



Seminar Report

People First in Tropical Forests? Are We on the Right Track?

September 25, 2013, Conference Centre "De Reehorst", Ede, the Netherlands

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1. Background, objectives and programme

The focus of this Seminar - the seventh - was on sustainable forestry development approaches that are rooted in real life situations, perspectives and potentials of people and their forests in situ. Despite more than 25 years of experiences with participatory and community forestry 'classical' forestry' characterized by top-down approaches and looking "from outside – in"- are still dominant.

For people living in forested areas the forest is crucial for their livelihood. Their security of existence goes far beyond the monetary side of the economy. The forest delivers building materials, fuel and many other non-timber forest products. Especially food is important, with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity: the forest is a supermarket *avant la lettre*. The local setting is often not specifically formulated, let alone institutionalized. Land tenure, for example, is not clear in many cases. Local people often have no (formal) say over what is happening to the forest.

Recent developments such as land grabbing have drawn attention to situations where local interests are often not recognized and overrun by more powerful actors. Globalization is a virtue for many, but the increasing number of new actors, most of them coming from outside, make it sometimes feel like business in colonial times. In REDD+ the details of the people may be described in the most minute way, however such programmes will only work if starting from the local situation.

Purpose

The objective of this seminar was to demonstrate that acknowledging and starting from local realities, needs and arrangements in developing sustainable forestry models – and finding the right balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches -is an opportunity and a need, and that it is feasible and doable. Not taking seriously local people's realities, needs and interests and the complexities of rural life is a risk of failure. The seminar aimed to increase our understanding on the common pitfalls and best practices when developing policies, or when private companies, NGO and other external parties directly engage with local actors. In other words what are viable approaches to make use of the best of two worlds.

This seminar is the seventh in a series of annual events on ***Sustainable Forest Management in the Tropics. Are We on the Right Track?*** It is jointly organized by Utrecht University (Prince Bernhard Chair), Wageningen University (Forestry groups), Tropenbos International, Dutch Association of Tropical Forests (VTB), the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Programme

The seminar was chaired by **Helias Udo de Haes**, *Institute of Environmental Sciences (CML), Leiden University*. The programme consisted of the following elements:

Session 1: Understanding Local Practices, consisting of following presentations:

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| 1. Negotiating Timber in DR Congo | Charlotte Benneker, <i>Freelance researcher</i> |
| 2. Chainsaw logging in Gabon & Cameroon | Jaap van der Waarde, <i>World Wide Fund for Nature</i> |
| 3. Shell Nigeria: working with communities and local representatives | Sola Abulu, <i>Shell International Exploration and Production</i> |
| 4. Reforestation in Malindang, Philippines | Anton Stortelder, <i>Alterra, Wageningen University</i> |

Session 2: People First in Tropical Forests?

Meaningful engagement beyond rhetoric - Promises and Pitfalls

René Boot, *Tropenbos International*

Session 3: Interactive Panel Discussion

Panellists:

1. Verina Ingram, *Wageningen UR, Agricultural Economics Institute (LEI)*
2. Bas Clabbers, *Senior policy advisor climate change at Ministry of Economic Affairs*
3. Vanessa Linforth, *Social Policy Manager, FSC International*
4. Freerk Wiersum, *Wageningen UR*

Participation

The meeting was attended by around 110 participants from public and private sectors, education and research entities and NGOs. For the list of participants, see Annex 1:

2. Highlights of the presentations

2.1 Charlotte Benneker – Negotiating Timber in DR Congo – the reality mismatch

This presentation was about artisanal logging in DR Congo. Artisanal logging in this region is not necessarily what one imagines; logging at a commercial scale takes place under illegal 'artisanal' permits. However, logging is locally controlled in the sense that it is regulated by the population itself with very little government control. In the region where Charlotte worked, most logging takes place at a smaller scale in a complex production chain where there are continuously changing power relations between forest owners, logging companies, temporary employees (that shift between the diamond and logging industry), government officials and traders. Every step in the production chain is negotiated, and the outcomes of these negotiations are strongly influenced by the economic, social and political conditions existing at the time of negotiation. For example, the larger the logging activity that a company wants to do, the higher up in the system of power they must go to get things arranged. Payments to the local forest owners highly depend on market pressure; the higher the pressure, the more negotiations take place between forest owners and loggers, but the higher the loggers are in the political or social hierarchy, the less room forest owners have to negotiate.

However, the forest owners should definitely not be seen as victims, as they have power to negotiate with the artisanal loggers over which trees are cut and what price they get for the timber, but this power is quite variable. They are also very well-organized. More appropriate than an image of victims is an image of creativity, exemplified by the common practice to use disabled people to transport goods across the border because they are exempted from paying taxes. In this system, it also makes no sense to speak of the local and non-local, because it is one big complex system with intertwining layers that has been build up over a long history.

This common practice in artisanal logging implies that top-down legal frameworks cannot grasp the complexity and flexibility of the current market; it can only legalise what is already existing. Policies

can guide but not define the system. In a sense, this is what is already happening in DR Congo. Charlotte would even go as far as to call this true *governance*, especially if you compare it to more authoritative governments.

Question: But is the artisanal logging system sustainable in ecological terms? This does not seem to be considered by the people locally, but for now it is because only the big trees are taken and a lack of roads ensures a lack of access to the largest part of the forest.

2.2 Jaap van der Waarde - Chainsaw logging in Gabon & Cameroon

Jaap described the development and results of community forest management (CFM) projects supported by WWF in Cameroon and Gabon. He also showed a short movie containing interviews with community members. In Cameroon, community forestry is included in legislation since 1994, but community forestry only took off since 2004 and gradually increased since then. In 2009, rules for community forestry were simplified. WWF supports community forest management in 60 communities, and has assisted in the establishment of >40 forest management plans and >50 permits. Activities and management plans are also bundles for groups of communities. Difficulties with CFM in Cameroon include heavy paperwork, low capacity (especially entrepreneurial skills), the weak business case of CFM and the small market share. In 2013, WWF also started supporting CFM in Gabon. The outlook for CFM in these African countries is that (1) there is a need for capacity building; (2) the diversity of income sources, including NTFPs and REDD+ needs to be taken into account and (3) VPA/FLEGT may stimulate the development of community forest management.

2.3 Sola Abulu: working with communities and local representatives

Sola gave an overview of the diversity of ethnic groups, the population size, the geographic diversity and the range of environmental problems of Nigeria. Her talk was not about forests, but about how local communities can be more centrally and actively involved in operations that affect their land and resources. Shell has made a shift in its policy in Nigeria. Shell's policy used to be rather top-down: communities would be informed about options for assistance from Shell's part, then they would be involved in the execution of the activities and they would be empowered in conducting these activities. Now, the approach is very different: communities now tell what they need, obtain funds from Shell and execute activities. In this way, Shell obtains a 'social license to operate'.

2.4 Anton Stortelder - Reforestation in Malindang, Philippines

Anton presented the approach and results of a reforestation project by "Trees for all" on Mindanao island, the Philippines. This project started with a biodiversity research project, in which the local forest types and tree species were inventoried. Then the suitability of native species for planting and reforestation was evaluated. In the reforestation project, 40 ha is planted annually with seedlings from a variety of species, raised in nurseries from seeds collected in nearby forest patches. The project includes a scholarship programme, involves 300 local persons and foresees in a continuous payment for tending and planting. Local involvement and profit for the local community are essential for the success of the project.

2.5 Rene Boot - Meaningful engagement beyond rhetoric -Promises and Pitfalls

Rene summarized some of the messages of the four previous presentations:

- *Understand local realities.* The most important message in all presentations was the importance of understanding local realities. Access to resources is dependent on a complex interaction of economic, political and social realities. Negotiation power is also dependent on rules and regulations, meaning that particular laws can empower particular parties in the negotiations, such as government officials.

- *Cost of compliance to legal frameworks often exceeds benefits.* Embedding community forestry in a legal framework can be a good way to organise sustainable forestry, however it often comes with high costs for those who use the framework, especially in small-scale community forestry. Heavy processes of bureaucracy reduce the net benefit that communities could get and outside assistance is needed to organise things on the ground to fit the legal framework. In many cases, such legal frameworks have failed, such as in Bolivia. There, a new forest law offered many provisions for locals, but there were too many difficulties to comply with technical and administrative requirements. Regulations and certification come with a high cost, and seem to work best for large forest concessions, which fit into a simple market where consumers want certified products and the producer can comply to regulations. For small producers it is much more difficult to comply.
- *Take broader livelihood into perspective instead of just focusing on forestry.* Organizations involved in forest conservation tend to just focus on forestry as a local income source, but in reality people depend on a variety of resources for their income. In community forestry management, the broader livelihoods of people should be taken into account instead of just focusing on forestry.
- *Formalizing customary practices.* Taking local realities into account also means that when legislation is made, it should be by formalizing customary practices instead of expecting local practices to fit an external legal framework.
- *Understand social reality: take religious or clan power into consideration.* When local practices are to be changed or understood, then local institutions such as religion or family clans should be given more attention. Peoples' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours are oftentimes strongly influenced by these institutions, so these structures can also be used to learn about practices and resolve conflicts.

3. Panel discussion

Panelists were asked three main questions:

- (1) What should we stop doing ?
- (2) What should we do better or change?
- (3) Who should take action?

Verina Ingram:

- We should stop thinking in terms of phases. Initiatives like REDD and FSC are no magical solutions.
- We should learn more from past experiences
- We should *ask* people what they want to do. Forest should be taken into account in all its uses and communities should be seen as a wider group of users. Take a livelihood approach. (Forests are not the centre of the world). We should look at the whole livelihood of local communities. Communities are not a homogenous group of people. There may not be one representative.

Bas Clabbers:

- We should change the theory, since it is not useful to change all practices.
- Detailed rules on how local communities should be included in plans do not work. You have to take into account the specific circumstances in each separate case.
- Perhaps REDD is too costly. Whether REDD is successful or not, depends on its specific objectives.
- Providing false information to local communities by NGO's and other civil society organisations should stop (e.g. regarding REDD, where people are afraid that they are 'kicked off' their land)
- Don't solve conflicts on international level, but on local level.
- Representatives of local communities are not always advocating interests of the community
- Stop patronizing governments of developing countries. Who are we to tell them what to do?

Vanessa Linforth:

- Who are 'we' in these questions?
- Smaller communities are more difficult to reach.
- In the FSC criteria 'consultation' recently has been changed to 'engagement' and 'participation'. Also 'free prior consent' has been adapted. This means that they are not just consulted, but they are given rights to say no to a plan. Also 'local training' is now part of the criteria.
- Instead of a tool of the market, make it a tool for communities, also including political aspects and tenure rights
- Southern recognized products can be interesting. Public procurement can for example refer to community forestry.

Freerk Wiersum:

- We need to recognize that next to forest reserves, there are also forested landscapes and rural forests. Many local communities have adapted forests to their own needs.
- Before, the belief was that we should simply manage forests for livelihoods of locals. Now, we recognize that community forestry can also provide commercial products. Therefore they must be able to harvest and manage their forest sustainably. This can be reached through partnerships with other organizations (market, NGO, government) and sustainable learning processes for these local communities. We should aim for a forest sustainable enterprise management to integrate economics with conservation.
- We must recognize the role of community and rural forests.

4. Plenary Discussion

In the concluding plenary discussions participants shared their observations and put questions to the panelists.

Participants

- We might be implementing our own wishes. These local communities have their own needs and motivation. We should not patronize local communities. Who are we to tell them what to do? In order for communal forestry to work on the long term, the people have to have an intrinsic reason to participate in sustainable development.
- If we really want to help the local communities, we must stop thinking from our own perspectives and start to consider the realities of tropical developing countries.

Vanessa Linforth

- The question is, whether the development of the company needs to be a part of certification. A lot of small forest enterprises failed to keep their certificate.
- FSC starts with a partnership programme next year, together with FAO. And FSC also starts a 2 year training programme for smallholders.

Freerk Wiersum

- We can't expect that communities can do everything. They have a lot of capacities. Other aspects they can leave to partnerships (NGOs, social responsible enterprises). FSC learned from her experiences. A good initiative is for example FSC and Fairtrade.

Question from the audience

Why develop economic activities next door to national parks ?

- Answer from the audience (Petra Hamers): Surely it is a way to save the forest, because people show efforts to save their forest. Look for example to Guatemala.
- Freerk: We can't separate nature and people. We take an integral reality as a starting point.
- Verina: Take into account local realities.
- Charlotte: In addition to Verina's remark likes to add: don't overestimate our importance. Our real impact is quite reduced. People should eat.

Remark from the audience (Leo van der Vlist)

Some communities commercialize their products already (example rubber in Kalimantan). But people need to decide themselves what they want to do.

Remark from the audience (Roos Niepels, Rich Forests):

Make productive forests. Orient to more than one species. Also create forests (for example in combination with tea plantations) in addition to the remaining forest.

Remark from the audience:

Economic benefits are important for people/communities. In for example a project on 'green gold' in Colombia it appeared the reason that people participated was the economic benefits rather than environmental reasons.

Remark from the audience:

Will REDD+ work ? We need the people. It is a question of supply and demand. He expects that theory will meet practice by involvement of local communities. Governments need to recognize this.

- Freerk: Also in FLEGT this is the case. Tropical countries are also interested in livelihood needs. Take this into account as starting point.

Remark from the audience (Marielos Peña Claros, WUR)

Small companies in the Netherlands complained about the costs of FSC certification and absence of a premium.

A member of the board of FSC Netherlands: this has been solved.

Marielos replies to this that exactly this is the case: How can we expect communities in tropical countries to pay the costs, while in the Netherlands they are complaining and matters are being arranged ?

Verina:

- Don't take communities as a homogenous group ! Several representatives can be important for several matters. Rather, take a community as a 'group of users'.
- Remark from the audience: This is a good recommendation, but it is not new. Why is it not happening and aren't we learning from past experiences ?
- Verina: The cause of this is mainly that the North has the resources and the power; and people in the forest are mostly the poorest people.

Remark from the audience:

People need to have an intrinsic motivation to conserve the forest. But is this what they really want? If they want to buy a motor cycle instead of saving the forest is this also okay ? Do we trust local people? We can only ask people what they want and make them realize the consequences of their actions.

Remark from the audience (Jaap van der Waarde, WWF):

'If we want to save biodiversity, we have to embrace economic development' (Economist). Sustainable and economic development can go hand in hand. Use our example in Western Europe as an example: economic growth and increase of sustainability (return of the wolf and other species).

Freerk Wiersum:

Also small companies must be allowed to the international market. It would be social injustice not to let them. Projects need not only to be adapted to local communities, local communities can also adapt to the international society.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Surname	First Name	Organization
Abulu	Sola	Shell International Exploration and Production
Alves	Jorge	
Antoine	Juliette	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Ayana	Alemayehu	WUR
Behte	Eike	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Benneker	Charlotte	Freelance researcher
Berlo, van	Martijn	Master Student UU
Beukeboom	Hans	WWF Netherlands
Biru	Jemberu	WUR
Bodegom, van	Arend Jan	WUR
Boelens	Marjolein	Anthropologist
Boer, de	Menno	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Boot	René	Tropenbos International
Bos	Tim	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Brasser	Andre	Beagle Solutions
Bruil	Carla	Tropenbos International
Caffaro	Felipe	
Clabbers	Bas	Ministry of Economic Affairs
Cook	William	WUR
Dang	Thi Kim Phung	Student WUR
Dielissen	Esther	Student UU
Diemont	Rosa	Van Hall Larenstein
Duden	Anna Sarah	33 Forest Capital Student Forest and Nature Conservation
Duuren, van	Ilse	
Fermont	Tanita	Student UU
Geerling	Chris	Carnbee Consulting
Geerling	Dieke	WeversGeerling
Ginneken, van	Pieter	
Goor, van	Wouter	Face the Future
Goot, van der	Chris	ECOHOUT
Graaf, de	Maartje	Student UU
Groenendijk	Peter	WUR
Haase	Myrthe	SMK
Hamers	Petra	ICCO
Herdoiza	Natalie	Student UU
Hesen	Robbert	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Hulsen, van	Sandra	Van Hulsen Consulting
IJff	Stéphanie	Student UU
Ingram	Verina	LEI, WUR
Jezeer	Rosalien	UU
Jiang	Qijun	
Jobse	Judith	Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein
Koster	Harko	WWF Netherlands
Kuper	Jaap	
Lammerts van Bueren	Erik	ISAFOR

Surname	First Name	Organization
Leek	Nico	
Lent, van	Jeffrey	CIFOR
Linforth	Vanessa	FSC International
Lohbeck	Madelon	WUR
Louwers	Evelien	Student UU Institute for Environmental
Maas Geesteranus	Fieke	Security
Meer, van der	Iris	Student WUR
Meer, van der	Peter	WUR
Meijboom	Marianne	ETC
Mijland	Wouter	
Murillo	Julian	
Nijpels-Cieremans	Roos	Rich Forests / Both ENDS
Oldenkamp	Leffert	
Oostrum, van	Willeke	EDC
Paulino de Carmo	Isaias Emilio	Student
Pelinck	E.	
Pena Claros	Marielos	WUR
Perdijk	Bryndis	
Pesch	Gerard	WUR
Pietersen	Sjoerd	Van Hall Larenstein
Prillwitz	Onno	
Raphaelli	Joao Gabriel	Student
Renes	Gertjan	
Rijt, van de	Appie	TU Dresden
Romein	Ben	FSC Nederland
Romijn	Erika	WUR
Rompaey, van	Renaat	WIX
Runia	Simon	VITACARBON
Sande, van der	Masha	WUR
Savenije	Herman	Tropenbos International Ministerie van Buitenlandse
Schaik, van	Marion	Zaken
Scheele	Fleur	SOMO
Schneemann	Jochem	FSAS
Schröder	Tom	
Sleen, van der	Peter	WUR
Snoep	Martijn	Face the Future
Souren	Ingrid	Student UU
Sousa de Moraes		
Sarmiento	Arina	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Stok, van der	Louise	Student WUR
Stortelder	Anton	Alterra, WUR
Teheux	Coco	Student
Tinhout	Bas	Wetlands International
Top	Ellen	Tropenbos International
Topper	Egger	Topperspective bvba
Torren, van der	Vivian	Student Van Hall Larenstein
Tosto	Ambra	student UU

Surname	First Name	Organization
Udo Haes, de	Helias	Institute of Environmental Sciences, Leiden University
Veen, van	Huib	PEFC NL
Veen, van der	Frida	eLigna
Veening	Wouter	Institute for Environmental Security
Vellema	Hans	Tropenbos International
Ven, van de	Ad	Hogeschool Windesheim
Vijge	Marjanneke	WUR
Vlam	Mart	WUR
Vletter, de	Jaap	Van Hall Larenstein
Vlist, van der	Leo	Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples
Waarde, van der	Jaap	World Wide Fund for Nature
Wal, van der	Wilg	
Wiersum	Freerk	WUR
Wilson	Stanfort	Rijkswaterstaat
Wits	Tjeerd	Global Canopy Programme
Wolfgang	Richard	WOLF Consulting & Evaluations
Zambon	Paul	S-FOR-S
Zomer	Peter	VTB board member
Zuidema	Pieter	WUR
Zuijlen, van	Kristel	Student UU

Annex 2: Abstracts

1. Negotiating Timber in DR Congo - The reality mismatch

Charlotte Benneker, *Free-lance researcher*

The presentation is based on studies on artisanal logging in the Oriental Province in DR Congo implemented by Tropenbos DR Congo. Results show the involvement of multiple types of actors in the production chain of artisanally produced timber whereby chainsaws are used to process logs. It is especially interesting to observe how changing social, economic and political circumstances alter the negotiation power of actors to access resources and benefit from them. The focus of this presentation will be on how rules and regulations are used in the negotiations by government officials and their implications for the effectiveness of international initiatives aiming to realize change through legal reform.

2. Chainsaw logging in Gabon & Cameroon: the potential for Community Forestry

Jaap van der Waarde, *World Wide Fund for Nature*

Deforestation is globally still leading to loss of high biodiversity areas and impacting negatively on livelihoods of local communities. The logging sector which has seen some major improvements in the last decades (more management and less extraction, better working conditions for forest workers, more dialogue with communities, etc.) is still partly to blame and producing countries have taken measures to make the sector more sustainable.

In Cameroon, half the timber production is from the permanent forest domain, part of the formal economy and mostly destined for export. The other half is chainsaw logging from the informal sector, which is poorly governed. Giving local people authority over forest resources might improve the sector, and Cameroon was the first country in the Congo Basin to establish a legal framework for Community Forestry. Nearly ten years later there are now some 650.000 ha of forest being exploited by communities under legal title, covering 21% of the non-permanent forest domain. WWF-Cameroon works on Community Forestry in almost all of its programs. Results show that Community Forests do have the potential to bring additional income to communities and at the same time an opportunity to provide legal timber to the domestic market. Management plans should ensure ecological sustainability of the timber species targeted. Several challenges still hamper achieving the full intended benefits of Community Forestry. A lack of entrepreneurial spirit and capacities with the local communities and heavy bureaucracy make these Forest Enterprises highly dependent on outside assistance, and vulnerable to abuse. The costs of respecting the Community Forestry structures and fiscal obligations are higher than for a commercial logger who operates in the informal economy, hence reducing the economic viability of Community Forests.

In Gabon there have been pilots with Community Forestry and the legal framework is only now being put in place. First results indicate that it will take time before Community Forestry can produce significant volumes of timber to the market. In the meantime the stakeholder participation processes around the negotiations and implementation of the Voluntary Partnership Agreements in both Gabon and Cameroon result in raised awareness within civil society and real participation the national forestry debate. The VPA process is expected to improve the governance of the forest sector and when it does it will undoubtedly make a huge difference for the social and economic viability of community forestry in the region.

- Community Forestry has become a significant source of timber from the Non-Permanent Forest Domain in Cameroon
- Community Forestry provides jobs and some income for communities in the poorest parts of the country.
- Community Forestry could become a source of legal wood for the domestic market
- The Community Forestry system in Cameroon is heavy
- Poor governance in the timber sector and lack of entrepreneurial skills hamper economic viability of many Forest Enterprises.
- In Gabon the process of Community Forestry has just started and will need time to provide significant volumes for the timber market.

3. Shell Nigeria – Working with communities and local representatives

Sola Abulu, *International Relations Manager, Nigeria – Shell International Exploration & Production*

Each year, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and its joint venture partners, invest in social projects and programmes in communities primarily in the Niger Delta. The initial investments were in agricultural development programmes and have grown to include health care, roads and civil infrastructure, water projects, small businesses and education, which benefit hundreds of thousands of people. Over the years, SPDC has improved on how it engages with local communities to deliver these projects. In 2006, it introduced a new way of working with communities called the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU). The GMoUs represent an important shift in approach, placing emphasis on more transparent and accountable processes, regular communication with the grassroots, sustainability and conflict prevention.

- The GMoU is a written statement between SPDC and a group of several communities.
- Under the terms of the agreement, the communities decide the development they want, while SPDC provides secure funding for five years.
- Communities implement the projects through a transparent governance structure, while SPDC provides access to development experts to oversee implementation and build local capacity.
- This system replaces the previous approach where SPDC agreed to hundreds of separate development projects with individual communities and managed them directly and separately.
- The accountability in the GMoU model provides a good platform for other local and international donor agencies to directly fund development projects.

4. Reforestation in Malindang, the Philippines

Anton Stortelder, *Alterra, Wageningen University*

- Scientific research on Mnt. Malindang in the BRP-project (Biological Research Program) from 2000-2005
- Initiative of Aart and Anton to write a project proposal for reforestation of the mountain based on research results.
- Integrated approach, various aspects (employment, awareness building, biodiversity, water shed, carbon sequestration).
- Adaptation of the proposal by *Trees for All* (www.treesforall.info/; formerly Trees for Travel) and preparing contracts between Trees for All and the Philippine partner (letter of intent).
- After signing of the first contract start of the plantations (50 ha per year).
- Implementation with local people (300 workers); payments for plantations and for forest maintenance, during 30 yrs.
- Management by Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) with representatives of the locals barangay captains, regional stakeholders, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).
- Yearly control, evaluation and discussion on improvement of the project organization.
- Results: new plantations, scholarship, awareness (importance of the old growth forest), improvement of economic and social life.