

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **COMMUNITY FOREST AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

Through the influence of international agencies on national governments, the participation of people has been recognized as being in need of emphasis within the context of community development. Many academic studies have stated that the actions of local people can bring success to forest conservation and development projects, so people's participation, together with the trend for decentralization in natural resource management, has been widely accepted as an important instrument to use when wishing to gain public acceptance of and commitment for an idea or policies at the local community level. In terms of the different levels of active community involvement, participation can be measured in terms of the extent of participation in forest operations, participation in the setting of rules and regulations, in decision-making and agreeing benefits sharing arrangements, and in terms of an awareness of the responsibility to manage community forests. These activities include specific activities related to resources allocation, distribution, operation and maintenance within the community.

This chapter presents the local responses to the community forest project that have come from inside and outside the local community, as well as the establishment of community forests without local governance being put in place, something that later caused alienation among the local community due to the centralized planning of the local forest NGO – the Forest Resource Environment Development and Conservation Association, or FREDA, and the institutional arrangement, which was not set up to be inclusive of all households in the community. Discussing how the local community has tried to gain informal access to the community forests, I will analyze the local community's traditional land use systems, the community forest through their eyes, and their local customary laws on resource management.

#### 4.1 Community Forests without Local Governance

The community forest is a decentralized environmental governance movement that has been gaining strength since the mid-1980s (World Bank, 2000). The framework for decentralization has developed through a paradigm shift away from state-centre policies, those which excluded local communities and stakeholders from resource management and decision making. The popularity of decentralization in natural resource management is premised on the theory that if local actors, who are accountable and representative of the local population, are given a role in natural resource management, they will produce more efficient and equitable outcomes for all (Ribot, 2004). So, community forest management is a form of decentralization and devolution. Despite the popularity of decentralization, Ribot (2004) reminds us that there is an entrenched resistance to decentralization and devolution within resource management among agencies and people who feel threatened by, or who are uncomfortable with such a shift in power.

Unlike in Thailand, community forestry in Myanmar is more of a government program than a people's movement; therefore, it has been the Government that has attempted to decentralize forest management - giving local communities a sense of ownership so that they will willingly take care of the forests. The participation of local communities in forest conservation is seen as a way of decentralizing forest management under the name of the community forestry initiative (CFI). The CFI represents a unique opportunity for communities to participate in the management of their local forests, and represents the promotion of local participation in forest conservation (Lwin, 1996); however, regarding the transfer of power to the local community, a sense of ownership is difficult to convey without real rights being granted. Whether centralized or decentralized, the goal of most public forestry regimes is to control access to and regulate forest resources (Winter, 1998). I argue that in establishing a community forest in the Pa-O community at Tingyikyat, the Government has **not** transferred actual power to manage the community forests to the local community, resulting in a lack of 'local governance'.

Here, we need to understand first, the way that community forests were established by the forest NGO – FREDA, and the reasons why such an NGO has

emerged within strictly-centralized Myanmar. FREDA is a local NGO that has emerged from the state sector itself, with its focus being on forest conservation and rural development. It is a forestry-based environmental organization, formed by retired forest officials from the Forest Department. Even though it is registered as an independent NGO, the former forest officials still maintain functional ties with members of the administration, and conduct most of their projects in close cooperation with the Government. As a result, it has never found it difficult to maintain a good relationship with forest-related departments whenever it needs to deal with them at any level, because most of the government officials currently in service used to work under the FREDA officials when they were in government service. It can therefore be said that FREDA has an informal influence over the current government officials at both the national, district and township level, all over the country.

Due to international donor support for the decentralization and local participation approach, the Government and NGOs are using a bottom-up approach in their development projects. Decentralization transfers power closer to the people - and in particular decision-making power to those familiar with the local context (Ojendal et al., 2001). But although FREDA implemented its forest conservation project using the popular bottom-up approach in a decentralized way, their implementation has been found to align much more with a centralized management approach.

One key aspect of community forest management is the manner in which the process is facilitated (Matthews, Nathaniel and Bruce Missingham, 2009). Strong leadership is essential to any community-based development process. Carr (2002) argues that the government appointed facilitator is particularly central to community forest management initiatives, because of the many roles that that facilitator undertakes. However, as a government employee, that facilitator might be viewed with suspicion and perceived to be pushing a government agenda. As a result, the perceptions of the community involved play a pivotal role in determining the success or failure of a community-based natural-resource management project. Agrawal and Gibson (1999) warn that communities are often romanticized or thought of as “a unified, organic whole, attached to a particular place”. This idealization of communities may create unrealistic expectations of their effectiveness in managing

natural resources, as in the case of the community forest process in Tingyikyat. When implementing its project, FREDa, as a government facilitator, played an important role by seeking to achieve the objectives, but without trying to understand the local Pa-O community. I argue that community forestry is a process rather than a project simply set up to achieve objectives. The way that FREDa implemented the project was output-oriented, not people-oriented, and so in the following sections I will discuss the way FREDa implemented its CF project in the community.

The community forest in Tingyikyat is a FREDa project with the cooperation of JOFCA and a German non-government organization called Gesellschaft Zur Forderung Konkreter Entwicklung (GFE), its aims being forest restoration, to alleviate soil erosion and maximize land productivity. When examining the way in which FREDa initiated this CF project, it can be seen that it took a lead approach towards achieving the objectives. According to my interviews with the FREDa field staff and informant villagers, it was later found out that the whole CF process had been largely led (rather than assisted) by FREDa. Community forest implementation is a long and complicated process - from creating a management committee for the village, developing a CF management plan and liaising with the local forest agencies, to getting a CF certificate issued. Eventually, the local community assumed it was the responsibility of FREDa to do all these things.

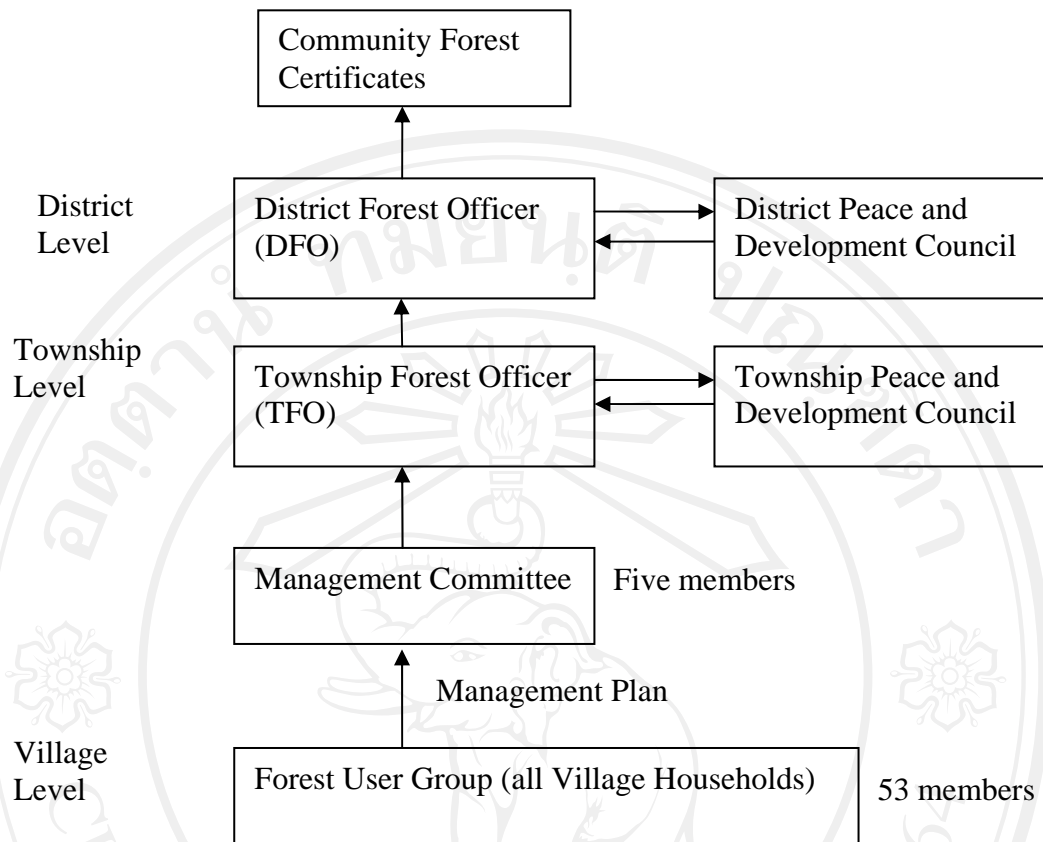
As mentioned under the state of knowledge section in Chapter 1, FREDa followed the steps set out by the Community Forestry Instructions (CFIs). According to the CFIs, a local community which desires to establish a community forest must form a forest user group (CF members) and management committee (within the forest user group). In the case of Tingyikyat community, FREDa arranged all the households in the village (53 households) to be a part of the forest user group, and five farmers were selected to form the management committee - to be in-charge of managing and protecting the CF plantations. The farmers from the village who formed the management committee were mainly chosen by FREDa, with the agreement of the headman and some other villagers in the local community. Under this initial process, all 53 households in the village became CF members, whether they knew anything about FREDa's community forest project or not. No one was left behind in this process, under the centralized planning of FREDa. It is not certain



whether all of them wished to be members of the CF project or not, but one thing is certain - that all of them became part of the user group for the community forest. FREDA field staff argued that because all the households are forest users, and also participated in road upgrade activities, all households should be in the forest user group.

FREDA field staff, some villagers and the headman conducted a land survey for the CF plantations, after which FREDA prepared a 'community forest management plan', to apply for official CF permits from the District Forest Authority. The management plan is a kind of written book in which it is recorded how the community will manage the CF plantation and make use of it under the rules and regulations set out for CFIs, as described by the local community. FREDA also developed the entire management plan, because the villagers do not understand about these kinds of document.

Applying to the local authority for CF permits is a formal procedure which takes place at the township and district level. FREDA field staff, on behalf of the village, applied to the Township Forest Officer (TFO) in Kalaw for a CF permit, using the management plan and maps of the land chosen for CF plots. The TFO forwarded the CF application to the District Forest Officer (DFO) in Taunggyi, with the recommendation of the township administrative unit, called the Township Peace and Develop Council. DFO sent the application to the district administrative body, called the District Peace and Development Council, giving his endorsement for approval of the CF permit. The power to issue CF certificates to communities does not lie solely with the local forest officers, but also requires approval from the local authorities at the district level. Figure 4.1 shows the long official process one has to go through to get a CF certificate. The local community began participating in the establishment of community forest plantations in 1999, applying for CF certificates in February 2002, and receiving a CF permit in December 2003. As a result, the project had already started before the CF permits arrived from the local forest authorities. There was no actual local community engagement in terms of developing the management plan or applying for CF permits, because none of villagers or management committee members were involved in the process.



**Figure 4.1: Community Forest Certificate Application Process**

The villagers I interviewed said they didn't even know how the community forest certificates were granted to them and they did not want to understand this most likely complicated state bureaucratic procedure. One of the participating villagers replied to my query on such CF applications as follows:

We do not know about such certificate or permits, so U Kyi Bo (FREDA field staff member) did everything, because we do not understand the complicated procedures of such government-related issues. We just participated in the road upgrading and tree planting projects in the CF plots, because we thought it would be good for all of us. The people at FREDA, our monk and the headman said it would be good for the long-term future of the village; it would enhance our lives.

U Aung Mei, 47-year-old, CF member

The management of natural resources is the encompassing dynamic for the entire community forest process (Matthews, Nathaniel and Bruce Missinghan, 2009), and that management involves the devolution and sharing of power. However, despite power sharing being mentioned in the village management plan, when the project was initiated the actual transfer of power did not happen in practice. In community forest management within Myanmar, developing a management plan plays an important role when applying for a permit to establish a CF plantation. Since the local people do not understand this complex process, only FREDAs can prepare the management plans – documents which explain how the user groups will manage and use the CF plantations. In a management plan, the location and number of households in the village, the number of CF plantations, the land area, types of trees to be planted and tree plantings techniques are scientifically-written; and the maps of the relevant CF plots attached.

During my interviews with the management committee of the village, they recalled developing the management plan at the FREDA camp, and said FREDA had needed to submit that management plan to the Township Forest Officer in order to be able to get the CF certificates on their behalf, adding that the CF related documents were being kept at the FREDA office. FREDA keeps the CF permits at its office, it does not leave them in the hands of management committee. According to the CFIs, all CF certificates should be kept at the management committee of the village, or should be hung on the wall at the house of a management committee member or the headman.

There are also ambiguities in the rules and regulations and in the benefit sharing framework outlined in the CF management plan. The rules and regulations adopted by the villagers state the following: (1) The user group (all the households) will be solely responsible for protection and management of the community forests, (2) A village forest guard will be appointed to patrol and protect the community forest, (3) The village guard has to inform of any illegal cutting of the trees inside the community forests, as well as any damage done to the FREDA fodder plantation, (4) The Chairman of the user group will undertake any action necessary against encroachers, in consultation with the Chairman of Village Peace and Development

Council (the headman), and (5) If required, criminal proceedings will be filed with the Township Peace and Development Council - for serious encroachments.

The management plan is also rather unclear regarding the use of forest products from the CF plantations, saying “the selective cutting and felling system will be practiced, more-than-10-year-old trees will be cut in accordance with the agreement from the responsible persons and management committee”. It is not clearly explained what kind of responsible persons the CF members are required to coordinate with.

As mentioned in the above rules and regulations, when the initial project finished, FREDA appointed a villager as a guard to inspect and protect the CF plantations, providing him with two uniforms, a pair of safety shoes and a daily wage of 250 kyat. FREDA built a wooden guard-tower on a hill for him to be able to watch all the CF plantations. He was then told he must report to FREDA field staff every day before and after patrolling the CF plantations around the village. However, this forest guard was sacked by FREDA after nine months for not doing his work properly, so finally FREDA appointed one of its own field staff to protect the CF plantations. This FREDA member of staff was not a native of the area and conflicts developed between him and the local villagers, as, since he was not a native Pa-O, he did not understand the traditional Pa-O ways. He also exercised his power by giving orders to the villagers, so much so that during my interviews with the individual villagers I noticed that some of them did not like him. Because FREDA staff were sent to protect the CF plantations, the authority of the management committee became ambiguous and the committee was disempowered. As a result, FREDA's methods of managing the community forest effectively prevented the decentralization process and the transfer of power to the local community.

So, the participation of local people in the CF process was limited after the launch of the project, and with low levels of participation from the community, the CF management process in Tingyikyat village suffered setbacks, and there was a poor system of governance set up. So, with FREDA taking a central role in the implementation of the CF, and with its output-oriented methodology, plus the fact it did not help the community fully understand the whole process, resistance developed against the CF management framework. The factors that led to these problems

developing were that: (1) transfer of authority to the local community was only outlined in the management plan (in the book) – it did not take place in practice, (2) the poor people's voices and interests were ignored, (3) the devolved power was captured by FREDA, even though they stated that power would transfer to the local community, and (4) the attitude of FREDA was conventional, with little interest shown towards the transfer of power and authority to the local community.

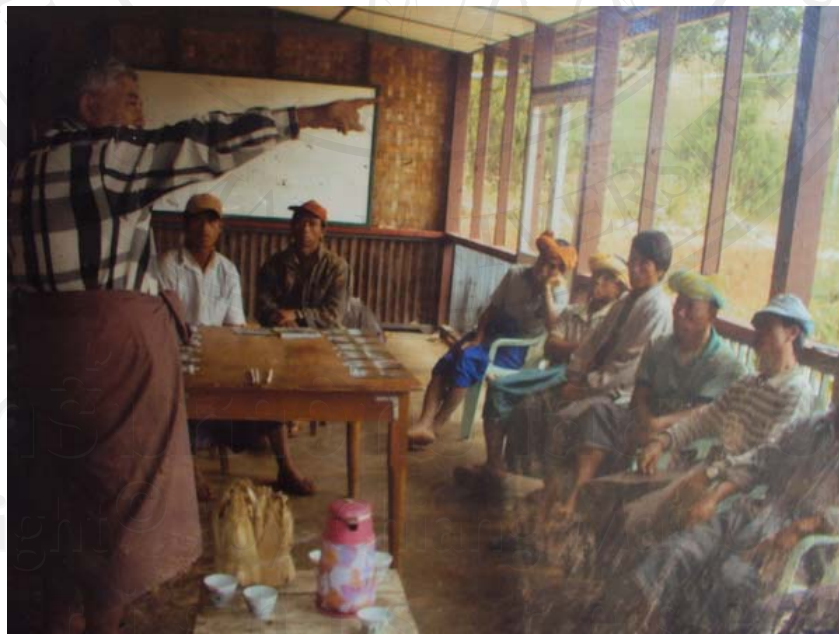
#### **4.2 Level of Participation in the State-Initiated Community Forest**

Having discussed the lack of local governance that existed in the community forest implementation process set up by FREDA, I will now discuss the levels of participation among the community in the local governance process. Community forest management is based on cooperation among local people who live in a community, and the level of participation is a social indicator of the potential of any given community to manage their forest. During my research I investigated the local community's dynamics such as group participation, people's reasons for participating and their comments on participation. These variables will highlight the perception of people regarding group activities and the quality of participation necessary for effective community forest management.

I used five requirement classifications in order to analyze the level of participation of the villagers in FREDA's community forest project. I tried to examine different levels of participation among the villagers from my selected 40 percent of total households (21 households), based on their wealth ranking and based on the household categories, including management committee members, better-off households, medium-income and poor households, and also those with women as the head. Those key informants were questioned about CF issues and their level of participation using interviews and group discussions. As the concept of state-program community forestry is a relatively new idea and different from the villagers' own communal forest management practices, many respondents were not familiar with the new practices and so not very confident about discussing it. The different levels of participation displayed are shown in Table 4.1.



**Decision Making:** Out of my five requirements for displaying participation, the first is participation in the decision making process, one that consists of having a say when choosing the plots and seedlings for community forests. Early in the project there were a number of discussions held between FREDA and the villagers, mostly at a FREDA camp, but also at the monastery and the headman's house, usually three or four times when the vice-chairman of FREDA came to the village every two months. According to my discussions with the key informant villagers, only around ten people from the village, including the headman, participated in this process; attending meetings and discussions. After that, this group of people informed the other households in the village which plots had been chosen for CF plantations and which trees would be planted. So, only ten villagers in total participated directly in the decision making process; the rest did only indirectly. Early in the project, FREDA treated the attending villagers to lunch and also paid them a daily allowance for attending the meetings; however, later no lunch was served and no allowance paid, so the number of villagers participating decreased.



**Figure 4.2: Meeting held at the FREDA Camp with Representatives from the Villages** *Source: FREDA*

**Forest Operation:** I classify the forest operations into the different tasks undertaken by the community in terms of establishing the community forest plantations. All villagers out of the 53 households in the village took part in digging the trenches for the seedlings, planting the trees, fencing the individual trees according to the planting design arranged by FREDa, and counting the surviving trees. FREDa also awarded the participating villagers with 250 Kyat for every tree that survived, so it can be assumed that 100% of people participated in this process. Regarding forest use, every household collects fuel-wood from the CF plantations for household use.

According to the community forestry instructions, the management committee is responsible for forest operations such as protecting the community forests. In Tingyikyat community, it was found that the management committee failed to protect the CF plantations because they said they didn't want to be hated and ruin their friendship with the others, and as mentioned in Section 4.1, FREDa also appointed its own staff to help the management committee protect the community forests. Therefore, another reason the villagers did not want to engage in protecting the CF plantations was that they thought FREDa already had a member of staff doing that task, and they did not need to do any protection activities because the plantations were being protected by FREDa.

FREDa already have staff to guard these plantations. We understand it is his duty because all the plantations belong to FREDa. We don't want to prohibit our people from cutting trees - that will ruin our friendships.

U Maung Aye, CF management committee member and ex-PNO member

**Setting Up and Enforcing the Rules and Regulations:** To formulate and enforce the rules and regulations regarding the CF plantations, several meetings were held between FREDa and the management committee of five at the FREDa camp. The villagers felt it was reasonable for the headman and only a few farmers to go to the meetings on their behalf, so only five out of all the households participated in the process of formulating the rules and regulations. The demarcation of the community forest boundaries and setting up signboards was also undertaken by FREDa field staff and management committee members; they participated in erecting the wooden pillars

along the perimeters of each plantation block – and each signboard was engraved with information on the name of the user groups, the year of planting and the number of trees of each species.

**Preparation for the Community Forestry Project:** I placed the road upgrade activity under the category of preparing for the community forest, because only after the road condition had improved could FREDA initiate its community forest project. Knowing very well the benefits the road would bring in terms of market access, all the villagers contributed labor on the 4.5-mile road construction project, such as leveling the surface of the road, collecting stones, loading and unloading the stones, and digging the drainage ditches. Every villager I met agreed that the improved road condition had made their lives easier, and they expressed gratitude to FREDA for the all-season usable road. With easy access to the markets in nearby towns, they can now fetch higher prices for their crops, whereas in the past, it was very difficult and time consuming for them to go to the town - they had to leave early in the morning in their ox-cart to get to the junction of the highway before noon, where they left their ox and cart and went to the town by car. Now, the villagers have more trawler Gs (small mechanized tractor)\_ and bicycles for the transportation of goods and other items. All the villagers, not only from Tingyikyat but also from the other villages, contributed their labor to upgrading the road so 100% participated in these activities.

The road is very important for all of us. If the road is good, we can go to the town in a shorter time to sell our crops at the town market. For the planting of trees as organized by FREDA, we also participated in planting the trees as we knew these trees would be useful for our daily use. In the past, this land had no trees and no one used it to cultivate because of the poor soil fertility. Now, there were many trees along the road because we participated in growing the trees with the support of FREDA. In the past, villagers didn't want to grow trees along the road side because that area does not belong to the village, but because of the monk and the headman, we and the villagers from other villages helped to plant the trees for the long-term benefit of the area.

Carpenter U Aye, a forest user group member

**Reciprocity and Cooperation:** Reciprocity is a form of interaction which manifests itself as participation in benefits sharing among forest users. Table 4.1 shows that all the respondents generally share forest resources within the same forest user group but not with the other villages. This is because all eight villages have their own community forests and they do not need to share the resources with outsiders, but they can share with anyone else in the same village.

In terms of the participation level of the villagers in the community forest, most of them, including some members of the management committee, do not even know the CF plantations are already village-owned, and as a result they were confused and puzzled when I asked the above questions regarding their level of participation. The reason for this is that the management committee failed to explain this to the other villagers and did not share its knowledge on CF, and this is why uneven participation among the villagers has been observed.

A participatory process is widely considered as the cornerstone of community forest activities. The objective of the participatory process is to build local-level capacity for self-help and sustainable development, by enabling local communities to elaborate and implement their own development activities. After evaluating the participation level of the local community in the case of Tingyikyat village, the activities for the community to build capacity for self-help were found to be very weak. Although there was a high level of local cooperation in the road construction and tree planting process, there was little cooperation in other activities such as protecting the plantations, decision-making and setting up the rules and regulations. The villagers didn't ask about things they were unclear about during the discussions with FREDAs, which also did not pay much attention to hearing the opinions of the local community, or could not make them voice their opinions.

**Table 4.1: Villagers' Level of Participation in the Community Forest Project**

Level of Participation	Did not Participate	Did Participate
<b>A. Decision Making</b>		
Choosing the community forest sites and the trees to plant	75	25

**Table 4.1 (Cont.)**

Level of Participation	Did not Participate	Did Participate
<b>B. Forest Operations</b>		
Staking, digging trenches, sowing and planting fruit and tree seedlings, plus counting the surviving trees	-	100
Fencing the individual trees	-	100
Protecting the forest from fire and illegal cutting	43	57
Collecting fuel-wood and NTFPs for household use	-	100
Boundary demarcation and setting up signboards	76	24
<b>C. Setting up Rules and Regulations</b>		
Formulation and enforcement of the rules and regulations	76	24
Monitoring the community forest member activities	76	24
<b>D. Preparation for the Community Forestry Project</b>		
Upgrading the road between the highway and the village	-	100
Consulting with FREDA officers in setting up the CF	76	24
Discussing with the village headman or village monk in planning and implementation of the CF	24	76
<b>E. Reciprocity and Cooperation</b>		
Attending CF meetings with FREDA	76	24
Sharing forest resources with outsiders	-	-
Cooperation in accordance with the rules and regulations/resolving conflict	76	24

Source: Field survey, 2010





**Figure 4.3: Local Pa-O People Contribute their Labor to Upgrading the Road**

Source: FREDA

I will discuss the different types of community forest implemented by FREDA, and will discuss how the local people responded to FREDA and its project. During the three year project period, FREDA established fourteen plots of community forest plantation making a total of 165.67 acres on degraded forest land, that is, old shifting cultivation land. The different community forests can be categorized into four types in term of the different approaches taken by FREDA, as follows:

**Type 1:** The first type of community forest is established using a community approach. As mentioned in Section 4.1, all households in the village participated in establishing the community forest. The trees and seeds to plant were provided by FREDA, and the villagers were involved at a participatory level – providing labor for activities such as clearing the fields, weeding, working the soil, digging trenches and sowing the tree seedlings; watering the plants and counting the trees that had survived. In order to obtain firewood and posts for building, the tree species planted included *Eucllyptus grandis*, Pebokenwe, Pomez, pie trees, crab apple trees, *Cassia Siamea*, Jack Fruit and Jacaranda trees. Once planted, the community forest

plantations are meant to belong to all the villagers, since all are members of the forest user group according to the management plan developed by FRED A.

In terms of ownership, this type of community forest is meant to become the common-property of the village, as the plantations are officially handed over to the management committee in the village once they are in place; however, the villagers in the study village did not recognize the formal ownership granted by FRED A - with community forest certificates issued by the local forest authorities (the local community's rejection of ownership rights will be discussed in Chapter 5).

**Type 2:** The second type of community forest is established through agro-forestry practices. Agro-forestry plantations are implemented by individual farmers on their permanent sloping cultivation and shifting cultivation land. Agro-forestry is a cultivation method for growing fruit trees (or forest trees) with agricultural crops or cash-crops on the same land, the objective being to replace the shifting cultivation area with forests and horticultural crops. FRED A wanted the villagers to replace their purely agricultural farming methods with agro-forestry. Local farmers who wished to and had the manpower to grow this mix of crops became involved in this agro-forestry plantation system on their owned lands. A total of eight farmers from the better-off and medium-income households participated in this agro-forestry project, and FRED A provided them with the necessary fertilizers for the land upon which they were instructed to plant the trees. The income generating crops, such as crab apples, danyin, mango, oranges, coffee and avocado were planted by farmers upon the suggestion of FRED A.

Regarding this kind of forest, it is arguable whether fruit trees such as orange, mango and coffee can be considered community forests or not. According to my interviews with some of the foresters, the NGO chose which tree species' were to be planted for a community forest project. They said that mostly forest tree species such as teak, pyinkadaw and kokeko were chosen for the establishment of community forests, as the name is itself "community forest", rather than fruit trees. However, according to the FRED A annual reports, in Tingyikyat village fruit trees were chosen for planting under the agro-forestry project as part of its community forest approach. It seems that FRED A wanted to see any trees (fruit trees or forest trees) on the former shifting cultivation area, to prevent further degradation of the forest and soil erosion.

Also, since this agro-forestry project was implemented on individual, privately-owned farmland, it contradicts the name '*community forest*'.

The problem with this for of community forest was that, later on, the participating villagers no longer wanted to grow the fruit trees suggested by FREDA - they only wanted to grow cash-income crops such as ginger and potatoes. Although the land is privately-owned by the farmers, there were some incidents of the theft of fruit, plus some fruit trees like avocado and crab apple were damaged by the cattle. As a result, the landowners did not want to grow any more fruit trees.

For instance, one of the eight participating farmers, the former headman, cleared over half of his plantations to grow potatoes. Since the land was privately owned by him, he decided not to follow FREDA's instructions and also grow fruit trees. Some other farmers also fully converted their land away from fruit trees, and this resulted in frequent conflicts between them and the FREDA field staff. The villagers said that the fruit trees led to a decrease in crop yields and reduced the cultivatable area. They were also worried about the security of the fruit trees and the damage caused by the cattle, so, after discussions with FREDA, some farmers decided to grow fruit trees in their house compounds, as home gardens - only a few planted fruit trees on their farms. In fact, the villagers participated in the agro-forestry project due to the incentives (fertilizers) given by FREDA. Once they had received the fertilizers for the allocated land, they only wanted to grow potatoes or ginger - their key cash income crops. So, the objective of the agro-forestry project - to also grow fruit trees on the old shifting cultivation land and on private land, was not fully achieved.





**Figure 4.4: Community Forest Plantation near the Village**

*Type 3:* The third type of community forest is bamboo, and this was implemented using the monastery approach. For some villagers in the middle-income group, the concept of agro-forestry is not new, because it has existed for long periods as part of their traditional cultivation approach. Prior to the project, some villagers in the community had already grown a few clumps of bamboo with their agricultural plants, in the free spaces around their homestead or in their farmyards - for home use and for sale. In upland communities, bamboo is a marketable tree species used for housing and as a general purpose utility material. As a result, FREDA established two bamboo plantations as community forests: a one acre plot near the monastery and a half-acre plot in the FREDA compound. The bamboo community forest near the monastery was and is under the control and management of the monks and the villagers, who help the monks at the monastery. The villagers who need bamboo can ask the monks for permission to cut them for home use.



**Figure 4.5: Community Forest Plantation - Bamboo**

*Type 4:* The fourth type of community forest developed was FREDA's own. There are two community forest plantation plots containing Euclyptus, Yetama and *Cassia siamea* in the FREDA compound, plots managed by FREDA, and FREDA plans to run a community forestry training center for other upland communities in this area in the future. No one is allowed access to these community forests because they are for demonstration purposes only. These forests are managed and protected by the field staff and the families who live in the compound.

**Table 4.2: Types of Community Forest Implemented by FREDA**

Community Forest	Area (acres)	Managed by	Land	Access by	Trees
Type 1	165.67	Management Committee (5 villagers)	Old shifting cultivation land	All 53 households	Pine, <i>Pin Sein</i> , Eucalyptus, Pomeza, <i>Thabyay</i>

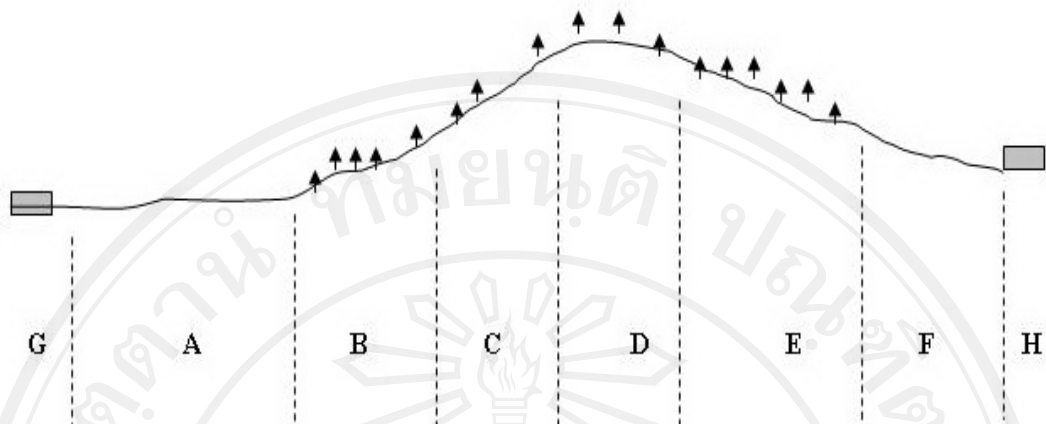


**Table 4.2 (Cont.)**

<b>Community Forest</b>	<b>Area (acres)</b>	<b>Managed by</b>	<b>Land</b>	<b>Access by</b>	<b>Trees</b>
Type 2.1 (agro-forestry)	- 12	- Individuals	- Private land	-Individuals	Crab apple, Avocado, Mango, Jack Fruit, Coffee, <i>Danyin</i>
Type 2.2	<7	- Individuals	- Private land	-Individuals	Bamboo
Type 3	2.5	Monks	Sacred land	Monks	Bamboo
Type 4	2.5	FREDA	FREDA	FREDA	Bamboo, Eucalyptus <i>Pin Sein</i>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2010

Table 4.2 shows all the types of community forest in the community. According to a FREDA report, the total number of trees surviving was 4869, 7379 and 8233 in the years 1998, 2000, and 2001 respectively (a total of 20,481 trees) and the average survival rate of the trees was 86.5 percent. Since the community forests in Tingyikyat community are a government-sponsored community forestry project, FREDA was at first concerned about the number of trees that would survive, and as Gilmour (1997) argues, the goals of community forest projects are often the forester's goals rather than community development goals.



G: FREDA camp

A: Agro-forestry Plantation

B: Community Forest Plantations (Pine trees\*, *Ye Thin Win*) 2000

C: Community Forest Plantations (Pine trees\*, *Tha Byay*) 2001

D: Community Forest Plantations (Pine trees\*, Euclyptus, Acacia, *Pinsein*) 2001

E: Community Forest Plantations (Pine trees\*, *Tha Byay*) 2001

F: Shifting Cultivation Farm

H: Village

Remark:

\* = dominant species

In C and D, some pine trees have been cut down

In D, remaining pieces of timber from a wooden tower which was destroyed have been found

**Figure 4.6: Transect Diagram of the Community Forest Plantations and Shifting Cultivation Fields - FREDA and Village Owned**

When state policies and legal systems bring disadvantages to the lives of local people, they tend to resist them by maintaining their own resource use strategies, or by showing their disagreement. State policies which exclude local people from the control of resources tends to lead to resistance (Bryant, 1997). According to Pile (1997), resistance refers to any action, imbued with intent, that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes or institutions. In theory, resistance is carried out in many different ways. The resistance of local people varies and can vary from negotiating, public defense or using ritual forms, to more violent methods such as protests or contestation, resistance, rebellion or breaking the law. In the case of Tigyikyat Pa-O community, the villagers did not accept the FREDA initiatives willingly and there was ‘resistance’ from the community against its community forest project. It can be argued that some villagers expressed their discontent over the arrival of FREDA through what Scott (1995) terms “everyday forms of resistance”.

According to my interviews with the FREDA field staff and executive committee members of the project, the villagers responded negatively to the project during the early phase. Although some leading farmers and the headman held several discussions with FREDA prior to the project, some villagers showed their discontent by destroying the CF plantations’ fences. The FREDA field staff’s words reflect how the villagers initially responded negatively to FREDA and its community forest project:

The villagers misunderstood the goodwill of FREDA. Only under the instructions of the village monk and headman did they participate in planting, but soon after that, some villagers destroyed the fences, plants and water pipes. When FREDA sunk the well to supply drinking water to the village, some villagers didn't use it. The reason for this was that they didn't want to drink water given by *Bama* people.

U Kyee Bo, 57-year-old - FREDA field staff member

Moreover, it was found out that the villagers also destroyed the wooden watchtower on the hill, to use it as fire-wood. During my second data collection visit in May 2008, I noticed the six-meter-high wooden tower on the hill next to the FREDA camp, a tower constructed by FREDA during the early phase of the project to hold the village guard and in order to view the whole of the community forest from the hill. However, during my final visit to the village in February 2010, I did not see that tower, just some pieces of timber on the ground. Because of such actions by some of the villagers, FREDA approached the PNO office in Aungban to complain about the negative response from the villagers during the project period. PNO issued a statement to the whole village to immediately stop spoiling FREDA's project and to participate in full, saying that if they did not, severe action would be taken against those found violating these instructions.

After this, the vandalism stopped, but the felling of pine trees has continued to cause problems between the local villagers and the FREDA field staff. In fact, cutting down the trees for fire-wood does not violate the rules and regulations in the management plan, because every villager is a member of forest user group and is allowed to exploit the community forest plantations if the trees are over ten years old. However, in many cases the villagers have tried to gain illegal access to the community forests without recognizing the existence of the management committee.

Regarding the role of PNO, one of the important actors when establishing the community forest in the research village, I found out that the PNO is not entirely interested in the well-being of the villagers. Since the ceasefire agreement was agreed with the Government in 1991, the PNO has focused on gem and gold businesses and enterprises, as allowed by the Government in exchange for signing the ceasefire agreement. As a result, the PNO – becoming closer to the Government and shifting their interests towards their own business interests, seem to have moved apart from the local Pa-O people, although they did much for the good of the people prior to 1991. However, the PNO still has an influence on the local Pa-O people, as they are still afraid of them

When forming the management committee in order to manage the community forests, FREDA gave one ex-PNO member a seat on the committee. The five members of the management committee are the headman, two family heads from the

better-off category and two from middle-income group. One older man from the middle-income group is an ex-PNO member, and he had a lot of influence over the village group when he was in the PNO. FREDa also allowed him to stay at the FREDa camp – to watch over the community forests and take care of the office. Based on my documentary research at the FREDa office and according to my interviews with the other foresters, it is in line with FREDa's style of management to appoint a headman and local influential people on to many of its development projects. One of the problems with the management committee is that the ex-PNO member does not get along with the rest of the members, nor with most of the villagers. Acting as a representative of FREDa, he usually tries to influence the other four members and the villagers. Another thing regarding the management committee is that there are no members who represent the poor households, and because of this, when establishing the forests, the poor household never had a voice when decisions were made.

#### **4.3 The Community Forest and Informal Access to Land Use**

A community forest is directly concerned with land use. In Myanmar, the Community Forestry Instructions (CFIs) clearly demonstrate that local people are to be granted 30-year land tenure in order to protect their community forest plantations; therefore, community forest management can be considered a kind of land use management approach as well as helping to conserve the environment. When participating in such land-use related development projects, most communities opt for a sustainable flow of benefits from the forests, such as a water supply, bamboo shoots, fuel-wood, timber and a place to graze their cattle. Through these benefits and the underlying cultural and moral values, community forest management can be seen as an integral part of subsistence and peasant farming systems (Anan, 2002). In this section, I will analyze the land use system in the study local community and how the local people perceive and manage their land and forests using their customary laws, plus how they have tried to gain (informal) access to the community forests.

The rights to land and resource tenure are very important for local people whose way of life is linked to natural resources such as the land and forest. Access to



land and resources is a key factor in the support of sustainable livelihoods, because land is the main resource for producing food and supporting and maintaining a livelihood. The meaning of access to resources is “the right to benefit from resources” rather than “the ability to benefit” (Ribot, 2001). Anan (2000) argues that resource tenure is the most important issue in resource management. It is always at the center of a struggle between different perspectives, in which the perceptions of the state and local people, or between local people, are different and sometimes in conflict with each other. The concept of resource tenure refers to those who are allowed to access and control the resources they want, how and at what time.

Before looking into the local land use system at the research site, we need to understand the land and forest management rights system in Myanmar as a whole. Resource tenure rights in Myanmar cover two factors: ownership and use rights. In Myanmar, all land is owned by the State, and there are two kinds land management type – the Forest Department manages all forest land including reserved forests and other forests, and land other than the forests is managed by the Land Record Department. Land is public (state-owned) property and the full, private ownership of land is not legally recognized. The State gives cultivators “the right to work” on the land as individuals. The transfer (or sale) of land use rights is not possible, but the State accepts inheritance from relatives or family members through traditional laws or customs. The State also has discretionary power to revoke the tillage rights of a farmer. The concept of ownership and use rights is understood as the distribution of specific decision rights related to land resource and forest management. Thus, land use systems are closely related to social issues and local livelihoods, especially in mountainous rural areas where forest utilization is the major activity.

In Myanmar, people have the right to use the land for cultivating agricultural crops, to set up community forests, establish private forest plantations or put the land to other uses allowed by prevailing laws, rules and regulations issued by the State. All the reserved forests, protected public forests and areas under the Protected Areas System (PAS) are constituted on the State-owned public forestland. In recent times, forest areas have always been under the control of the Forest Department, whether they are used for commercial exploitation or for protection. Since the majority of the populace is directly or indirectly dependant on the forests for fuel-wood, people can

exploit forest products for household use, except in the case of reserved forests. It is legal to exploit for household use, but the commercial production of fuel-wood and charcoal is strictly prohibited.

In Myanmar, traditionally-owned land is not officially recognized by the State, though under this system, when a person clears and occupies a certain patch of land, that land belongs to him, and this type of land is called *Dama U Cha*, which literally means “heading the tip of chopper on the land, that land is yours”. After that, the land is passed on from one generation to another and becomes traditionally-owned land.

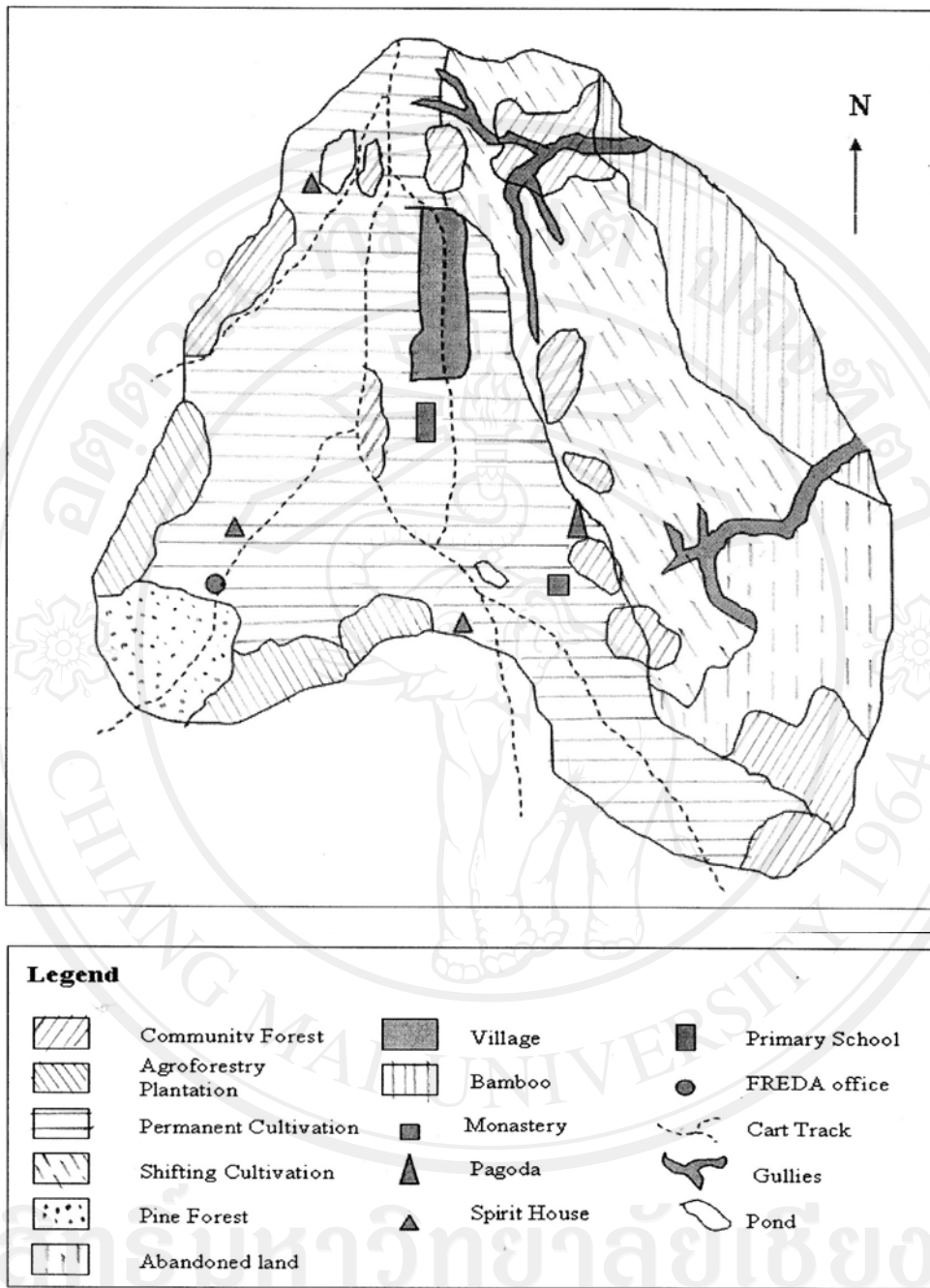
Land use rights for the Pa-O community in Tingyikyat village are unofficially enforced using a traditional, land-inherited system, and they have their traditionally-owned areas for shifting cultivation. Parents divide up land to give to their sons or daughters when they are married. The land is usually not divided equally among the sons and daughters, as it depends on availability. The unmarried sons and daughters can live in their parents’ houses forever if they wish. In some cases, in order to avoid land disputes among family members, parents divide land up between all their sons and daughter before they pass away. Such practices represent traditions handed down over generations. In the study community, although no official land use certificates have been issued from the local land authorities, all the agricultural land that the households owned has been recognized by the authorities through customary law, in terms of land use.

For local people, land is also not just only a place to live, but represents their identity. Forests and land in the village provide multiple interests and meanings, in particular, they represent the fundamental sources of food for the villagers’ everyday lives, and as part of an environmental regulation system. Land is their main productive asset, and is used for growing rice and seasonal crops. Therefore, the meaning of land for an upland Pa-O community is having the means to grow rice; to not have land is to have nothing.

The land in Tingyikyat community is officially divided into four categories: agricultural, forest, residential and abandoned land. Most of the abandoned land is old shifting cultivation land now left bare, with exposed rock. Forest land consists of natural pine trees and other forest trees such as pinsein and banyan. Agricultural land includes degraded forest land and sloping land used for shifting cultivation. Most

agricultural land is previously cleared forest on which the local people now grow seasonal cash crops. There are no formal paddy fields in the community. The word 'farmland' is not a clear distinction for them because they grow not only paddy but also other seasonal crops on their shifting cultivation land.

Access to the forest land is key in terms of their basic livelihoods; it also represents the cultural, social and spiritual value of the community. More importantly, it represents local arrangements and control over resources through communal, everyday practical forms. Pa-O people have their own beliefs on the value of land, and in the Pa-O language, land is called *hum*. Their traditional beliefs say that since the Pa-O people live on earth – a place which gives them a source of food and the means to live, so they must take good care of it. Land, regarded as the source of life, is one of the most important possessions for the Pa-O people, followed by housing, trees and animals. Land is a place to live and raise crops and livestock, and is also something to pass on to the new generations. Beyond this fundamental attitude towards the value of land, they also have spiritual beliefs regarding the land, which are similar to the beliefs held by all Myanmar people. To them, all land on earth is also inhabited by spirits and other invisible living things from different worlds. As a result, they keep their land clean and free of unwanted spirits when they use it for something important. Before they cultivate or before they build a house, they pray first to please the spirits, giving offerings also. They erect a wooden or bamboo pole, on top of which they hang a coconut husk, a banana, betel-nut and other offerings to the spirits, in order not to have their work disturbed or delayed.



**Figure 4.7: Land Use Map of Tingyikyat Village**

Source: Map from FREDA, modified by author

According to the Pa-O's customary laws, land, water resource locations and the cemetery are owned by the village (communal property), and monastery land and the pagodas are owned by the monks. If a certain area has water or a creek, that area belongs to the whole village and must be shared amongst all the villagers. No one individual can manage it on his or her own, even if the land is his or her property.

In contrast to customary law, under the state law system, only some people can receive the benefits from land; others are forced to comply - the State shows its power and sovereignty by issuing constitutions, regulations and policies. As a result of this contradiction, ethnic minorities cannot entirely follow the State's legal system but still continue to follow their local customary laws. The customary laws of the Pa-O people consist of regulations on resource management, land ownership, mutual assistance, farming practices and others. Regulations are voluntarily constructed according to the agreement of all people and are respected by the whole community. The regulations were set up to secure benefits for the whole community; therefore, all community members are involved. Those who violate these laws are condemned by the community members and the monks. These regulations and customary laws have been passed from generation to generation by oral means and are applied through their everyday practices.

When FREDA first implemented the community forests, the land they chose for CF plots was abandoned shifting cultivation land. In the past, this land had been traditionally 'owned' by the local Pa-O people, but more recently they had not cultivated this land due to the low yields. From my interviews with the key informants, I found out that the villagers did not object when FREDA put forward its plan to choose these plots for the CF plantations, because they no longer used the land; however, this land was already village-owned land (as common property) when the CF certificates were handed to the management committee, so, the village now has an official land use certificate for 30 years for this community forest land; however, as mentioned in Section 4.2, they do not recognize this community forest land as their own.

In fact, all households in the community have access rights to the community forests - to gather forest products for household use. They can exploit the community forests in accordance with the rules and regulations set out in the management plan,



but the villagers originally tried to gain informal access to these community forests without knowing that the CF plantations were already village-owned. As a result, they encroached on to the CF in order to cut the trees for household use, and these efforts at gaining informal access caused conflict between the FREDA field staff and the villagers.

In fact, the community forest plantations had already been handed over to the village by FREDA, together with CF permits issued by the local forest authorities, and the existing pine forests had also been transferred to the village. However, the villagers did not recognize the CF plantations and pine trees as belonging to them; they assumed that the CF plantations belonged to FREDA because FREDA had also appointed field staff to protect them. The members of the management committee themselves did not consider these CFs as village-owned (I will discuss the local perceptions over property rights and the community forest in Chapter 5). When the trees planted in the CF plantations became harvestable, they tried to gain access to the trees which they did not recognize as their own property. I argue that the local community trying to gain informal access to the community forests can be termed what Scott (1985) has called “everyday forms of resistance”, because the local actions against the plantations carried out early in the project destroyed some of the plants.

#### **4.4 Local Perceptions of the Complexity of Community Forestry**

Different perceptions of everything exist based on the different points of view of different actors and their purposes. As such, it is not always possible for the State and local people to see eye-to-eye on certain things or situations. States usually try to extend their power and control; trying to manage everything within their national boundary by establishing certain structures, laws and regulations, then characterizing these in order to affect control - they simplify everything in order to control and manage easily (Scott, 1998). Regarding the forest and forest resources, ordinary people and states usually have different interests at heart. Historically, states have used forests and land for commerce, or other purposes in support of the national economy, while most local people use the forests and land for subsistence purposes – certainly in developing countries. As a result, state foresters always have different

ideas to those of the local people. For people who live within or near to forests, they see them as their home and source of livelihood - the existence of forests is directly related to their survival. In contrast, states see forests in terms of economic development, focusing only on their commercial value, and they thus try to control them. There is a complex relationship between local people and the forests, one which they have managed in their own ways for many generations, because the forest has always been an integral part of their daily life.

Governments often force people to accept development programs that extend control over the land, forests and other natural resources. With popular participation becoming a key element in development circles within Myanmar, the Government has used the participation of local people in the forestry program for a different reasons; for commercial purposes as in the *taungya* system and for household use under the community forest initiatives. Community forests are one of the most important ways to conserve forests, and in fact, the concept of a community forest is not new to the local people in Myanmar. Although they do not use the term 'community forest', according to the villagers' there are many locally defined community forests in the upland areas of southern Shan State. Among the local people, 'community forests' are included in their traditional practices, customs and laws, in their cultural patterns and their lifestyles, depending on the forest resources involved. In this section, I will present the local Pa-O people's perceptions regarding the forests and the relationship between them and the forests.

The word 'perception' refers to the interpretation of certain issues or situations, as influenced by the knowledge and experience of the person perceiving, as well as his or her personal and social characteristics. For my research site, this definition reflects how the villagers perceive the benefits and usefulness of the community forest. Local people have had their own perceptions of the forest for a long time, as their lives depend on the forests. As a result, they classify land and forests in terms of the ecology, plus the land use and land tenure patterns in place (Santita, 1998), and usually have traditional regulations and rules in place to protect the forests. In the past, the local people in the research area were in the habit of making unrestricted use of the forests - for felling wood and bamboo, extracting wood-oil for torches from the pine trees, cutting grass for thatching, grazing their

cattle and clearing the forests for temporary or permanent cultivation. Thus, although they had no actual proprietary rights, the people living within the forests and in their vicinity were accustomed to privileges amounting almost to user rights (Nisbet, 1901).

The local people call the forest *Takhaya* in the Pa-O language, and the forest provides a substantial amount of wood and non-wood forest products for their households. Every village in the Peyintaung village group determines the boundaries between the villages and their forests based on natural features such as creeks, mountains and big trees. As a result, they can exploit the forest products to meet their basic needs using customary rights within the community. Outsiders or anybody from other areas are not allowed to cut trees in their communal forests, and the violation of others' community forests is an offense.

My survey of the community forest plantations and the various discussions I had with the knowledgeable villagers' during my field trips show that the local Pa-O communities have traditionally preserved forests based on their spiritual beliefs and their traditionally accepted customs. The Pa-O people have three types of forests in term of customary ownership: (1) village forest - for communal use, (2) family forest - for individual household use (private property), and (3) monastery forest - for monastic (religious) use. Out of these three types of land, I consider the first type of forest to be interpreted as what we now refer to as 'community forest' - certainly by the definition of the State. Locally the Pa-O call such forest *dupai*, where *du* means 'village' and *pai* means 'own'. I will refer to such forest land as 'communal forest', which is similar to what the Government's forest agencies now term 'community forest'.

The Pa-O's communal forest is the concern of all the villagers and is reserved for communal use such as graveyards, grazing areas and water courses. Communal forest territory usually contains the headwaters of rivers and streams from which the whole village draws their water supply. The villagers have shared responsibility to protect this land and the use of forest products from such communal forest land is only for communal purposes, such as building a rest house by the roadside and bridges. The headman usually initiates the exploitation of a communal forest for communal purposes.

In the past, the forests were managed only through these informal customary practices and systems of common understanding. They had their own operational rules for the communal forest based on their traditions handed down over the generations. These rules and regulations served the community in the interests of maintaining the yield of the forest - as a common property arrangement. Individuals could not decide for themselves how to make use of the forests as in a private property arrangement.

For the Pa-O people, these rules became common knowledge and were constituted as common forest laws among them; all the households knew the rules and traditional practices which applied to their communal forest, despite the lack of any written documentation. Their regulations were passed from generation to generation orally and were applied through their daily practices. Their informal customary practices regarding the forests were a strong reflection of their self-awareness, everyday practical consciousness and the complex everyday forms of local knowledge and arrangements they displayed.

Individual family-owned forests are called *sen lu*, where *sen* means 'trees' and *lu* means to protect or cultivate. Since *lu* means both protect and cultivate, they could clear their own individual forests for any purpose; mostly they cleared their own forest land for cultivation. The villagers protected their own family forests, which had been inherited from the previous generation. They used the forest products from their individual forests for household use and to build houses. For those who did not have their own individual forest land, the headman and respectable elders decided on giving people a forest plot located a bit further away from the village, with the agreement of the other villagers. The villagers had to protect and maintain all types of forest by planting trees every time they cut them down for household use - at least once a year.

Prior to the arrival of the project, everyday practices on the forest land were not only for producing food, but also reflected their social, cultural, spiritual and economic values; communal management and social arrangements. For the local people, forests were not only areas that contained trees, but also the home of spirit guardians, sacred wildlife habitats, places of worship and the setting for traditional lifestyles. Collecting forest products was not just an activity for household

livelihoods, but was also seen as the embedment of multiple rights to control resources locally through knowledge and arrangements. Local control over resources, in this regard, was a kind of transference of traditional knowledge and experiences from one generation to another, based on customary rights in everyday practice.

According to their traditional beliefs, they also believe in forest spirits as part of their daily lives - there are always guardian spirits in the forests, or in Burmese called *taw saunt nat*, where *taw* means 'forest', *saunt* means 'guardian' and *nat* is 'spirit'. In the Pa-O language, that forest spirits are called *lupe'kung*, and the guardian spirit for the village is called *sasani*. Likewise, there are also guardian spirits for the land, mountains, towns, water and houses etc. Under the Pa-O's traditional worship beliefs, they do not have a status for or picture of these spirits, but build a small brick or wooden spirit house for them. The offerings made to the spirits include water, flowers in a vase, baked sticky rice and some vegetables - no meat is offered to the *nat*. They constantly pay respect to these spirits and try not to do un-respectful things to them, such as urinating under the trees or cursing each other under big trees. The more religious people, whenever they finish worshipping the Lord Buddha at home at night or in the early morning, always carry out a traditional Buddhist 'merit sharing' - to all the living things and in ten directions, including these spirits.

Their religious beliefs state that the forests and trees are the abodes of spirits that have the power to create plentiful resources. Thus, if one destroys the forests or trees, or is disrespectful, such offences will bring illness or bad luck, or even death. As a result, if a person is unusually ill or there is something wrong with his or her behavior, the knowledgeable people in the village examine what they have done to annoy the spirits in the forest. These spirits are regarded as the protectors, or as guardians of the forest area, so the community forests are directly related to the spiritual life of all the people in the village. Destroying or showing a lack of respect to the spirits within their community forests means risking the safety and well-being of the villagers, and the offender is condemned and punished by them. On the full moon day during October, the Pa-O people make a big offering to the forest spirits, upon his return from visiting the Buddha in *Nivarna* (Heaven).

Whether in family forests or village-owned forests, very big trees like the banyan tree are seen as protectors because of their spiritual beliefs, while the other



trees can be used for their daily livelihood activities such as clearing the land for cultivation or cutting the branches for firewood. According to their traditional perceptions of the forest, natural pine forests are under the 'village-owned, but can be exploited' category - for household use or selling for household income, but not for commercial purposes. Since the whole area was under PNO control for a long time, these forests were also under its control.

According to the local customs regarding forest management, the Pa-O do not cut big trees like the banyan tree because of their spiritual beliefs – they believe there is a *nat* in the tree, and fear is spread about what punishment will be given-out by the spirits in the case of cutting trees beyond the traditional norm. There are many stories about the punishments given by the spirits, such as receiving snake bites or encountering bad luck. Normally, if the villagers they cut down a whole tree, the leading branch is traditionally left as a *natne branch* (a branch upon which the spirit can stay) - for future growth of the tree. They believe that as long as that branch is still growing, the spirit will have a place to stay. According to their beliefs system, Buddhist monks are more powerful than the spirits who stay in the trees, so, if needed, and if trees are needed for communal or monastic purposes, such as building communal houses, a monastery, bridges or making poles to use in pagoda festivals, monks will bless the activity.

The different ways of perceiving 'community forest' has created a complex and diverse perception of it. Local people perceive the forest as a complex part of their cultural system; whereas, outsiders and state agencies view the forest as a complex whole – their view is limited purely to the physical dimension. As for the local people, for a long time their entire lives have been associated with the forests. For them, the concept of 'community forest' is derived from their struggle to adjust to and develop a relationship with nature. The forest not only provides material benefits for them, but also cultural meaning in terms of moral ideologies that underlie their relationships. For this reason, the forests have over the years been protected by their local customs and practices. However, in terms of modern, state law, all the forest land belong to the State, so such local community forests and customary rights are not recognized by it.

When FREDA established its community forest for the village, the local community did not perceive it as a community forest in the way FREDA does, because they already had their own understanding of a community forest, or what I call a 'communal forest'. The way FREDA implemented the project made local people confused because of their mixed perceptions on access. Although access to the forest resources was granted to all households, the general perception among the villagers was that the community forest were initiated by FREDA and belonged to FREDA, and thus they did not have access to it. As a result, they tried to get informal access to get the forest products.

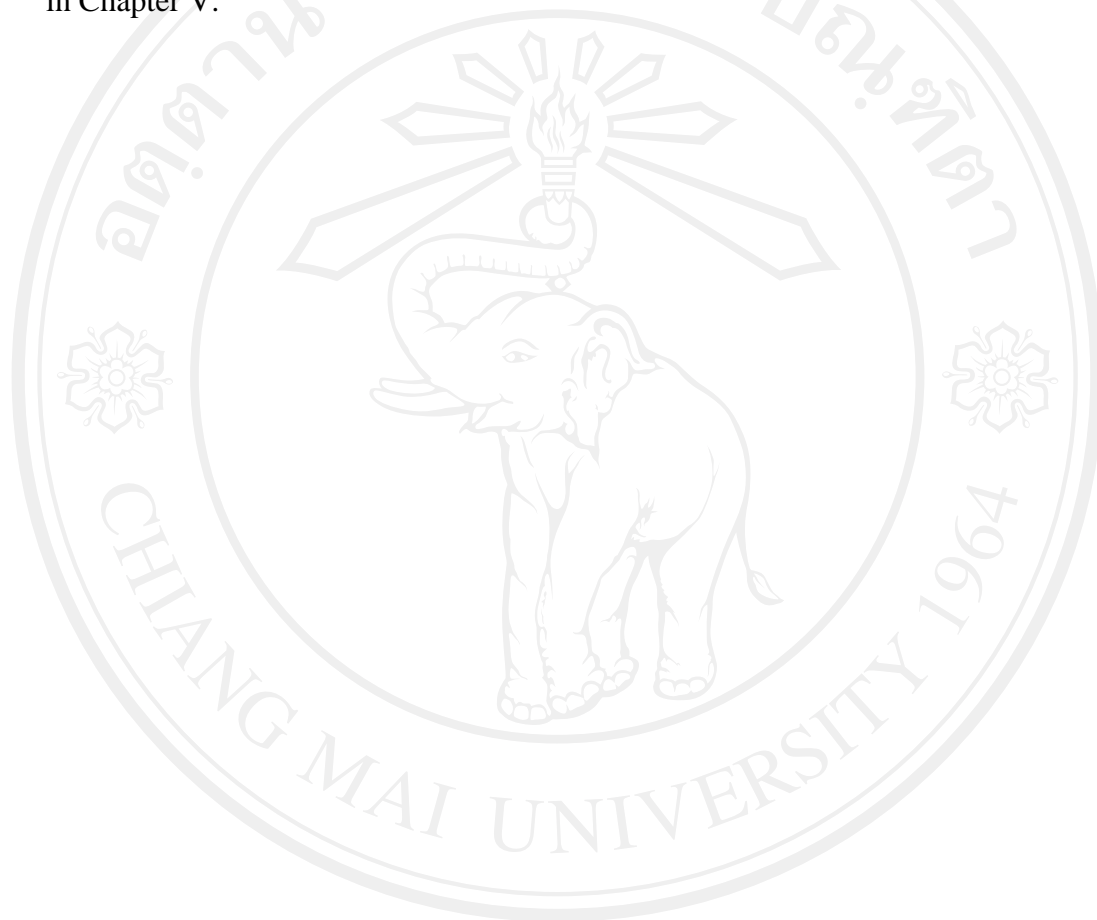
#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter has examined FREDA's implementation of the community forests, with the participation of the local community. FREDA established its community forest project using a conventional top-down management approach, carrying out the process mostly by itself, such as choosing the CF plots and tree species to plant, despite holding several discussions with the villagers. The management plan for the community forest was also prepared by FREDA, leaving the villagers to apply for CF permits at the local forest agency offices. By examining the different levels of participation shown by the local community under the weak institutional arrangement of the management committee, one which does not represent all the different social groups in the community, it can be clearly seen that the whole community forest process has largely taken place under the management and guidance of FREDA, leaving the local community to contribute only their labor, and resulting in a community forest management structure without local governance.

After the forests were created, the villagers did not recognize the community forest plantations as village-owned, and so lacked a sense of ownership over them - failing to manage and protect them. Later, the community tried to gain informal access to the community forests - to cut down the trees for household use, even though CF permits had already been issued and handed to the village.

For an upland community like Tingyikyat village, natural resources are valuable assets for their livelihood security, so for generations they have managed the

land and forests using their customary laws. Although not recognized by the State, in the past they had their own communal forest, one similar to the State's concept of 'community forests'. However, with the introduction of the externally-initiated state-driven community forests by FREDA, the villagers had to undertake a process of negotiation to protect their sustainable livelihoods, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter V.



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