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Forest Health under Institutional Development for Community-Based Upland Resource Management: Comparison of Villages in Lowland and Upland Settlement, Northern Thailand

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Abstract

This article is part of a research for a doctoral degree of the first author entitled institutional development for community-based upland resource management. The study has been carried out at Sopsai sub-watershed (in Nan Watershed), Nan province, Northern Thailand.

By comparison between Nahai, a lowland settlement village, and Huamuang, an upland settlement in terms of background, livelihood, and institutions in association with forests, it can pinpoint at critical issues in intervention to institutional development for community-based forest resource management in Northern Thailand, a part of the mountainous mainland region in Asia.

Although Huang-muang has been settled for 20 years and Hahai only for a few, there is no difference in forest health. But the greater succession in Hua-muang forest may be caused by management practices of Sopsai watershed management unit and villagers' fire protection. The forest areas in Nahai village are divided into 2 zones: conservation zone (CZ) and utilization zone (UZ). The analysis of forest resources yielded the following results: **(1)** there are no differences in forest health between UZ and CZ, **(2)** there are better regeneration and biodiversity in CZ than UZ, but **(3)** UZ showed a higher total density of prefered timber species than CZ, and **(4)** considering 5–10 major firewood species, there was a higher density and basal area (etc.) in UZ than in CZ.

These findings emphasize the importance of collective decisions with respect to rules and regulations for forest resources, health and improvement of resource management by the authorities of the communities themselves. The processes of interventions for institutional development towards community based approaches are synthesized. In addition, further research needs for supporting sustainable community-based upland resource management are identified.

Keywords: Biodiversity, common property, community-based approach, institutional development, livelihood, private property, tenureship, Thailand, upland resource management

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