

# **Institutional Development in Community-based Natural Resource Management: Local Politics and Governance in a Semi-urban Area of Northern Thailand<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

Although the current constitution has determined roles of the state to support people participation in their natural resource management nearby the locality, there is a loophole to obstruct the implementation. Therefore, the article argues that decision-making powers in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) still limited in the leaders and better-off well-being groups. Natural resource management needs to deal with conflicting benefits and power to control and decision-making on land resources of various local agencies and heterogeneity within communities.

The data was collected by using secondary information from various local and national agencies. In-depth interviews with various key informants were also used in composite with direct observation in various meetings and workshops in the villages and the SAOs. However, there are only three villages (called the 'A', 'B', and 'C' villages) in the studied watershed that are referred as illustrating cases.

The study found that there are many evidences of national policies conflicting within themselves. This can open opportunities for local governmental agencies to deviate from the responsive implementation to really strengthen CBNRM. Therefore, the CBNRM is still limited in voluntary protection, but not power in resource management and governance. And community heterogeneity is not well considered yet in the CBNRM, although it is found that the community heterogeneity in terms of the well-being, education, intensity and types (in specific to areas) of dependency on natural resources

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has found to influence on the institutional development particularly on the decision-making on the management.

## **Introduction**

General understanding that there is positive environment for community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in Thailand. First, the current constitution determined such as in Articles 76 and 79 (Section 5: Principles for the State Policies) stated that the state must promote and support people participation in natural resource management and determining policies and decision-making in all levels. In addition, the Sub-district Councils and Sub-district Administrative Organizations Act (1994) stated that SAOs must be allocated power to develop plans and implementation to conserve their natural resources. The Act recognize that most local people depend on their local resources so they are the most appropriate to be empowered to manage the natural resources. This is claimed by most officials as a clear implementation of ‘decentralization approach’ although this has been criticized by many activists and academics. Finally, after the success of the poor people movement in 1997 in the name of ‘Assembly of the Poor’ to let government addressing their 16 core problems which mostly caused by mistaken policies in natural resources of the country for almost half a century, the people sector has become more or less recognized in their roles in public decision-making.

However at the level of implementing agencies, local staff of the agencies are so reluctant to take these positive polices to implement on the ground. They do take opportunities from a loophole in the constitution [no-timeframe determination] for neglecting to change or develop laws that really response to the constitution’s intentions. And many agencies try to deviate from the principles of the policies, and pick up them to implement which these implementing policies can cause conflicts within themselves. This is clearly seen in the policy stated to promote people participation in one way. On the other way, it is claimed that there is a urgent need to protect natural resources of all people in the country by declaring the most forest remained as protected areas which many of these areas are under local management. Under legal protected areas (especially national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and head-watershed areas), direct resource uses and management by local people is almost impossible.

The obstacles to CBNRM related to policies and implementation at the national level were discussed such as by the Project for Ecological Recovery; Anan Ganjanapan

(1996 and 2000) and Gary Suwannarat (1996). Political issues on local resource management were also intensively studied by Anan Ganjanapan (1994; and 2000). However, the political and governance issues between various stakeholders in natural resource management particularly between many agencies (both government and NGOs), the agencies with local government (SAOs), and groups a village (interact power within the village or with external agencies), are still limited at the local levels. Therefore, this article tries to explore situations of these issues with recognition of community heterogeneity.

The article argues that decision-making powers in CBNRM still limited in the leaders and better-off well-being groups. Natural resource management needs to deal with conflicting benefits and power to control and decision-making on land resources of various local agencies and heterogeneity within communities.

The data was collected by using secondary information from various local and national agencies. In-depth interviews with various key informants were also used in composite with direct observation in various meetings and workshops in the villages and the SAOs. However, there are only three villages (called the 'A', 'B', and 'C' villages) in the studied watershed that are referred as illustrating cases.

### **People Adaptation and Watershed Resources**

The studied watershed called here as 'S' is a watershed in the Nan watershed, situated in North of Thailand. This watershed covers an area of 102 square kilometers or 10,200 hectares. The watershed is a small tributary flowing from west of the Nan River. The general sloping aspect is from the west to the east and from the south-west to the north-east. The highest peak of the watershed is 1,082 m msl on the east. These mountain-peaks and nearby high altitude areas used to be dominated by extensive shifting cultivation during the 1950s to 70s. These areas are currently dominated by grassland with scattered natural-regeneration trees. Although most of the high-altitude lands of the watershed (hereafter referred to as the highlands) are not claimed by local communities for agriculture, and the areas are sources of income-generating NTFPs (imperata grass for roofing, blooming grass, sugar palm and rattan (these two latter NTFPs are found only areas close to the streams) for both people within and outside the watershed. Land, except the land with legal title deeds, have been claimed as 'forest areas' by laws and the

responsibility for forest restoration is mostly under by the 'S' Watershed Management Unit's (SWMU), Watershed Conservation Office (WCO) since 1977. Recently, many of these areas, which have not yet been planted or enriched by SWMU, have been transferred to the Permanent Forest Project (PFP) under the Queen's initiative. In addition, there is an effort to declare a national park, which would overlap most areas under the SWMU and PFP, and some other areas claimed by local communities. The land and natural resource used of the 'A' village, one of the three upland villages is the most pressured because much of agricultural land claimed by villagers was converted to tree planting areas by the SWMU. And the grassland in the highland area of the village is under the reforestation of PFP amidst dissatisfaction of many villagers and SWMU. In addition it is obscure that this area is under the preparation of a national park.

In the 'S' watershed, there are five lowland villages settled in the watershed for more than two hundred years. Except for the 'C', the lowland villagers are *khon-muang* – local Northern Thai. Most 'C' villagers belong to a subgroup of the *Tai* or *Yuan* ethnic group called *Tai-lue* that migrated from Yunnan, the south-western province of the present-day People's Republic of China, approximately two hundred years ago (as recorded in the village's temple constructed in 1832). After the main road was constructed in 1973, most lowland villagers moved up from the areas adjacent to the river to both sides of the road, and later expanded.

The permanent settlement in upland areas was started in early 1940s. Most households of upland settlers migrated from the nearby villages in the lowland. The number of people settled in the upland villages has steadily increased although they were not legally recognized as administrative or formal villages until the mid -1960s. While many people had generally moved from lowland to upland areas, there are a few more semi-permanent villages scattered along the main streams of the watershed moved back to the lowland areas.

After resettlement near the main road, the lowland villagers changed their ex-settlement areas to irrigated paddy or annual cropping. Although most individuals have only a quarter of a rai (6.25 rai = 1ha) of land, they can gain high production from rice cultivation and other high-value crops (such as vegetables, peanuts, and soybeans) compared to the upland areas. By improving water resources during the 1980s, This brought higher and more reliable production in the lowland agriculture. Therefore,

shifting cultivation in the lowland villages (except for the 'B' village) has continually declined.

Similarly, when the upland settlement villages became permanent since the 1940s, they have also demonstrated efforts to improve agricultural land productivity by terracing the land in the valley and allocating water through self-managed check-dams for paddy or "upland paddy". Any land to which water can be diverted will be used for paddy and high valued crops after rice harvesting and /or permanent annual cropping of maize, peanut, and vegetables. The areas surrounding these settlements used to be under shifting cultivation usually changed to perennial cropping or home gardens. The improvement of these areas is seen as necessary assets for their community wealth and CBNRM. However, the physical potentials of areas are different within the upland villages.

In addition, people in the upland villages felt a need to protect the head-watershed areas and settlement areas from fire encroachment and to ensure enough water supply and safety for their lives. Therefore, *de facto* community forests for 'conservation' (or protection) and utilization have been informally and collectively established.

Since the late 1970s, many young people decided to find labor work in the big cities. existing shifting cultivation has been practised by the lowland villagers only near their settlement, and keeping rotations within their fallow areas (usually 2-3 plots only). Indeed, shifting cultivation is practised only by a small proportion -- the poorest group -- in the lowland villages. Many land claimed particularly of lowland villages do not continue cultivation, but lying in fallow over 10 years so called old-fallow land. The old-fallow areas are covered by naturally regenerating vegetation with species composition of mixed deciduous forest type. The old-fallow areas are important sources of fuelwood and bamboo products. In 1998, many individual old-fallow areas of most lowland villages were established as community forest for 'conservation' or utilization under the common property management regime with different bundles of rights agreed upon within a village. This has been supported and facilitated by the Upper Nan Watershed Management Project (UNWMP), a project of WCO under the support by DANCED (currently being transferred to DANIDA).

## **Local Politics on Land under National Policies and Implementation**

It is found on site (as many other sites all over the country) that most land is under “forest areas” by laws although they have been long period of time claimed by local people or even many of these areas have turned into permanent settlement in semi-urban areas. This law made the local officials can always claimed that people are ‘illegal’ or ‘forest destroyers’. Without consideration of the history of the ‘development’ in this country which the expand of the centralized power and national policies on the ‘development’ are the major forces leading to deforestation and natural resource degradation, it creates myths in the real complex causes of that degradation and solutions based on legal systems [not always legitimacy]. However, I would not discuss here on the causes of that.

***(1) From the National “Territorialization” to the Local “Territorialization” in the Name of “Conservation of Protected Areas”***

As I discussed in the early section, local communities have adaptability to restoration of forest and natural resources, although it would be variable due to various endogenous and exogenous factors. Among those, it is unavoidable to deal with land issues particularly in local politics on land, which have been impacted from national implementation.

The first is the “territorialization” of forest rights that Vandergeest (1996) defined it as:

“the states attempt to control people and their action by drawing boundaries around a geographic space, excluding some categories of individuals from this space, and proscribing or prescribing specific activities within these boundaries.”

He also stated that rights on land and its resources have been territorialized throughout Southeast Asia including forest areas in Thailand. The process took place from declaration of ‘forest’ by laws, then demarcation [mostly on maps] of these areas to forest reserve and protected areas, and classification of land use [based on coarse bio-physical data mainly] to control land and resource uses (Vandergeest 1996). This can be further illustration here. By referring to the forest policy to target of 25% of protected areas, the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Vegetation Conservation<sup>3</sup> has tried to declare

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<sup>3</sup> the department used to be under the Royal Forest Department. It has been newly established according to the Bureaucratic Reform effective since October, 2002.

national parks and other strict control areas based on the areas under the conservation zone determined on the map showing forest remained in Thailand. The zoning does not consider the reality on the ground how or how long people have been claimed the land. Because of no legal entity in forest zoning, the national parks office tries to accelerate promulgation of the areas under the zoning. On Nan province only, there are five national parks on the process of formal declaration. If these areas are succeeded as planned, the areas will cover over 80% of the total provincial area. And it would be overlapped with people's claimed land for agriculture and resource extraction. On the study area, it also clearly shows that land under conservation zone [according to the forest policy] covers most of land except only lowland paddy. In the early plan to establish the Nanthaburi national park, it will cover all conservation zone, then the team of the park's establishment must tries to avoid conflict with the local [especially for powerful groups] mainly by exclude permanent land-use (both settlement and agricultural areas). Land use under the rotational cropping would not be excluded especially for the upland and highland communities. This is because that there are myths in the concepts and ethnical bias. However, under the Sub-district Councils and Administrative Organizations Act (1994), any area prepares to establish a park needed to ask permission from the SAOs. The decisions of the SAOs are not always based on legal systems but they somehow referring to legal systems and local recognition. It is quite flexible which it can be like 2-sides of a coin. On the positive side, it is quite compromised and provided opportunities to integrate customary laws and local judgement. On the negative side, the decision-making powers are still limited among the governmental staff and executive committee in a SAO, which is too overwhelmed under the bureaucratic system. And it is often found that there are efforts from the local officials and contractors to influence decision making through lobbying the decision-making body or individuals in the executive committee especially of the chair. The lobbying achievement often depends on benefits shared or personal relationships.

In addition, the efforts of using watershed classification (another type of land use classification) to claim rights on land of the WCO based on conservation zone (25% targeted in the forest policy) is evident, as the office proposed in its web site:

“According to the watershed classification promulgation under cabinet resolution, there are about 18% (9.3 million ha) of the country area was classified as WSC1, about 8% (4 million ha) was classified as WSC2. Therefore, about 26% percent of the country area was classified as head

watershed areas [this is also classified as protected areas] where were the target area of Watershed Management Division [currently becoming Watershed Conservation Office].”

In the past when the watershed classification was just finished, the implementation was focused mainly on the protection of head-watershed areas in WSC1. Then, the head watershed areas have been expanded with the influence of the forest policy. To achieve protection in expecting 25% of the protected areas, the national park office tried to promulgate national parks while the WCO promulgates the head watershed areas (cover all WSC1 and WSC2).

In Nan province, it can see the effort of the WCO to expand their areas by establishing temporal watershed management units (which later mostly becoming permanent). Available degraded forest areas can mean budget allocation for forest restoration. The transferring areas under responsibility of the watershed management units (WCO) to PFP is of course dissatisfied by local officers of WCO due to the impacts on the units' legitimacy of existing.

The private company, which operates the PFP under sub-contract with the Telecommunication Office of Thailand (TOT), also wants to be handed over the power to control land from a regional forest office (legally appointed to be a controller of the land under the PFP). The company also needs to avoid conflict with local communities during the short period of responsibility [one year of planting and two years of maintenance]. Therefore, the staff of the company under the PFP would often give personal benefits to the leaders of 'A' village such as monthly salary with less work and accessible the PFP's resources and facilities.

## ***(2) Power and Benefits on the 'Degraded Land'***

The WCO can be claimed as the most advanced agency within the DoNP in its concepts to integrated people in the natural resource management. This can be seen from the regular implementation and lessons learnt from various projects implemented by the office (Limchoowong 1996; and Tan-Kim-Yong 1993). The tasks of WCO have been changed from head-watersheds' rehabilitation by **reforestation (100 seedlings per rai<sup>4</sup>)** to (1) natural regeneration supplemented by **enrichment planting (25 seedlings per rai)**, (2) protection against encroachment, (3) soil moisture and water conservation works, (4)



enhance community participation [referring as ‘participatory watershed management’ approach]. However, the changing tasks of WCO make fewer budgets allocated per unit area (calculating from seedlings per rai) especially when compares to budget gained of full reforestation of PFP.

Amidst the fighting for power on the land both by the National Park Office, WCO, and the PFP, the rest willingness of these agencies to empower local communities to manage these lands are scare. Although there are many studies proved ability and willingness of communities to restore forest resources especially head-watershed areas (Santasombat 1995; Pragtong 1993; Apichatvullop 1993; Thomas 1993; Limchoowong 1996; and Tan-Kim-Yong 1993), local officers hardly have active response for that. The local officers from these related agencies wish local communities to just participate in planting (voluntary or paying as a labor wage) or protecting the areas to ensure their achievement of forest restoration. However, watershed management units seem to be more interested in the long-term success compared to the PFP. The private company which has sub-contracted from the PFP is less interested in long-term success; the staff from the company is deal only with influence leaders to ensure their short-term implementation without community’s protest and receive cooperation in provision of labor worker without confronting conflicts about land and water uses.

Finally, the Forum of the Poor (FoP), the body of many communities that are detrimentally impacted from state policies, has analyzed problems on people and protected area and commented that many of local officials wre not willing to make clear demarcation because they wants to have loopholes to exercise their power and decision making under legal frameworks. **This is often making them gaining personal benefits.<sup>5</sup>on the unclear situations.** Especially for the local forestry offices, Although they are recognized that forestland has been changed to other land-uses, the remain of rights over land means the remain of power to make decisions and get benefits on the land and resource uses including benefits from budget allocation. So, the un-clarity of rights and legal certification based on existing land use and historical claim are preferred.

Apart from no clear defined boundary of land and forest resource use, the blur of local rights can become positive toward the SWMU. The SWMU can build their

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<sup>4</sup> rai is Thai area unit; 6.25 rai = 1 hectare.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from “Guidelines to solve problems of people and protected areas according to the proposal of the Forum of the Poor : Problems and impacts

legitimacy to lowland people and SAO from the perception that upland and highland people cause detrimental impacts to downstream. The SWMU claimed themselves protecting the benefits of the ‘society’ with actually limited to only the downstream communities (mostly lowland villages).

## **Heterogeneity, Dependency on Natural Resources, and CBNRM**

### ***(1) Heterogeneity of Dependency on Natural resources and Well-being***

Communities will adapt their livelihoods in different ways for survival. In order to understand community heterogeneity, therefore, diversity of dependency on natural resources have been grouped based on the time-allocation for household economics: less and more dependent groups. This is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of Households and Percentage in a Village of Different Livelihood Systems in Term of their Dependency on Natural Resources. (Source: Village Census Survey 2001)

| Classification of Dependency on NR   | The Upland Villages (Uvs) |              | The Lowland Villages (LVs) |             |              |
|--|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------|
|  | ‘A’ Village               | Total of UVs | ‘B’ Village                | ‘C’ Village | Total of LVs |
| <b>Households with Less Dependency on NR</b>   |                           |              |                            |             |              |
| Work outside locality (almost whole year)  | 11(18%)                   | 18 (9%)      | 29 (9%)                    | 10 (6%)     | 61 (10%)     |
| Get remittance only / remittance with labor work in locality   | 8 (13%)                   | 8 (4%)       | 8 (2%)                     | 23 (15%)    | 43 (8%)      |
| Work in locality (Service sector, governmental service permanent work, business, labor work)                           | -                         | -            | 24 (8%)                    | 10 (6%)     | 39 (6%)      |
| <b>Households with More Dependency on NR</b>   |                           |              |                            |             |              |
| Depend on paddy with other income generation activities  | 25 (41%)                  | 73 (37%)     | 165 (52%)                  | 106 (69%)*  | 346 (58%)    |
| Depend on upland farming (shifting cultivation, perennial cropping, permanent annual cropping) and others but no paddy | 10 (16%)                  | 77 (40%)     | 91 (29%)                   | 5 (4%)      | 108 (18%)    |
| Collection of forest products and/or labor works but no utilization of land  | 7 (12%)                   | 19 (10%)     | -                          | -           | -            |

**Remark: \* Most households in this group depend on an irrigation system on the other watershed.**

*Households with less dependency on natural resources*

Within upland villages, households in this group usually work outside the locality for the whole year accounting for nine percent of households in all upland villages. In addition, it is interesting to see that there are up to 31 percent of households in the 'A' upland village with less dependency on natural resources while only 5 percent each in other villages. In general, there are higher numbers of households with less dependency on natural resources in lowland villages compared to upland villages. The households of the lowland villages with less dependency are not specific to any well-being groups. Some villages will work mainly outside some others would work in the locality. There is increase of people who work in governmental service work as teachers in local schools. This is a result of long-term adaptation of villagers.

*Households with more dependency on natural resources*

Households in this group are divided into three groups: groups of households with dependency on (1) water resources (mainly); (2) upland areas; and (3) forest products only.

Groups of households with mainly dependence on water resources have paddy (both lowland and upland) and/or other permanent annual-cropping areas. In the upland villages, households in this group generally have paddy field in composite with shifting cultivation, perennial cropping, animal-raising and labor work for some periods. Households in the group are average and better-off in terms of their well-being. On the other hand, households in this group of lowland villages have more income generation alternatives. Most of households in the group especially in the average well-being group have perennial cropping for additional income. All in all, the better-off group has major incomes from business and government service, while the below-average groups still rely on labor work for household income. This group is accounting for more than 50 percent of total households except 'C' village. This is because that most lowland paddy fields of the 'C' village are in the opposite side of the Nan river so these areas also depend on water supply from another watershed.

The second group is dependent on upland areas. They have no paddy field but practicing the land-based activities including shifting cultivation, perennial cropping, and animal raising in the forest or grassland. Their major income comes from labor mainly outside the locality for four to eight months or within their locality. It is higher in upland than lowland households depending on natural resources particularly in upland areas. Most lowland villages that depend only on land-use in the uplands are limited.

It should be noted that there are only 5 percent of total households in 'C' that depend on upland areas and are also accounted as the households with more dependency on natural resources. This means that 'C' is the village with least dependence on natural resources of the Watershed. Finally, households with more dependency on natural resource in terms of direct use of forest products occur only in the upland villages. These households also work as laborers for income, supplemented by income generating from various forest products accounting for approximately 10 households. Most households in this group are considered as the poorest group in a village.

In comparison with other villages, the 'B' and 'C' villages are more diversified in terms of their source of incomes or economic activities and that the proportion in land-based system activities for livelihood seems to be reduced. The reduction is also seen in other lowland villages.

## ***(2) Community Heterogeneity and CBNRM***

### ***Politics of the Local People on Land***

Land is not only interested among local agencies. Politics on land is also an issue within local communities. Information obtained from a focus-group meeting with senior key informants in the lowland villages confirmed that:

“Land of most 'A' villagers in the past did not belong to them. We [lowland villages] had temporally settled on the current settlement area of their village during cropping seasons. We also practised shifting cultivation around the settlement and expand much further up to the head-watersheds. After a decade of [extensive shifting] cultivation, we moved back to our villages. Many members of the 'A' village had claimed land after us.”

As mentioned in the early settlement of the upland villagers, most upland areas have been claimed by many people in the lowland villages and then abandoned them. But, the lowland people often claimed that they rights is more recognized as pioneers of land

clearing. This can be seen in many areas near the boundaries of the upland and lowland villages that people sometimes dispute rights on land. The local recognized rights still are unclear, but the local government and officials are often bias toward the local communities.

In addition of the issues of interactions between lowland and upland villages often have been dealt with inequity, the local officials often have similar expectation of purposes of land-use to the lowland villagers. For example, they are more appreciated to support the lowland villages to demarcate their old-fallow land as ‘conservation’ community forests than that of utilization, or even against using the land for agriculture.

The flight for land claimed is not only occurred between the upland and lowland villages in the watershed, there are a few evidences of claiming land back from some lowland villages outside the watershed. As told by an ex-village headman:

“Most fallow lands near here (settlement area) belonged ..(one lowland village nearby).. villagers. In 1973, we (the lowland villagers in the study site) had quarreled with ...(one lowland village nearby)’s villagers. I therefore asked a district governor to mediate land and forest conflict issues. Finally, we made it clear where the land belonging to ...(one lowland village nearby).. different from our forests. If the land used to belong ...(a lowland village nearby)..’s villagers but they did not use it for long time [more than 10 years], this land was returned to our village. ...(a lowland village nearby).. is more civilized than us, most of the villagers preferred not to use these lands, especially the better-off households. However, the ...(a lowland village nearby).. poor still hold their rights to use land here.”

The re-claimed land was shared among the landless or poor villagers for individuals’ use. In addition, some parts were also allocated for common uses within the village. Similarly, there are also evident in the upland villages that their planted community forests were reclaimed back from people in other villages who were not regularly using these lands. In these cases, it is although not the issue of imbalance power, it shows local political strategies to deal with resources conflicts and learn to use power of the local government to manage the conflicts and to gain recognition on the rights on land in their village boundaries.

*Social Relationships of Outside-Working Households*

Community heterogeneity in terms of differences in the wealth-status and the dependency on natural resources has influenced CBNRM especially in the upland villages. Generally, it is true that the upland villages are more dependent on forest resources than the lowland villages in terms of number of users and quantities of extraction for day-by-day dependence and income generations. However, the vast differences of livelihood strategies (from land and natural resource based livelihoods to urban workers) within individual upland villages can make differences in incentives toward CBNRM especially in the 'A' village. Because of dependence on natural resources and high social relationship, people who makes living through agricultural-based systems (or land and natural resource based livelihoods) perceive themselves as a part of collective decisions. On the other hand people who work outside for the whole year (urban workers) perceived that they won't gain or lose through any decisions on rule-setting and enforcement concerning to land and natural resources as long as their private land claimed is recognized.

The maintaining the membership of villagers who work outside locality is different in the purposes and values from villagers who are dependent on resources in the locality. Villagers who work outside the locality have much lesser social interdependence with their own village than other households. This can be illustrated by a case of sanctioning some people who do not involve village development activities (including resources' maintenance) by excluding that people in religious events. This exclusion is accounted as a serious measure of social sanctions. But, this measure is not concerned by people who work outside the locality. The group of people is more concerned on legal rights or formal agreement which they can be impacted as a member. And with increasing people in this group, the rules and any agreement upon CBNRM are evolved into the more formal patterns especially in written ones.

This group of people does not only have new social relationship with other people in their own village but also create new power relationship with formal leaders. The relationship is dependent less on common values but leaders' values, as they do not discuss with other villagers in publics, but dealing only with the leaders. So, some time they have to share some benefits with leaders, which these may not be transparent. In addition, in any agreement upon rules, these (outside-living) villagers may just be informed on the existence of rules, but rules are not institutionalized because they often

not recognized these rules and do not expect any impacts from resources' abundance or deterioration through rule against.

*Influential Roles and Decision-making Power of The Better-off Groups*

Apart from different in livelihood systems in relationship to dependency on natural resources, the differences in household well-being and their gaps also influences CBNRM. It cannot be said that the better well-being village will be more actively involved in CBNRM. Similarly, the better-off households do not show more recognition in rules and collective management than the below-average households. However, many leaders who mostly come from the better-off groups have more influential roles and decision-making powers than the below-average groups especially in the negotiation between villages in concerns of village boundaries. Therefore, the better-off group also has more power in setting rules than the below-average group. Without interfering to intervene fairness negotiation, the rules and agreement mostly ensure the benefits of the rule-makers, which they can be both positive and negative impacts to the below-average group especially among people who are more dependent on natural resources.

For example, the leaders of the lowland villages who have active roles in negotiation in CBNRM are in the groups of the less resource dependence and water resource's dependence only. They mostly depend on lowland agriculture and non-agricultural sectors. They defend for the benefits of their groups in their own villages particularly in concerned with village boundaries in order to possess clear administration, rights, and authority. They usually do not concern about forest resource uses especially NTFPs' extraction as they hardly depend on these resources for income generation. As these leaders being representatives in the inter-village organization, they still take priority on clear defined boundaries. However, at this stage, the agreement upon the land right and boundaries are also preferable by the upland users and other disadvantaged groups because it limits resource accessible by outsiders.

*Influences of the New Class in CBNRM: the High-educated Villagers*

Another less resource dependence group, households with high-educated members, is observed in terms of the influences of perceptions on CBNRM. This group can be considered as a new group with currently limited, but constantly increased especially in the low villages. This group is associated with CBNRM in two ways. Some people in this group are not interested and do not want to be involved in the community resource management. For example, on the days of making fire-break lines or guarding forests, the group particularly in the 'B' village would prefer to pay money to substitute for their own labor. They often do not involve in meeting or planning activities concerning to CBNRM unless the activities are possible to impact or annoy them. They often thought that natural conservation and protection is a duty of the state through related agencies especially DoNP, not local people.

On the other hand, some high-educated members (particularly in the 'C' village) do very active in resource protection activities as 'conservationists'. This semi-urban conservationists have overwhelmed by modern education, which seem to appreciate value of natural resources in terms of their pristine and educational values rather than cultural values in terms of the livelihood security of the poor people. Therefore, the increase of this group no matter their perception toward conservation and community management is quite sensitive and may be vulnerable to disadvantage groups in their local communities. And, in the 'C' village, the local officials expect to see in the future that this high-educated groups mostly in the lowland villages make pressure the upland villages or disadvantage villagers who mainly depends on upland areas for direct resource uses (especially on land) to limit land use. If this becomes working-out well, it can be impacted on livelihood security of the poor and the disadvantaged group particularly in the upland villages.

#### *Dependency on Natural Resources and CBNRM*

Within a village, there are some differences in specific resources dependencies (water users, upland users, and NTFPs' collectors) and population density, adaptability through institutional development. The differences within a village influence incentives and capacity of that village in natural resources management. In addition, it is found that the wider gaps of well-being within the village can influence in effective management of communities.



This can be illustrated that the rule setting in most lowland villages is for the benefits of water-user group while the most upland villages are dominated the collective-decisions by upland users. Similarly in consideration of their different dependence on land resources on resources' maintenance, the upland dependence (upland cultivators) are more recognized in their roles to prevent fire encroachment by making fire-break lines prior to open land for cropping as well as the lines to protect the forests nearby the settlement. On the other hand the lowland dependence (such as farmers) are more concerned to protect head-watershed forests in order to ensure enough water supply to their lowland fields.

## **Conclusion**

The government has claimed that there are the policies to promote people participation in resource management according the determination in the current constitution. However, most policies to promote and support community participation in resource management is still limited in protection, but not power in resource governance. Local communities do not have clear power in decision-making to develop their collective management; their management practices are not so well recognized by the local and national officials especially in the villages who approximately half-a-century settled in the upland areas. Under the efforts of many agencies (such as the National Park Office, Watershed Conservation Office) and the PFP to promulgate some types of protected areas, it can be called local "territorialization" in the name of 'conservation strategies'. Under the efforts of "territorialization" at the local level by the agencies and PFP, there are conflicts among them to gain power to control land and the benefits from that claimed. However, after the 'decentralizing' authorities and decision-making powers to SAOs, the power relationships within a community and that community with the local officials have been changed. However, the influencing on decision-making powers is still limited among formal leaders and better-off well-being groups.

In general understanding, community adaptation have many positives toward better land use and ability to manage the local resources under their collective decision-making. However, a community is not homogenous; it is different depending on their well-being, education, intensity and types (in specific to areas) of dependency on natural

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resources, etc. The community heterogeneity needs to be considered in the support and facilitation of community based natural resource management.

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