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Forest Plantation Management between Centralized and Participatory Planning — A Case Study of East Pegu Yoma Project, Myanmar

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Abstract

Myanmar is one of the top ten teak planting countries. Although the plantations cannot replace all functions of natural forests, they are necessary for combating deforestation and providing increased demand of basic needs and individual wood, especially in tropical developing countries. The overall objective of this study is to contribute better strategies for plantation management in Myanmar. The study was carried out in a large-scale teak (*Tectona grandis*) plantation project on degraded natural forest area in Myanmar. Personal interviews were done with three major interest groups of EPP: the planner, the field level staff and the effected local people. A small-scale one-shot inventory was also conducted to examine the impacts of forest dwellers on nearby plantations. Research findings indicate that the planning process of EPP was carried out by a group of professionals without discussion with other interest groups. Young foresters who were assigned by the Forest department implemented the project. Local people were involved in the project only as temporary labour. Project administration was a top-down bureaucratic system and there were no transparent relations and interaction between these actors. As a consequence, a considerable amount of negative human impacts were observed in EPP plantations and the project could not achieve its expectations. Although there are some limitations and constraints for the participatory approach in Myanmar, it is important to start from a point that is suitable for current political and social economic conditions. Perspectives of all actors have to be investigated and social aspects must be included in future plantation management. Local communities must have the opportunity to participate in planning, management and benefit sharing activities of plantations.

Keywords: Forest plantation, Myanmar, participatory planning