

Future Directions of Small-scale and Community-based Forestry

Report from the IUFRO 2013 Conference on Future Directions of Small-scale and Community-based Forestry, 8-13 September, Fukuoka, Japan, a joint effort of the Small-scale Forestry Research Group (3.08.00) and the Working Party on Gender Research in Forestry (6.08.01), sponsored by the Japanese Forest Economic Society

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Community-based forestry and small-scale forestry are of key importance for sustaining sound forest management in both developed and developing countries. Small-scale forestry provides important environmental protection, landscape conservation and rural development benefits as well as timber production in many countries. However, small-scale forestry faces major challenges in developed and semi-developed countries, especially associated with aging of the population, declining birthrates, depopulation, and unemployment in rural districts.

In many countries, small and fragmented forestland ownership is quite common. In some countries, communal forest ownership as a residue from feudal eras is still alive and has been managed by rural communities. On the one hand, such communal forests or commons may be considered as a pre-modern and inefficient style of ownership which is likely to disappear under the market economy. On the other hand, communal forests offer a variety of possibilities for the conservation of ecological landscapes or healthy rural development.

When looking at developing countries, in some cases there have been moves for forest land tenure/ownership to be distributed to communities or individuals with the rapid acceleration of decentralizing policy in the forestry sector. Under such circumstances, researchers are struggling to analyze and understand how to accomplish a successful management of community-based forestry. To better understand the present situation and the future challenges of small-scale forestry as well as different types of community-based forestry, a gender perspective is needed.

Such a gender perspective was discussed at the conference on *Future Directions of Small-scale and Community-based Forestry* in Fukuoka, Japan, where the following issues were addressed:

- a) Roles of small-scale and community-based forestry for rural development
- b) Theoretical and conceptual issues of small-scale and community-based forestry
- c) Landowners' attitudes toward forest management
- d) Consolidation of forest practices to overcome fragmented land
- e) Women's participation in community-based forestry
- f) Activities of women's organizations for sustainable forest management
- g) Agroforestry & non-timber forest products
- h) Land tenure & traditional inheritance system
- i) Modification of traditional community-based forestry
- j) Activities of forest owners' cooperatives
- k) Education & communication in forestry
- l) Timber markets and distribution systems



Group photo by Kimihiko Hyakumura

In the course of the conference participants were made aware of the reality of small-scale forest owners in many developed countries who have been suffering from aging and depopulation of their villages, as well as from decreasing forest income and increasing dependence on other income sources. They also noted the need to understand the changes in forest owner's attitudes toward forest and the progressive grouping of forest owners, and the need to support forest owners' cooperatives and consolidation measures in each country.

Participants also confirmed that the issues of small-scale forestry and community-based forestry can be discussed on a new common ground by adding a gender perspective, which will lead them to new directions. As the ratio of female forest owners in European countries and the U.S. has grown recently, studies on the difference of attitudes of men and women toward forest and the roles of female forest owner groups are getting more important. It was found, however, that the ratio of female forest owners varies from country to country and that women are also interested in other forest functions, while policies and measures are centered on timber production.

In addition to these findings which indicate that women's participation is indispensable to community-based forestry and that women are highly interested in non-timber forest products (NTFP) in developing countries, many other studies to further understand community forestry were announced including a case study on the difference in forest resource management between women's groups and mixed gender groups.

Presentations of the conference are available at:
<http://ffpsc.agr.kyushu-u.ac.jp/policy/IUFRO/program.html>