The Direction of Thailand's Implementation of Its Forest Policy: A Case Study of India's Joint Forest Management

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Abstract

This research aimed to study applying the Joint Forest Management (JFM) program, which is India's implementation of its National Forest Policy, to the forest-related problems in Thailand, such as policies, planning, and organization. This program successfully engaged local communities to co-conduct forest management activities with the Forestry Department, with parallel emphases on counter-poverty community management and forest conservation. Although the JFM program involves complex procedures, certain managerial aspects, based on the research's analysis, can be applied to the Thai context by the JFM approach gives communities the authority to manage the forests, protection of existing forests, curbing of forest encroachment because of farmland expansion, restoration of biodiversity, and national park networks. In this collaborative system, the community forest team is supposed to work closely with village headmen and subdistrict chiefs, just as the Indian JFM Committee works for hand in hand with the Panchayati Raj.

Keywords: Forestry, Management, Monitoring, Policy and Law, Forest Policy

Introduction

From 1985 to 2016, Thailand had no clear forest management policies. Attempts to protect forest areas failed, resulting in a continuous decrease in forest areas from 38.67% in 1976 to 30.52% in 1982. The first national forest policy was begun to propose by National Forest Policy Commission in 1985. This policy marked the start of public-private cooperation in forest management, which in turn would lead to developing a master plan and relevant operational strategies. However, it had some shortcomings.

As Thailand's economy expanded, the state's restriction of wood and land to commercially profitable activities by the public and private sectors widened the gap between urban and rural communities. Deforestation and destruction of other natural resources rose due to the expansion of commercial cultivation and increase in forest-encroaching projects. Forest losses were not primarily caused by population growth, ordinary farmers' expansion of farmland or hill-tribes slash-and-burn practice, but were significantly linked to the state's 1) approach to infrastructural development; 2) failure to properly allocate forest resources; and 3) granting of 'commercial forest' licenses to major private operators through reforestation projects implemented based on the National Economic and Social Development Plans, one of whose goals was to increase forest areas to 40% of the country's total area (National Forest Policy, 1985).

2017, another significant turning point in Thailand's forest policy occurred during the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan. This plan was grounded in the principles of sufficiency, economy, sustainable development, and human-center development and intended to serve as a mechanism to propel development. Therefore, the government must adopt an integrated developmental approach to putting the plan into efficient practice.

The fact that neither the access nor the right to exploitation of natural resources is somewhat granted has led to inequality, conflicts, and local-level disputes between the state, the private, and the community sectors.   Although this policy did not indicate the country's total forest area, it stipulated the rights and restrictions concerning the utilization of forests, which were classified into four types conservation forests; 2) economic forests; 3) forests for collecting forest products, and 4) pasturage for livestock.

The main objective of India's 1894 Forest Management Policy was to empower the state to regulate forest utilization and generate forest-related revenues. For this reason, this first National Forest Management Policy imposed strict state control on forest-related activities. It did not grant the people any right to benefit from forests and their products.

India's success in its joint forest management program is evident. According to the latest report (2015) by the Global Forest Resources Assessments (GFRA), which conducts forest surveys every five years, India was amongst the world's top ten countries with the most forest areas. India's overall forest area amounted to 67% of the world's total forest area. Therefore, India's forest policies were similar to Thailand's and India's forest damage situations, which have continued since the era of British colonialism. The first similarity is that the forestry works in both these countries were initiated by British officials—Dr. Voelcker for India and Mr. H A Slade for Thailand (then called Siam). Secondly, India and Thailand have similar forest-related legislation, such as the Forest Acts, the Protected Forest Acts, and the National Park Acts. However, whereas India implemented three national forest management policies in 1894, 1952, and 1988, Thailand launched only one such policing in 1985. Finally, India has trialed several forest-increasing projects, and although many such projects failed, its Joint Forest Management (JFM) has been successful.

JFM is a concept of developing mutual understanding and trust between forest-dwelling communities and forestry organizations to engage local people to conserve and restore their forests. First implemented in West Bengal in 1980, the JFM was adopted by other states and some cities, like Odisha State and Harayana, which adopted this program to prevent mudslides and deforestation.

This research aimed to explore Thailand's legal and operational problems concerning its forest policy implementation and the socio-economic impacts. Then, examine India's 1988 National Forest Policy, which was implemented through the JFM program, with a focus on factors contributing to the successful increase in forest areas in New Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. After that, to offer forest policy implementation recommendations compatible with the Thai context.

Methods

This research is qualitative; according to Daly and Cobb (1989), towards the operational principle of sustainable development, growth refers to quantitative expansion in the scale of the physical dimensions of the economic system. In terms of development, in contrast, Daly and Cobb have suggested that one should refer to the qualitative change of a physically non-

growing economic system in dynamic equilibrium with the environment. Therefore, it used the case study approach to gain comprehensive information concerning the success of model community forests.

Data Collection

1. Documentary Research

Information regarding the model community forest was preliminarily reviewed from various resources, such as official records at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Royal Forest Department, and Kasetsart University, Thailand. Moreover, we also review in India, such as the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change in New Delhi, Punjab Agriculture University at Ludhiana, Punjab University at Chandigarh, and Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) at Dehradun. Further, documentary review of reports, textbooks, articles, and other publications disseminated in Thailand and India.

2. Community Survey

After selecting the model community forests, an in-depth study of four community forests was undertaken to investigate community practices, locations, patterns of participation, and the environment.

3. In-Depth Interview

An in-depth interview is often used along with participant observations and provides a method of collecting respondents' perceptions of their world. It tends to be used when high-status people, such as leaders of groups, are involved because it is thought that they would not respond well to a situation in which a questionnaire is read to them. With a more open-ended strategy, the interviewer makes the interview more conversational and follows up with details on exciting points that the respondent makes. A combination of structured and unstructured interviews was employed for each local community forest. The number of critical informants varied in each community forest stakeholder in Thailand and India, including university scholars, public servants, and NGO staff members.

4. Group Discussion

Group discussion is conducted with a group of villagers and critical informants on such issues as present forest conservation activities, encouraging factors to participate in forest conservation, the patterns and processes of participation in forest conservation, and the success of their community forest.

Results and Discussion

1. Shortcomings of Thailand's Forest Policy.
Thailand's forest-related problems have stemmed from three major causes.

1.1 Policies and planning

In 1985, Thailand's forest policy began to be drafted, which was not based on environmental facts. The policy promoted cash crops mainly in response to the country's effort to develop its tourism industry. As a result, unmonitored cash-crop cultivation led to widespread damage to forests. The mechanism intended to boost the economy turned out to cause severe adverse effects on the country's natural resources. Worse, as some policies were proposed for political rather than environmental effects, such policies lacked practical clarity and long-term sustainability. Thailand's master plan for forest development was not effectively

implemented. Because stakeholders were not engaged in the preparatory stage, this resulted in a lack of unity amongst the forest resources management agencies and, subsequently, the absence of participation by residents. Examples of problems emanating from poor planning included compartmentalized forest management, absence of integrated ideas, principles, and managerial approaches, lack of continuity caused by changes of policy setters, the obscurity of forest boundaries, and contradiction of forest agencies' legal statuses and policies. The causes of forest problems affected by changes in forest areas from 1973 to 2016 as presented in figure 1.
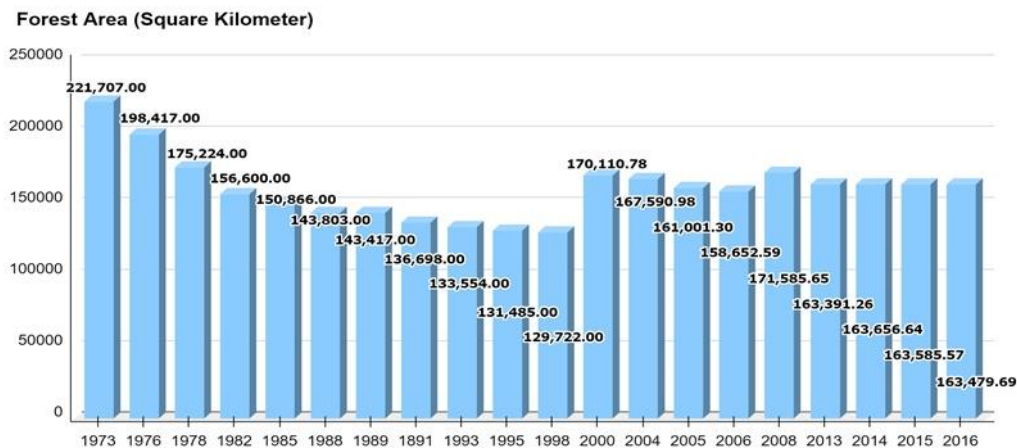

Fig.1 The causes of forest problems affected by changes in forest areas from 1973-to 2016.

1.2 Forest Area Database System

Currently, the boundaries of forests and other types of state property are unclear and, in some cases, even overlapping. The land-zoning system is still ineffective and inconsistent with current geographic conditions. The government's conventional categorization of conservation zones or farming zones has led to some positional and locational inaccuracies and misuse of forest zones in several areas. In all, the database of users and occupants of forest areas and other types of state property is inaccurate, incomplete, and far from up to date.

1.3 Legislation

There is little harmony between Thai relevant forest-related laws, and it has affected organizational structures, community engagement, and the concrete expansion of forest areas. Some such laws were legislated based on different standards and not systematically enforced, while others have never been amended or revised since their enactment.

2. State's Approaches to Addressing Forest-Related Problems

The present government (2014-2019) places high urgency on forest-related issues. Important examples of forest policies included constitutionalizing individuals and communities, rights to natural resources, adopting new forest management concepts, and progressing suppressive measures against forest encroachment. However, the action was to shadow the direction Thailand's forest work is likely to take, which present below this paragraph.

2.1 Promotion of people-state cooperation

In 2017, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, in compliance with the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021), adopted the principles of sufficiency economy, sustainability, and human centeredness as the central developmental mechanisms. The Constitution clearly defined the people's rights and the state's duties concerning natural resource utilization.[1] While granting individuals and communities the right to manage support and benefit from the natural resources, environment, and biodiversity in a balanced. In a sustainable manner through legally permitted methods, the Constitution also requires that the state conserve, protect, restore, and manage the natural resources, environment, and biodiversity in ways that facilitate people and communities to play an active part in the process.

2.2 Application of new concepts to forest work.

The government's policies declared on 24 August 2014 included plans to apply the new concept idea for community and forest resources management:

1) Designing policies based on the correct understanding of, access to, and application of the philosophy of sufficiency economy, emphasizing moderation, spending within one's means, rationality, and immunity.

2) Determining 'Less Inequality & More Access to Public Services' as an urgent policy. Specifically, this concept aims to grant farmland ownership rights to farmers who do not encroach on protected forest areas.

3) Maintaining resource security and sustainable balance between conservation and utilization of resources. Evaluation and analysis of the problems have led to the conclusion that the significant barriers to Thailand's effective implementation of its forest-related policies are the absence of a clear direction and redundancies. Both of which have caused grave difficulties for the state's forest personnel. This quandary underlies the research team's rationale for proposing that India's Forest Policies, which were implemented in 1894, 1952, and 1988, be thoroughly studied and applied to Thailand. India's Forest Management Programmed.

3. India's Forest Management Program

This section provides an overview of India's latest forest policy, the 1988 National Forest Policy, which was the consummation of its two earlier policies (1894 and 1952). The overview is then followed by a discussion of India's Joint Forest Management Program, which is a model of forest management achievement. The final part of this section describes the recommended guidelines or directions for Thailand's implementation of its forest policies.

3.1 India's 1988 National Forest Policy

The 1988 National Forest Policy was enacted based on these principles and strategies to carry outs shown in Table 1. The primary objectives of the 1988 National Forest Policy were to preserve environmental stability and natural heritage; mitigate floods and droughts; increase

forest and tree cover and products from the forest to meet the national needs; and, notably, to promote cooperation with local people, especially women, to fulfill these objectives.

Table 1. India's 1988 National Forest Policy.

India's 1988 National Forest Policy	
the basis of these principles	1) protection of existing forests and increase in forest productivity 2) curbing of forest encroachment as a result of farmland expansion 3) restoration of biodiversity, national park networks, wildlife sanctuaries, and biosphere reserves 4) prevention of depletion of fodder, fuel woods, and pasture near the forests 5) most significantly, acknowledgment of tribal people's and forest-inhabiting communities' collection of forest products as part of their livelihood and as a means of generating employment and income
Strategies to carry out its objectives	1) forest cover protection and restoration. 2) social forestry and afforestation activities. 3) improvement of forest management by the state sector. 4) granting of rights and concessions to local people. 5) wildlife protection. 6) promotion of tribal human-forest symbiosis. 7) reduction of shifting cultivation 8) protection of forests from encroachment, fires, and grazing. 9) stricter control of forest-based industry. 10) extension of forest areas. 11) provision of forest education. 12) promotion of forest-related research. 13) improvement of forest organizations' personnel management efficiency. 14) upgrading of forest survey technologies and databases. 15) provision of legal support and infrastructure development. 16) financial support for forestry organizations.

To conclude, the 1988 National Forest Policy was legislated to engage native peoples in conserving and restoring ecosystems, forests, and trees. However, for the goals set by the central government to be achieved, local governments' and forestry officers' dedication was essential. Despite the forest officers' working in such complex environments, India's progress in its forest restoration was noteworthy. Between 1988 and 2018, India's total forest area increased significantly. As shown in the 2015 global statistics of forest areas, India was ranked as the tenth country with the largest forest area in the world, accounting for 2% of the world's total forests (GFRA, 2015).

3.2 Joint Forest Management

This program began as part of the project called "Capacity Development for Forest Management and Training of Personnel (ID-P.199)," which was launched by the Ministry of Environment and Forest of the government of India and financed by a low-interest loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This project, implemented in 13 states of India, served these two objectives: 1) to provide training to increase the effectiveness of the State Forest Training Institutes (SFTI), and 2) to build the capacity of frontline forest officers to support JFM.

According to India's 1988 Forest Policy, participation from local communities living in or around forest areas was necessary for forest protection and development. To implement

the policy, the central government issued a statute on 1 June 1990 to develop and manage degraded forest areas under the State Forest Department (SFD) in cooperation with local communities and voluntary organizations. To achieve the national policy goals, local governments in India issued resolutions for each state to facilitate the implementation of JFM. The resolutions of JFM in different states were based on the order issued by the central government.

According to this statute, the government's forestry-related authority would be distributed utilizing specific acts, namely, the Panchyat Act, the Panchyat Act, Extension for Scheduled Areas (PESA), the Forest Right Act, and the Biodiversity Act & Rules. These acts were legislated to facilitate better workflow in the future and at the grassroots level, in compliance with the resolution of JFM. Therefore, policy goals could be realized by implementing JFM and transforming the policy into practice at the community level. In addition, copies of the JFM Handbook were handed out as an effective tool for implementing the policy. State and government officers were advised to use this handbook when working with the frontline officers.

The working committee of the ID-P. 199 project, led by Dr. D. K. Sharma, believed that the JFM policies, regulations, procedures, and methods would facilitate different parties to work together confidently. According to the committee, "Joint Forest Management (JFM) is an approach and program initiated in the context of the National Forest Policy of 1988, wherein state forest departments support local forest-dwelling and forest-fringe communities to protect and manage forests and share the costs and benefits from the forests with them." Now that JFM is in operation, communities can independently manage the project through the JFMC, which receives legislative guidance and micro-plans from the central government.

In essence, the JFM approach gives communities the authority to manage the forests. The 1988 National Forest Policy recognizes that a community should serve as the cornerstone of forest protection and management. The JFM action guidance issued in 1990, 2000, and 2002 prepared a framework of actions for the different states by issuing different tools, such as regulations, resolutions, and codes of conduct, for JFM implementation. Whereas the 1980 Forest Conservation Act centralized the control of the forest, the 1988 National Forest Policy acknowledged local communities as central stakeholders in protecting and managing the forests. Through the JFM program, local communities were supported to benefit from the forests based on their needs, for instance, to obtain fuel woods, fodder, NTFPs, minor forest produce, and timber products. The JFM operation is supported by two principal committees: Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) and Eco-Development Committee (EDC).

a) Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC)

Originally part of the Gram Sabha (village council) concept, a JFMC represents democracy, decentralization, and institutional transparency amongst forest-dwelling communities. Because JFM projects are technically established by state resolutions, regulations, and guidelines, each revenue village (a village entitled to a centrally allotted budget) has one JFMC. However, in some cases, one JFMC can be responsible for two or more villages. For tribal villages, a JFMC can be responsible for many villages and must establish sub-revenue villages for even funding allocation. For collaborative forest management to significantly impact local resources, persons should be identified and provided with intensive technical inputs. These 'local resource persons' would further act as extension agents to enhance the spread of capacities across the building plan.

b) Eco-Development Committee (EDC)

The EDC's primary responsibility is to develop ecosystems and protect forests and buffer zones. The EDC has two main objectives: 1) to protect wildlife and biological diversity of the forest, and 2) to organize activities to improve and restore ecosystems in communities. JFMC members and forestry officers encounter both conducive and adverse working conditions in implementing the JFM program. There are areas where the JFMC and staff can work well and where they face obstacles. They sometimes encounter opposition while working in or near historical or protected areas of local communities or protected areas belonging to institutions, such as Van Panchayats (in Uttarakhand). JFMC members and forestry staff also need to deal with various management issues of the committee under the Forest Rights Act; Village Forest Act; Section 28 of IFA; Kangra Forest Cooperatives (HP); and Biodiversity Heritage Committee.

Nonetheless, overall, India's JFM has been comprehensively implemented and propelled, thanks to these 12 elements: 1) JFMCs; 2) Executive Committee; 3) Gender Balance in every JFMC; 4) Role, Responsibility, Duties, and Rights of Ex-Officio Members; 5) Responsibilities of Forest Department Staff; 6) Financial Management for JFMCs/EDCs; 7) Micro plans; 8) Performance Indicators for Success of JFMC; 9) JFM Monitoring Process; 10) Conflict Resolution or Arbitration Process; 11) Maintenance Fund and Corpus Fund, and 12) Help for JFMCs to form Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the analysis of India's JFM, the research team recommends that Thailand's forestry improvement be pursued in three significant directions, namely, 1) promotion of state-community collaboration; 2) recognition of women's potential; and 3) promotion of local administration for community forest management. For Thailand, legitimate local organizations working in proximity to community residents include municipalities which are local administrative bodies in addition to district chiefs and village headmen, both serving at the community level. Municipalities are responsible for providing local infrastructure, while district chiefs and village headmen oversee almost every matter about community members' careers and livelihood. Thus, forest management work should target the latter group, which resembles India's Panchayati Raj concept. When cooperation between a community forest management committee and local inhabitants is sought, it is advisable that the committee approach and collaborate with the district chiefs and village headmen, just as the JFMC does with Panchayati Raj institutions in India.

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