0.55 ha per capita. However, it is also facing a continuous deforestation problem and the annual deforestation rate had accounted for 0.95 % during the period of 2005 to 2010. It means that, each year, about 310,000 ha of the forest had been disappearing during the period (FAO 2010). To combat such deforestation, the governance reform in which the promotion of community forestry is one of the options is broadly acknowledged as critical (Scheyvens et al 2007). The 1992 Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro explicitly encouraged the governments to provide opportunities for the participation of local community and indigenous people (UN 1993).

The Forest Law (1992) of Myanmar highlights the requirement of people participation in the implementation of the forestry policy (The State Law and Order Restoration Council, 1992). In addition, the Forest Policy (1995) that was formulated in line with the Forestry Principles adopted in the Earth Summit identifies it as an imperative (Ministry of Forestry 1995). In consequence, a comprehensive and legal framework: Community Forestry Instructions (CFI) was issued by the Forest Department (FD) in 1995 to promote community participation in forestry sector (FAO, 1997).

In fact, with the purposes of fulfilling the basic needs of local people, the Local Supply Working Cycles (LSWC) have been organized since the beginning of systematic forest management system which was introduced in 1856, (Ministry of Forestry 2001). Currently, 7,071 million hectares (22.25 % of the total forest cover) of the forest are falling into these working cycles (FAO 2010). Before the policy reform of 1995, the management rights to and control over these forests had absolutely been kept by the FD however. Under the current policy, the management and access rights to and the control over these forests are to be devolved to the respective local communities in accordance with the CFI. According to the statistics of the FD, 42,147 ha of Community Forest (CF) had already been established and handed over to the respective local communities (572 users groups) throughout the country by the end of April, 2010.

2. Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

In the development of Community Forestry (CF) in Myanmar, most of the initiatives had occurred under the joint cooperations of the FD and the international organizations such as UNDP/FAO, JICA and Action Mangrove (ACTMANG) (Lin 2005). Even the CF sites selected for the case studies are the outcomes of the project (Community Forestry Training and Extension Project) that had been jointly implemented by the FD and JICA during the period of 2001-2006. It shows that the external support or encouragement is still needed so that the local people could enter the program. On the other hand, when the CF program was introduced to a specific community, not all villagers are interested in the program even on the fact that it equally open to all local residents. The study focus was put on this matter and the case studies were conducted in the two CF sites: one implemented through the natural forest conservation system (NFC-CF) and the other implemented through the agroforestry system (Agro-CF).

The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to investigate the benefits brought about by the CF program; (2) to find out how different in the socio-economic status between the two groups in each community: the local people who are being involved in the program (CF users)/ in the application process (applicants), and the local people who are not yet being involved in the program in any way (non-CF users); and (3) to examine the attitudes of local people, in particular non-CF users, towards the CF program.

3. Case Study Sites and Methodology

The case study sites are located in the Central Dry Zone of Myanmar where the severe drought is a significant feature of the region. The NFC-CF site is located in Padaukngoke (new) village (20° 17' 24.0" N; 95° 17' 40.0" E), Natmauk Township, Magwe District. At the time of survey (Dec., 2009), the village has 96 households and the population is 466. Out of them, 32 households are being involved in the program. The Certificate for CF establishment was issued on Feb. 16, 2005 and the area is 52 ha. To this CF users group (CFUG), the project provided with an income generating activity: goat breeding that was worth \$ 500 to support their CF implementation. At present, the CFUG have appointed a member as a forest guard to protect the forest with a pay of Kyat 10,000 per month since August, 2009. The pay comes from the fund initially provided by the project.

The Agro-CF site is located in Mezalizan Village (20° 48' 18.4" N; 96° 10' 36.9" E), Thazi Township, Metila District. The village has 360 households and the population is 2,078 at the time of survey (Jan., 2010). In this site, only 3 households are being involved in the program. The Certificate for CF establishment was issued on April 26, 2006 and the total area is 50 ha. In this case, the land is allocated for each user (Fig.1) and the implementation is being conducted individually, not by group. In this village, another group consisting of 10 members also applied for permission in 2007. These 13 households (3 CF users and 10 applicants) are treated as the same

Table 1. Land allocation among the CF users (Agro-CF)

CF Users	Land Allocation (ha)	% of the Total
User 1	4	8
User 2	36.5	73
User 3	9.5	19
Total	50	100

group in the analysis.

Basically, the study focus is put on the two groups in each case study site: CF users/ applicants and non-CF users. In NFC-CF site, all CF users available in the village at the time of survey (28) and 30 non-CF users selected in random were interviewed. Therefore, there are totally 58 respondents in this study site. In the Agro-CF site, one group consisting of 13 households (3 CF users and 10 applicants) and another consisting of 30 randomly selected non-CF users were interviewed. The structured and open questionnaires were used in interviewing.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Benefits and Impacts from the CF Program

4.1.1. NFC-CF: Till now, the CF users have got only some small amount of firewood (about 3 bull-carts per user per year) obtained from the natural regeneration activities. However, the improvement of the forest under the control of CFUG is very significant. All respondents said the CF forest could produce non-wood forest products such as mushroom, fodder and roofing that much more than before and other forests. Therefore, all the villagers, both CF users and non-CF users who have to partially depend on such forest products for their livelihood are able to enjoy the benefits of the CF program. A shortcoming there is that some villagers who had been holding the customary users' right over the forest of CF site lost theirs when the CF program was introduced. In fact, the customary rights hold by some villagers over their respective forests have already existed and are recognized by all the respective local residents.

4.1.2. Agro-CF: Having a shot-termed income particularly from the agricultural crop constituted in the agroforestry system, the CF users have got the benefits since the beginning year of the implementation. The average annual cost contributed to and net profit obtained from the program are as described in Table 2. No sooner had the existing CFUG got the Certificate than another group consisting of 10 members also submitted the application in 2007 for the land of 44.5 ha. However, the FD did not yet process the application till now as on being the termination (end of 2006) of the project that had been the main driving force to the local FD before.

Table 2. Average Cost and Benefit (,000) K (2006~2009)

CF Users	Cost (,000)K	Benefit (,000)K	Net Profit (,000)K
User-1	44.2	180	135.8
User-2	177.7	720.9	543.2
User-3	163.8	276.3	112.5
Total	385.7	1177.2	791.5

4.2. The Comparative Study on the Socio-economic Status of CF users and Non-CF users

The comparative study is conducted on some socio-economic variables which generally indicate the socio-economic status of the respondents: possessions of farm land, cattle (cows) and luxurious properties (TV and Motorbike); and the annual income. For the comparative study on annual income distributions of the two groups in each study site, a line representing a nationally adopted average annual expenditure (Kyat 1,165,000) of a household (CSO 2008) and a line of minimum food sufficiency (Kyat 600,000 per household per year) that was obtained from the discussion with a local resident are fixed to the Fig.2 and Fig.4 so that the significant difference could be seen. By the two lines, each group could generally be categorized into 3 sub-groups: the better off who are located above the line of national average annual expenditure of a household; the fair who are located between the two lines and the poor who are located under the line of food sufficiency.

4.2.1. NFC-CF:

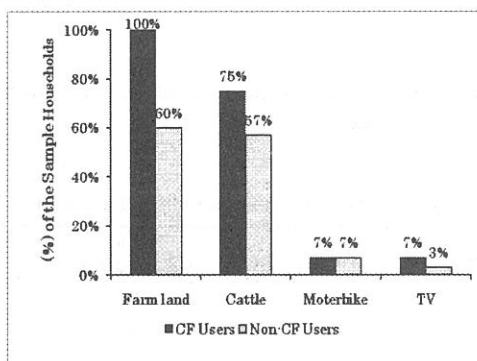


Fig.1. Comparisons on some socio-economic variables (NFC-CF)

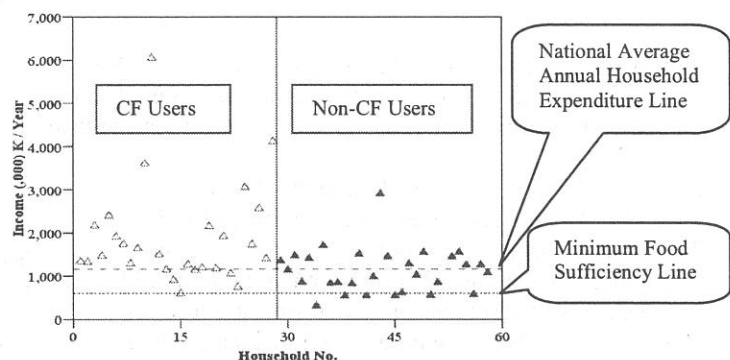


Fig.2. Comparison on annual income distribution (NFC-CF)

According to the Fig.1, a significant finding is that all the CF users have the farm lands while 40% of the non-CF users are the landless. Generally the landless belong to the group of the poor while the villagers who have the farm lands are economically fair or good. Regarding the possession of cattle also, the proportion of the CF users are found higher. The differences are not so significant under the comparisons related to the possession of luxurious properties, and the proportions of both groups are found small. It indicates that the numbers of both the CF users and non-CF users are very limited in the wealthy group (7% of each group). In the comparison of annual income distributions (Fig.2), the proportion of the CF users is significantly higher in the category of the better off (78.5% Vs 46.7%) while, conversely,

their proportion is much lower in the category of the poor (3.6% Vs 20%). The difference is not so significant in the economically fair category (25% of CF user Vs 33.3 % of non-CF users).

Table 3. Statistic test on Annual Income Comparison (NFC-CF)

Test Groups	Ranks			Test Statistics		
	No.	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Variable	Ws	Z
CF-Users	28	36.41	1019.5	Annual Income	691.5	-3.011
Non-CF Users	30	23.05	691.5			0.003**

Note: Statistic Test: Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test
** Significance at 0.01 level

4.2.2. The Agro-CF: As to the Fig.3, the proportions of the CF users/ applicants are found higher under all comparisons: a greater proportion of the CF users/applicants have farm land, cattle and luxurious properties. The significant differences are: the proportion of CF users/applicants who have farm lands accounts for 85 % while that of the non-CF users only 40%, and 46 % of the CF users/applicants have luxurious property (motorbike) while only 7 % of non-CF users have it. This finding (46% of the CF users/applicant have luxurious property) also reveals that about half of the CF users/applicants belong to the wealthy group. In the comparison of annual income distributions (Fig.4), the proportion of the CF users is significantly higher in the category of the better off (84.6% Vs 36.6%) while the large proportion of the non-CF users are concentrated in the economically fair group (53.3 %).

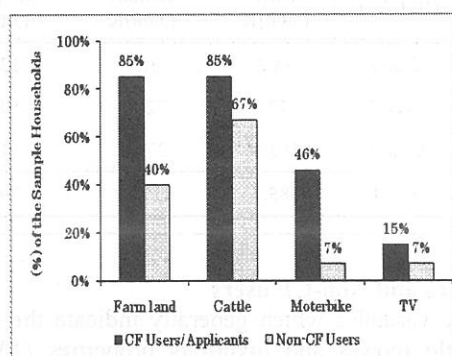


Fig.3. Comparisons on some socio-economic variables (Agro-CF)

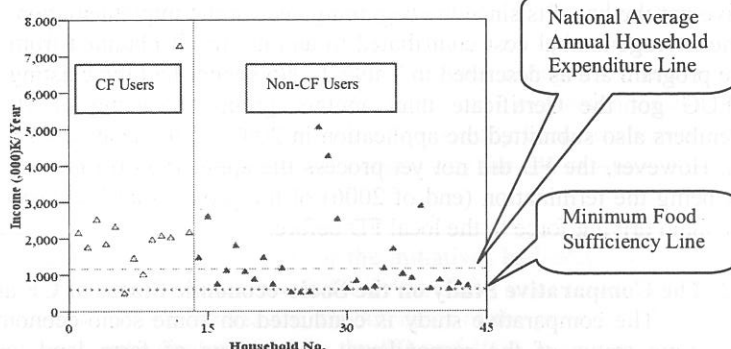


Fig.4. Comparisons on annual income distributions (Agro-CF)

Table 4. Statistic test on Annual Income Comparison (NFC-CF)

Test Groups	Ranks			Test Statistics		
	No.	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Variable	Ws	Z
CF Users/ Applicants	13	29.38	382	Annual Income	564	-2.539
Non-CF Users	30	18.8	546			0.011*

Note: Statistic Test: Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test
* Significance at 0.05 level

4.3. The Attitudes of Non-CF Users towards the CF Program

For the investigation of attitudes of the non-CF users towards the program, a question of "Do you want to be involved in the CF program if it will be initiated in your village?" had been raised.

4.3.1. The NFC-CF (Table 5): Regarding the reasons of why the 53 % of the respondents have no interest in CF, 33% said they are seasonal workers (generally the poor) who could not live in the village all around the year; 13 % respondents give the reasons of lack of working force or being too old; and the remaining 7% replied that, with their owned business, they could not pay attention to the program. With respect to the responses "Yes but with conditions", they responded they will join the program if the forests over which they have customarily controlled are targeted for CF establishment (7%), if other family members are interested in the program (7%) and if they are in the village at the time of initiating CF to their village (3%).

Table 5. Attitudes of non-CF users towards the CF program (NFC-CF)

Category	Responses	No. of Respondents	(%)
1	Yes	9	30
2	No	16	53
3	Yes (with condition)	5	17
Total		30	100

4.3.2. The Agro-CF (Table 6): Out of the 10 respondents with no interest in CF (33%), the reasons behind them are: having sufficient income sources (17%); lack of experience in farming (3.3%); and being too poor (13.3%). As to the

respondents who show their interests in the CF program but with no capability, this group consists of 6 respondents (20%). Out of them, the two respondents (6.7%) said they have no working force or are too old to join the CF program and the remaining 4 (13.3) responded that they are too poor to be involved in the program. Therefore, there are totally 8 respondents (26.6 % of the sample) with whom the poverty is the main limitation to their interest in the program.

Table 6. Attitudes of non-CF users towards the CF program (Agro-CF)

Category	Responses	No. of Respondents	%
1	Yes	14	47
2	No	10	33
3	Yes (no capability)	6	20
Total		30	100

5. Conclusion

According to the results of socio-economic comparisons between the two groups of the CF users and non-CF users, the local people whose economy is generally fair are more likely to be involved in the program in both cases. In addition, the results of investigating the attitudes of the non-CF users reveal that, in general, the local people who belong to the poor or wealthy groups are not interested in the program. Therefore, the middle-classed villagers are found to be potential CF users in the program.

In the NFC-CF, the improvement of the forest under the CFUG shows the effectiveness in forest conservation under the program, in particular under the group ownership. However, the issue of customary users is needed to be considered in future not only to eliminate the negative impacts to them by the program but also to avoid the social tension within the community and make the program relevant to the local custom. Therefore, it could be concluded that the customary users' right holders are the most relevant to the program in such cases. In the Agro-CF, a good advantage is the presence of incentive of short-termed income. However, the CF program was found to be out of reach of the poor because of the requirement of initial contributions of both intensive labor and some amount of cash (Average Annual cost by the CF users: Kyat 385,700/year). The 26.6% of the non-CF users there also give the reason of being poor for their unwillingness/incapability to be involved in the program. It indicates only some villagers with a fair economic condition might be eligible to the program under the current trend.

Even though the results of investigating the attitudes of the non-CF users reveal that not all local people are interested in the program, the existence of some non-CF users who are willing to participate in the program in both cases (30% in NFC-CF and 47% in Agro-CF) indicates that the program has a good potential for development in future if the FD genuinely wants to give a role to the local communities in the forestry sector.

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