



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2018, Ghent

“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

The Role of Forest Income in Mitigating Poverty and Inequality in Natma Taung National Park

PYI SOE AUNG, JÜRGEN PRETZSCH, ECKHARD AUCH

*Technische Universität Dresden, Inst. of International Forestry and Forest Products: Tropical Forestry,
Germany*

Abstract

Forests provide important sources of rural livelihoods. However, the degree of contribution varies across communities, particularly when households have different rights in accessing forest resources. Understanding this variation is important for policy makers for developing further regulations to achieve both conservation and development goals. This study investigates the role of forest income in mitigating poverty and income inequality among three indigenous communities living inside, bordering, and outside the Natma Taung National Park located in southern Chin State, Myanmar. The study is designed as comparative analysis drawing on 50 randomly selected households from each community. First, both formal and informal regulations for the removal of forest products were identified. Later, the three FGT (Foster—Greer—Thorbecke) poverty indices with and without forest income across communities were compared. Finally, marginal effects of forest income on local inequality were analysed by using Gini decomposition method. Results indicate that forest income plays a significant role in mitigating poverty and inequality across three communities. Comparative analysis shows that households living inside and bordering the park receive higher forest income than those living outside the park ($\chi^2=16.27$, $p < 0.001$). The relative contributing of forest income is about 49 %, 39 %, and 29 % of total income respectively ($\chi^2=14.56$, $p < 0.001$). The effect of forest income on reducing poverty is higher in households living inside the park than households bordering and outside the park. In terms of marginal effect on income inequality, only households living outside the park show equalising effect on total Gini by forest income. This indicates that promotion of forest income for households living inside and bordering the park is likely to increase income inequality within each community. The study suggests that under the existing management system, the national park does not increase local poverty as it is perceived by general public. However, it has increased local inequality by motivating the use of forest resources due to tenure insecurity and declining traditional institutions. The study recommends policy makers to strengthen local institutions to improve sustainable resource use and reduce social inequality.

Keywords: Forest income, inequality, Myanmar, poverty, protected area