



**The Center for the Study of
Rural Populations and Forest Resources
(RUPAFOR)**

IFRICRC - Bangkok, Thailand

ACTIVITY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Center for the Study of Rural Populations and Forest Resources (RUPAFOR) was established in December 1999 at the Asian Institute of Technology, in collaboration with the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) program at Indiana University, USA.

RUPAFOR exists to apply novel research approaches to the continuing problem in SE Asia of how to manage dwindling forest resources in the face of increased population pressure, combined with the recognized need by governments to include humans into the equation of sustainable rural natural resource management. IFRI is highly relevant in SE Asian countries struggling with how to increase the success of community-based management schemes. Although the idea of "Community Management" or "Community Participation" has become prevalent throughout all political systems — from countries considered highly democratic to those considered less democratic — many community participation activities are simply not succeeding and require investigation for causes and solutions.

As an academic process, research incorporating IFRI / IAD methods will allow a politically neutral assessment of how communities interact with each other and their natural resources, and how policy can strengthen institutional arrangements crafted at the local level.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of RUPAFOR are:

- To conduct research on the social interactions within and among rural SE Asian communities, and the subsequent impact on forest cover, condition, and the status of the resources therein;
- To test current social and development theory through the acquisition of empirical data in rural environments of SE Asia;
- To build site-specific, relevant capacity at the local and district levels using results and experiences from the study areas.

The strategy of RUPAFOR is to achieve these objectives through Research, Education/Training, and Extension.

Research

Research is the core activity at RUPAFOR, as it supplies the relevant and critical information upon which adequate training and site-specific capacity building can occur. The research tool central to RUPAFOR is a novel, cross-cutting approach to collecting broad environmental and social data for quantitative analysis. The research method was developed by IFRI colleagues at Indiana University. Both social and biological hypotheses can be addressed at the community level using IFRI research, and RUPAFOR data are entered into the global IFRI database for future testing of larger hypotheses. Students undertaking research under the partial or full academic sponsorship of RUPAFOR use the IFRI method as part of their field research. Hence,

students will be adding to the database of RUPAFOR during their doctoral research, thereby making a substantial contribution to the global understanding of rural communities and forest resources in their particular region.

Education/Training

Doctoral students matriculating into the Agriculture Systems, Natural Resource Management, or Rural and Regional Development Fields of Study at AIT can choose academic supervision by RUPAFOR faculty. Students under RUPAFOR supervision will take a Special Studies course in their second term, where they will learn the social and biological theoretical underpinnings of the IFRI program, as well as the practical field methods to be used during research. Through their own research, the students will train field assistants for social and biological data collection, thereby increasing the skills of those participating.

Extension

RUPAFOR is committed to using empirical research to build capacity in rural regions of Asia. Extension by doctoral students and RUPAFOR faculty is the strategy through which this goal can be achieved. Doctoral students will be urged to return to field sites after their research to hold informal or formal community meetings, at which time the results will be disseminated to the community. Capacity building by RUPAFOR is seen as an interactive process initiated by the community itself, therefore under some conditions informal meetings may lead to in-depth, site-specific problem solving activities on subjects such as community self-organization, resource management/extraction, and collective action.

At a larger scale, RUPAFOR will also organize district-level and international symposia, designed to disseminate research results, and to inform policymakers and district resource managers about current advances in social and development theory.

PEOPLE

RUPAFOR is co-directed by Ganesh Shivakoti (Visiting Faculty, Agriculture Systems) and Edward Webb (Assistant Professor, Natural Resources Management). Doctoral students matriculating as advisees of the co-directors are associates of RUPAFOR. One student not matriculated under the directors is associated with RUPAFOR as his thesis on rural community forestry in the NWFP of Pakistan is highly germane to RUPAFOR interests, and led to a collaborative research project with RUPAFOR (see below).

Current Research Associates of RUPAFOR are:

Mr. Lam Dorji (*Bhutan*)

Mr. Ambika P. Gautam (*Nepal*)

Mr. Muhammad Khurshid (*Pakistan*)

Ms. Nitaya Kijtewachakul (*Thailand*)

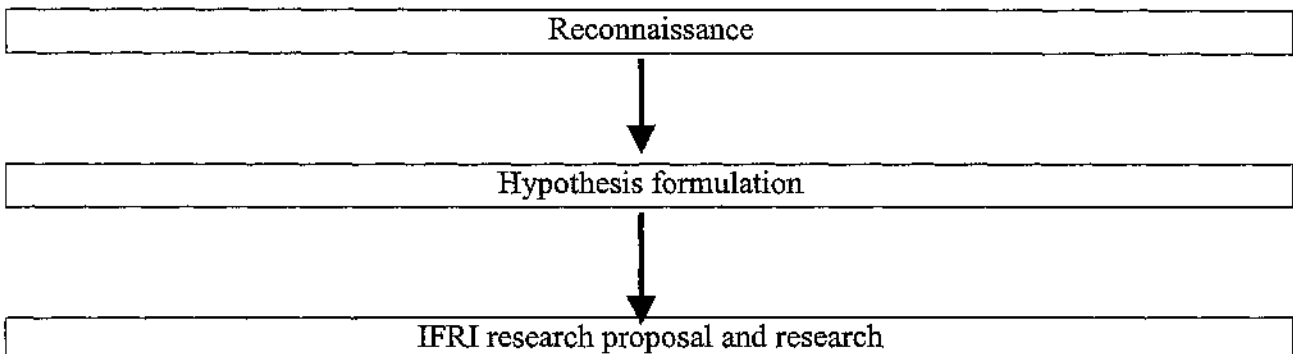
ACTIVITIES

Activities at RUPAFOR have included proposal submission, reconnaissance trips to potential focal countries, and training of Research Associates (PhD students).

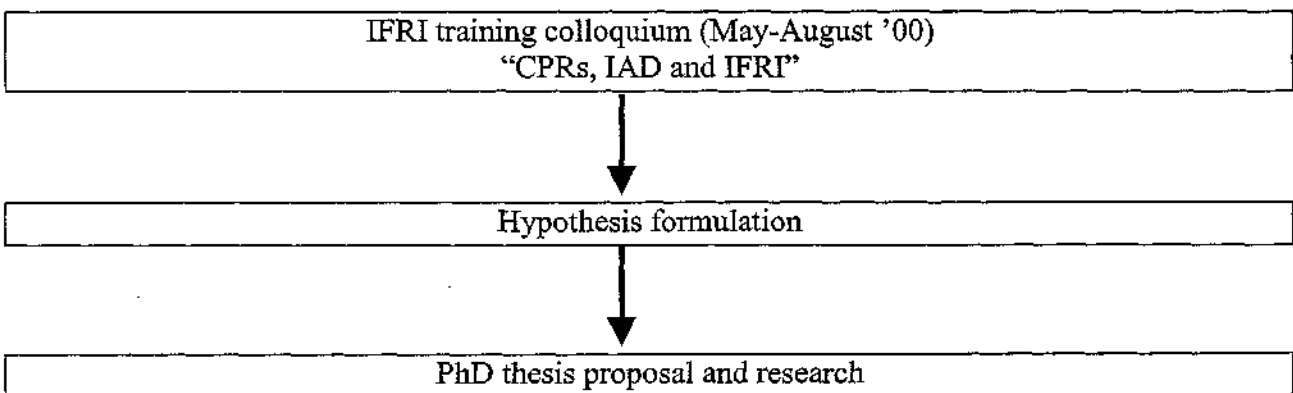
Proposals: Two major proposals were submitted to donors to provide institutional and activity support to RUPAFOR. While both proposals were well received and favorably reviewed, they were not successful in acquiring funds. The current focus for RUPAFOR activities are therefore limited to reconnaissance trips to potential focal countries, and AIT-supported training activities for doctoral students.

Reconnaissance and training: These two elements comprise part of the overall research agenda at RUPAFOR. Research and training strategies differ somewhat for faculty and the PhD Research Associates. The strategy is outlined below, with specific activities for reconnaissance (faculty) and training (students) explained later.

FACULTY RESEARCH



STUDENT RESEARCH



Reconnaissance

Research faculty have been successful in undertaking a number of reconnaissance trips, from which future research hypotheses and proposals will be constructed. Reconnaissance trips have been taken to the following destinations: Pakistan, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Nepal (although Nepal is covered by NFRI). Salient results of those trips, pertinent to the future of RUPAFOR / IFRI research, follow.

Pakistan

Overview: CPRs are increasing in importance in the Himal region of Pakistan, as the Forest Department seeks to increase local participation in the management of Guzara (community) forests. However, many obstacles exist in the road ahead, some of which stem from the fact that community-based management is not a historically prevalent form of forest management in many parts (*cf.* Nepal), and therefore the crafting of appropriate institutions is essentially *de novo*.

Reference:

Webb, EX., and Khurshid, M. Divergent destinies among pine forests in Northern Pakistan: linking ecosystem characteristics with community self-governance and local institutions. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*. In press.

Bhutan

Overview: National policy towards community-level forest management is supportive of CPR management. However, loopholes in forest policy as well as policies not directly related to forests have influenced the evolution of local management systems, resulting in the divergence from CPR management toward pseudo-privatization in many cases.

Lao PDR

Overview: The Integrated Watershed Development and Management Program at AIT will focus near-term educational / training investment in Lao PDR. Scholarships in IWDM to Laotian students are provided by DANIDA, and PhD students matriculating under Dr. Shivakoti in this program will become RUPAFOR associates. IFRI research in CPRs in Laos through PhD thesis work is therefore a possibility

Training

Training in the form of a Special Studies Colloquium at AIT from May - August 2000 is provided to PhD Research Associates. The objective of the colloquium is to expose the students to the subject of integrated research in rural situations using the IAD research framework and the IFRI protocol. The following subjects are being discussed:

- Institutional Analysis and the IAD framework
- Scale in research
- Socioeconomic research agenda, with reference to the IAD framework
- Common Pool Resources
- IFRI research methodology
- Examples of IFRI research

RUPAFOR PUBLICATIONS

Following is a list of relevant publications by RUPAFOR researchers. Although most of these were published prior to RUPAFOR, they nevertheless reflect common interest that led to the establishment of the Center.

In review

Webb, E.L. and Gautam, A.P. Effects of community forest management on the structure and diversity of a successional broadleaf forest in Nepal.

Webb, E.L., and Than, M.M. Optimizing investment strategies for coastal mangrove plantations in Myanmar by considering biological and economic parameters.

In press

Ghale, Y., G. Shivakoti and B. Upreti. "The Ecological Dynamics of Low-External-Input Agriculture: A Case Study of Hill Farming in Developing Country Setting." *Journal of Farming Systems Research-Extension*.

Matthews, S., G. Shivakoti and N.B. Chhetri. "The Impact of Population Growth on Land Use Change, Forest Utilization and Flora Biodiversity: Observations from Western Chitwan." *Society and Natural Resources*.

Webb, E.L., and Khurshid, M. Divergent destinies among pine forests in Northern Pakistan: linking ecosystem characteristics with community self-governance and local institutions. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*.

Published

Shivakoti, Ganesh, W.G. Axinn, P. Bhandari and N.B. Chhetri. 1999. "The Impact of Community Context on Land Use in an Agricultural Society." *Population and Environment* 20(3):191-213.

Barber, Jennifer, G. Shivakoti, W.G. Axinn and Kishor Gajurel. 1997. "Sampling Strategies for Rural Settings: A Detailed Example from the Chitwan Valley Family Study." *Nepal Population Journal* 6(5): 193-203.

Shivakoti, G., G. Varughese, E. Ostrom, A. Shukla and G. Thapa. 1997. People and Participation in Sustainable Development: Understanding the Dynamics of Natural Resource System. (Proceedings of an International Conference held at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science, Rampur, Nepal. 17-21 March, 1996). Bloomington, Indiana and Rampur, Chitwan.

Shivakoti, Ganesh. 1995. "Public Interventions and Support Services for Farmer-Managed Irrigation Systems in Nepal: Review of Some Selected Support Service Programs." *The Economic Journal of Nepal*. 18(3): 114-140.

Shivakoti, Ganesh. 1994. "Farmers' Perceptions of Performance in Farmer and Agency Managed Irrigation Systems in Nepal." *The Economic Journal of Nepal*. 17(2):85-108.

INFORMATION ON AIT

AIT originated in 1959 to help meet the growing need for advanced engineering education in Asia. In November 1967, under its present name of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), the Institute became an autonomous international institution empowered to award degrees and diplomas.

AIT offers:

- academic programs leading to the award of master or doctoral degrees, the diploma or certificates;
- research work by students, faculty, and professional staff;
- outreach activities in partnership with private and public sector institutions; and
- special programs, conferences, seminars, and short courses.

Completion of the doctoral degree program normally takes ten or eleven terms (three years or so), the master degree five terms, and the diploma two or three terms. A certificate program normally lasts one term.

The Institute's 160-hectare campus is located 42 kilometers north of, Thailand. Here, well over one thousand students, mostly from Asia, and 200 faculty and international staff, foster advanced technological learning to meet the need for more and better trained personnel for key positions in private and public sectors throughout the region. More than 10,000 AIT alumni already hold such positions.

The Institute is supported by donor governments, international agencies, foundations, business organizations and individuals, Asian and non-Asian. This support acknowledges AIT's successful academic endeavor, an endeavor recognized in several international awards, including, in its thirtieth anniversary year, 1989, the Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding, and in 1995, the Asian Institute of Management Award for Development Management.