

CHAPTER 5

PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION AS A NEGOTIATION STRATEGY

In many countries, property rights within forests have been centralized in order to strengthen control over forest resources, superseding the traditional rights of people who have dwelled in and around the forest for centuries (Zin, 2005). But these actions have more often had the opposite effect - undermining the local rules governing access and use, eroding local conservation incentives and saddling the governments with responsibilities that exceed their administrative capabilities. As a result, decentralization has become a popular approach to use in order to implement development projects. Property rights also play a central role in the decentralization process within natural resource management, and decentralization is likely to be implemented most successfully when a given local community mobilizes itself in order to support it and in the event that they gain at the very least proprietary rights (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001). However, in practice the decentralized community forest program was not well implemented in Tingyikyat by FREDa, and as a result has failed at the local level, resulting in the villagers rejecting the ownership rights granted to them.

Although the villagers passively engaged in helping to establish the community forests, they then undertook a negotiation process utilizing their knowledge, experience and skills and adapted the new technology introduced by FREDa. They then learned how to improve these strategies in order to gain the benefits brought by development as well as secure their livelihoods. In this chapter, I will focus on the ways in which the local people have participated in community the forest project in order to maintain their livelihood security.

5.1 Local Perceptions of Property Relations in the Community Forest

One of the causes of resource conflict, environmental degradation and the overuse of natural resources is ambiguous and poorly defined property rights (Baland and Platteau, 1996). There is a need to understand property rights from the perspective of local people because they have their own perceptions of property and resources, and these perceptions are related closely to their practical knowledge - they use their own customary laws to manage resources. Property rights are nearly always at the center of struggles between the state and local people, and between local communities themselves. The many different ways to look at property create complexity and diversity in terms of property relations. The necessity to establish clearly-defined property rights is an important factor leading to the success or otherwise of development projects, and the right to use and benefit from community forests provides a strong incentive for their effective management. When people lose secure property rights over the resources, they also lose any incentive to manage these resources for maximum long-term benefit.

There are two critical elements to property rights: (1) granting rights to individuals – giving them an exclusive entitlement to use the property as they see fit, and (2) granting the owner the right to dispose of, sell or otherwise transfer those rights at will (Turnell, 2006). The first element provides the basis of the incentive to work, produce, save and invest – which together provide the drive behind a capitalist economy, while the second element provides the means through which capital can be created. The different ways of perceiving property create a complex and diverse perception framework, and in Tingyikyat community, property relationships are also linked closely to socio-economic factors.

To understand the Pa-O people's perception of property rights regarding the community forest, then as in Chapter IV, I will analyze the people's responses in terms of agreement, disagreement and/or ignorance in light of statements related to their social relationships and knowledge regarding the community forest. According to my field observations and personal judgment, most of those who are reluctant to preserve the forests act like this because they do not understand the ownership rights regime put in place for the community forest plantations. Table 5.1 shows that more

than two-thirds of the villagers do not know that the community forest regime has already passed ownership to the village, but they agree that if the community forest is a common property resource, its use should be shared among all the community members under a systemically defined set of regulations.

One important principle in community forest management is that all the users should be responsible for the conservation and management of the forest. I found that all the respondents believe that the community forest should be conserved and managed by the villagers, but jointly with FREDA. However, because up until now they have not known that the community forest is already village-owned, they think that FREDA is solely responsible for the management of the community forests. Most of them believe that the cutting wood for fuel and collecting NTFPs should be regulated, because fuel-wood and NTFPs are finite resources, although they can regenerate naturally; however, most of the villagers (over 70 per cent of the responses) do not know the rules and regulations to follow regarding the use of forest products.

Generally, all the villagers agree that an area of community forest should be defined and boundaries established, but they also think that the work needed to define and demarcate the boundary lines, as well as erect the signboards needed to identify the community forests plots, should be done by FREDA (already discussed in Section 4.2). There are also mixed perceptions regarding access to forest resources within the community forest plantations. Over 70 percent of the respondents disagree with the fact that only the participant villagers should have access to the forest resources. They told me that not only the household heads who participated in planting the trees, but all the villagers should have equal access to the community forests. The general perception of the villagers is that access to the community forest should not only be limited to the participating households, because it is a common resource - though use must be regulated.

Table 5.1 Villagers' Perceptions of Property Rights in the Community Forest

Perception	Agree	Disagree	Do not know
A. Inclusion			
Community forest is a common resource, hence it should be shared among community members	100		
Everyone should have the right to access resources in the community forest	100		
Access to forest resources should be regulated	71	-	29
Rules and regulations should be included in the community forest management plan	29	-	71
B. Exclusion			
Community forests should be allocated and boundaries established	100		
Those from outside the village should have access to the community forest		100	
Only those households who participate in the management and conservation of the community forest should have access to it		71	29
C. Perception of villagers regarding responsibility for management of the community forest			
Community forests plantations are already village-owned	29	-	7
Managing the community forests should be the responsibility of users	48	48	4
Managing the community forests should be the responsibility of FREDA		33	67
Managing the community forests should be the responsibility of FREDA <u>and</u> the users	100		

Source: Field survey 2010

All the respondents agree that protecting the forest should be carried out jointly with FREDA, but over 60 percent still do not know how, because they do not know about (or do not accept) their ownership of the community forest plantations. Even within the management committee, there is disagreement over the ownership of the community forests; some think that the community forests are village-owned, while others do not agree and say that they are the property of FREDA. Only the management committee know that the plantation is village owned and so that they need to protect it themselves. It was thus found that there is a sense of confusion over the ownership of the CF plantation among the local community – leading to strange outcomes in terms of their perception of property relations and exploitation of the community forests.

Saneh Chamarik and Yos Santasombat (1992) state that one of the eight preconditions necessary for a community to be able to look after its own forest resources is the existence of organizations such as village or people's forest conservation committees. Focused on participation, creating a relevant resource management mechanism can boost the level of sustainable participation by local people (Messersmidt et al., 1996). In the case of the community forestry program in Myanmar, the management committee has created the institutional arrangement or local resource management mechanism needed in order to manage community forests. But as Gilmour et al. (1997) point out, the Government lacks the capacity to set up sustainable community institutional structures, though they continually try to do so. His argument is fully supported by the case of the local management committee set up by FREDA in the study village. The management committee, which is responsible for managing and protecting the CF plantations, is very weak and lacks power among the villagers, so I argue that forming a local institution for managing community forests is not enough on its own – it is also vitally important that such an organization is respected, recognized and followed by all members of the community. In Tingyikyat village, the villagers do not even know who the members of the management committee are.

A community forest institutional arrangement can also be understood as a set of guiding principles for forest management, consisting of formal and informal institutional arrangements. Basically, formal institutional arrangements take the form

of rules and instructions, those set for nationwide acknowledgement and implementation, such as the community forestry instructions (CFIs) in Myanmar. Informal institutional arrangements are defined as guiding principles within the local community, based on customary law, norms and rules, those that emerge from a locality-specific social consensus and from negotiations on modes of appropriating the forest. Inheritance and appropriation through labor investment are the most common rules based upon which local people establish relationships with natural resources (Zingerli, 2001).

The management plan developed by FREDA is a form of institutional arrangement for the community forest, and is the concern of all the villagers because all of them participated in establishing the community forest plantations in the first place. However, FREDA did not take account of the local customary institutional arrangements when formulating the rules and regulations, and I argue that combining the formal institutional (state) and informal institutional (customary) rules and regulations will lead to local people becoming more aware of and involved in the management plan for the community forest.

5.2 Lack of Recognition regarding Community Forest Rights

Property rights play a central role, not only in natural resource management, but also in any decentralization process. Property rights involve a relationship between the rights owners, others and an institution to back up the claim. Hence, the state's reorganization of user rights increases tenure security and creates greater incentives for users to participate in natural resource management (Meinzen-Dick and Knox, 2001). Decentralization reforms imply changes in property rights over resources, those in which local communities gain rights and the capabilities to develop operational rules. Therefore, decentralization is likely to be implemented more successfully when a local community mobilizes to support it and when they gain at least proprietary rights as part of the change (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001).

A decentralization process transfers the rights over resources to local users and strengthens tenure security, not only through ownership rights but also access, management, withdrawal and other types of rights. If we see decentralization through

the lens of property relations, Agrawal and Ostrom (2001) do not refer to property rights as simply “ownership” as defined by state law, but refer to it as “a bundle of rights”, which is derived from state or customary law, or other normative frameworks. They argue that ownership is often taken as meaning having complete control and rights over a resource. If we consider only the state-defined ownership of many natural resources, we often find that the state claims ownership and is unwilling to give that up, but if we look at “bundles of rights”, it is easier to identify specific rights that can be or are already held by users, either individually or collectively. In fact, decentralization and devolution in some countries has led to a transfer of responsibility for protecting forest resources to local communities, without these same communities being granted the rights to use the resources for their own benefit, even where local use is allowed. Fisher (1999) point out that a tribal community in the Philippines was given the responsibility to protect a watershed area, but not the rights to use the resources inside it, plus that in the case of many protected areas in India, people are given responsibility to protect the resources, but are not given access to them.

In Myanmar, community forest management can also be seen as an attempt to decentralize forest management by giving the local communities a sense of ownership in terms of taking care of their community forests, but in the case of Tingyikyat village, the villagers did not accept ownership of these community forests when the project was initiated. I argue here that it is due to the partial involvement of the local community in the decision making process and the formulation of rules and regulations, and most importantly due to the unclear definition of use rights in the management plan, that has led to the rejection of ownership rights by the local community. In this section, I will discuss the consequences of this perception of a lack of ownership rights among the villagers, plus the perceptions of the state-backed NGO. I will also explore the perceptions of the local people regarding FREDA, perceptions that have resulted in them participating without having an actual understanding of the workings of the community forest project.

First, we need to understand the mindset of the average Myanmar person, as someone reluctant to deal with the Government’s bureaucratic system. In Myanmar, frequently termed a “land of fear”, it is common for people to dare not ask about

something they don't understand due to the fear inside of them. People fear the government authorities, because of the power the Government might and often does use against them; therefore, Myanmar people usually want to stay away from government staff or avoid dealing with government related issues.

I argue that there two main factors have created such a general perception (fear) among the local people of government agencies: (1) it is due to the long-term centralized system and strict control of the State, and (2) it is due to the severe action taken against powerless rural people for even the smallest of rule violations.



Figure 5.1: Cartoon showing a man being arrested for cutting down a tree (the signboard says ‘Three years in jail for cutting down one tree’)

Source: Snap Shot Weekly Paper - September 10th 2010

As examples, there are cases of local people being imprisoned for weeks or months for breaching forest law by simply cutting-down a few small branches to use for firewood, or people being executed for illegally accessing state-owned restricted areas such as protected forests. As a result, the local poor people, and especially those in remote areas, are afraid such things will happen to them. Due to the large amount of state ‘bullying’ of local people that is reported, the people have a deep fear of the Government and every one who works for the Government. As a result, they do not trust the Government and have a constant fear of the absolute power it wields, power

that might be used anytime - legally or illegally. Figure 4.2 is a cartoon from a weekly paper that shows a villager being arrested by a forest official for cutting down a tree. This is not an uncommon occurrence in Myanmar, especially in rural areas.

In the case of those local Pa-O people who helped to establish the community forests under FREDa, they assumed that FREDa is a state forest agency because it is made up mostly of former government forest officials and because of its centralized approach to project implementation. In the eyes of the local people; therefore, FREDa is a state actor, even though it claims to be an independent NGO.

Due to their presumption about FREDa, the local people dared not talk to or ask much of FREDa, resulting in them participating without really understanding what the project was about, and this represents a form of one-sided participation – participation without a real level of understanding being in place. Even the headman and the management committee members themselves knew little about the project at the start, such as the implementation steps, the types of trees to be planted or the ownership of and rights over the use of the CF plantations, and so, being simple and honest people, the local people as a whole are not familiar with the concept of a community forest. They had never heard of the concept of a community forest prior to the project, but with the welfare of their community in mind, they planted the trees for the project under the instructions of FREDa, together with the monk and headman.

After implementation of the project, FREDa handed over the CF certificates issued from DFO to the village (but later kept them in its office), saying that the community forests already belonged to the village and that all the CF users had to protect and manage the forest for long term household use, in accordance with the rules and regulations set out. However, because of the way FREDa managed the CF plantations thereafter - by appointing its own staff to protect them, plus due to the lack of dialogue between FREDa and the local community over the community forests, the villagers became confused and rejected ownership and use rights for these CF plantations. In terms of the difficulties faced when dealing with the villagers and their lack of acceptance of the community forest, one executive committee member of FREDa said:

The villagers are very simple and ignorant. Even after all the community forests were legally granted to them - with permits, it is very hard for them to believe that these forest estates are now theirs and that it is their responsibility to protect and manage the forest for their own use. It is understandable that they still cling to this concept, since they were born and brought up in a country where forests were planted, owned and managed by the state authorities only.

U Sit Bo, Executive Committee member - FREDA

My interviews with the FREDA officials revealed that the villagers are not interested in managing their (own) community forests. The same official said:

During the project, we tried to educate the people through formal and informal training – how to manage their own forest. A list of duties re: managing the allotted forest areas was distributed. This was then tried-out on a voluntary basis - such as when they carried out their daily monastic duties in the village. But this failed due to a lack of interest - as mentioned above.

Here, I argue that it is not that the villagers were not interested in managing their own community forests, but that they did not consider these CF plantations to be theirs, in other words, they did not have a sense of ownership over the CF plantations. As a result, after the project had been implemented, the villagers remained ignorant of or would not accept ownership of the community forests.

As it has been over ten years since the project was implemented, most of the trees planted are now harvestable, and branches can be cut down for household use. The villagers should be able to exploit these forest plantations in accordance with the rules and regulations described in the management plan, and also by verbally informing the management committee; however, because the villagers do not feel a sense of ownership regarding the rules and regulations prescribed in the management plan, they have tried to gain access to the community forests in illegal ways. The management committee does not stipulate the rules to the other villagers because they themselves do not consider the plantations as village-owned. As a result, uncontrolled

grazing and the illegal cutting of young tree branches occur all the time. Not having a sense of ownership over these CF plantations, the villagers do not want to protect them.



Figure 5.2: A Pine Tree Cut Down in the Community Forest

During the field survey, I saw some pine trees that had been cut down within the community forest areas. The management committee did not know who had done this and they said "No one informed us about it." Two pine trees on the hill near the boundary of the village had been felled down to the base. Although it is not mentioned clearly in the management plan how these trees should be extracted from the community forest, FREDa field staff said that it is not in accordance with the rules to fell trees to the base; however, as mentioned above, the villagers, not having a sense of ownership over these community forests, exploit the trees without care – they fell trees in order to clear the land for cultivation.

Gilmour (1997) argues that one reason why community forestry has been moderately successful is that communities genuinely benefit from their involvement, and the costs of participating are closely linked with the benefits derived. In the case of Tingyikyat community, the local community could not see the benefits of participating in the project due to the unclear and centralized management style of

FREDA. They were unsure about the benefits they would gain from their involvement and as a consequence, early on lost a sense of ownership with respect to the CF plantations. As a result, the level of local community involvement in the community forest management process was very low and passive in nature. When the villagers saw anybody carrying out illegal activities in terms of violating the forest laws, they had no incentive to report it to the management committee or FREDA. Although the community management of natural resources has the potential to be more effective than state-centered policies (Ribot, 2002), if local governance is lacking within the process and if the community are unable to see the benefits to be derived from their involvement, it will fail.

5.3 Participation as a Negotiating Strategy to Improve Livelihoods

In the context of development, local people may come up with different strategies to cope with difficulty in their lives. For the Pa-O community in Tingyikyat, participation is one of the negotiating strategies they have used to improve their livelihoods. Negotiations are often closely linked to power relations, that is, those who hold the power create discourses for their own purposes - in order to increase their power over other actors or to control the access of others. In contrast, the powerless actors do not always comply with what the powerful people impose and often find other ways to resist or cooperate, according to the conditions and their position in society. In a strongly-centralized country like Myanmar, the people, who are used to being under a top-down administration and are used to following orders and instructions (Kaung and Cho, 2003), comply with what the powerful actors impose as part of a negotiating strategy. The key argument I make in this section is that how the local people participated in the income generating activities that arrived with the community forest project implemented by FREDA, represented a negotiating strategy used in order to improve their livelihoods.

Ten years ago, the villagers never used pesticides and fertilizers within their farming system – and they only used manure in limited amounts resulting in poor yields. By not applying enough farmyard manure to their farmland, they received poor crop yields and suffered crop diseases such as potato leaf blight. The popularity of

chemical fertilizers increased as the demand for vegetables grown in Shan State rose. As a result of the shifting cultivation carried out, soil losses occurred through the misuse of sloping land and as a result soil quality in the cultivatable areas was badly affected (FREDA report). As a result, since then the local communities have needed to use more and more fertilizers to meet the growing demands, but the price of fertilizers has risen and has become unaffordable for the farmers. As a result, the villagers rely on their 'revolving fund' to buy fertilizers.

The community forestry is a long term project, and so the benefits to be gained from planting trees and fruit trees within the community forest cannot be gained within a short time-frame, because the trees require time to reach maturity, when they can be used for fuel-wood or other uses. As a result, the villagers have needed a special fund or income stream for the sustainable management of the community forests, prior to receiving benefits from the community forests plantations. In fact, the villagers originally wanted to grow more cash crops for their income, so FREDA set up a revolving fund system to provide the villagers with fertilizers, because most of the farmers could not afford to buy fertilizers themselves.

The villagers originally participated in the project by planting fruit trees as a negotiating strategy – in order to secure money from the revolving fund. Under the revolving fund, the villagers borrowed money from the fund at an interest rate of two percent per month, and each villager who borrowed money had to make a repayment, plus two percent interest, at the end of each month; for example, if a farmer wanted to buy fertilizer worth of 10000 Kyat, he paid back a total of 10200 Kyat (the amount of money he borrowed plus two percent interest rate). This lending system was only used to buy fertilizers. The villagers were thus able to buy fertilizers using the loans provided under the revolving fund, and in return, they had to plant the fruit trees that FREDA provided, as a trial under the agro-forestry scheme.

Regarding the agro-forestry initiative, in order to improve their income and maintain their livelihoods, local villagers have used agro-forestry practices, as encouraged by FREDA, and they have used agro-forestry to bargain and negotiate with FREDA for their food security and to gain higher incomes from the agricultural production activities. Highly popular within the forestry sector in Myanmar, the concept of agro-forestry was introduced to the villagers by FREDA as a new strategy

aimed at replacing swidden cultivation in the upland communities. In fact, agroforestry strategy is not new to local people because they have practiced it over a long period; for example, by shifting their land use activities as a way to maintain soil quality and by growing fruit trees. Some villagers have always grown bamboo with their agricultural crops, and FREDA also introduced an example of this by implementing a bamboo community forest near the monastery. Therefore, when this was introduced as a strategy to improve their livelihoods, the villagers saw it as an opportunity.

During the project, then in order to improve their crop production levels the villagers adopted new technology, having been through training conducted by FREDA. They adopted a double-cropping system on their land by sowing gram seeds after harvesting the paddy. They bought the gram seeds in a basket from FREDA with money from the revolving fund, sowing the seeds in their paddy fields. The average production rate turned out to be more than three times the amount of seeds grown, so other farmers also sowed gram as a second crop after harvesting paddy, to generate more income.

Another new technology adopted by the villagers was the making of compost. The villagers realized that the use of chemical fertilizers spoils the structure of the soil by hardening it, plus the cost of fertilizer is generally very high and its efficiency short-term. As a result, the villagers learned how to make their own compost to use as organic fertilizer, which last for more than one crop. The villagers engaged in a compost production initiative introduced by FREDA, using a simple technique with straw and leaves mixed with animal urine – placing the straw and leaves (as bedding materials) on the floor of the feeding stall to absorb the urine, with decomposition then expedited through the actions of the animal urine and the crushing of the material by the animal's hooves.

However, the villagers have a traditional belief that working bulls should be kept on clean beds, so they make compost using cow dung. They collect excretia from the bulls and dump it in the compost pit outside the cow shed, plus collect the urine whenever it forms in pools where the bulls are kept and add it to the compost pit. The villagers now realize that compost making is very effective at increasing the productive capacity of the farmyard.



Figure 5.3: Compost being made in Front of a House

The village has no proper grazing land except the community forest and permanent farm land. In the wet season, permanent farms are cultivated with the usual crops; however, the community forests are closed and guarded by FREDA field staff - for fear of the trees being damaged. As a result, during the wet season grazing land is very limited. In the past, before the project, free grazing practices were used for about 80 percent of the cattle population; the villagers only used stalls to feed the working bullocks. Allowing free grazing has many negative impacts, such as destruction of the cultivated areas, damage to the trees and fruit trees growing on the farmland and in the community forests. Free grazing also causes a reduction in crop yields due to the soil being compacted by the herds of cattle. In addition the cow dung that would otherwise be used to make manure is scattered across a large area and wasted.

After it arrived, FREDA wanted to promote stall feeding and reduce or remove the practice of free grazing; thus, the villagers participated in forage production, as introduced by FREDA, as a way to negotiate over the shortage of fodder for their cattle. They participated in what FREDA termed a 'Trinity of Silvopasture' - the practice of growing trees, fodder and grass in the community forest plantations. Under the instructions and design developed by FREDA, the villagers grew legumes to improve the impoverished soil, Napier grass for fodder, peyin as an

agricultural crop for income and Desmodium for fuel-wood, due to its rapid growth rate after cutting. In this way the villagers took part in FREDA's forage production program to resolve the shortage of fodder. The participating farmers were able to cut the grass (both local grass and Napier grass) during the wet season for fodder and for the production of compost. Since grass grows rapidly after being cut, the villagers were able to earn a steady income from growing fodder and grass.



Figure 5.4: Cattle Feeding Stall

Seeing the greater number of income generating opportunities created by the new road to the market, the villagers adopted new post-harvest processing strategies for their cash crops, which included pinsein fruit, ginger and potatoes. Because of the market potential of the pinsein fruit which they planted in abundance, the villagers developed a small-scale processing center at the village level with help from FREDA and local private businessmen, producing pinsein fruit slices preserved with honey. The products are now distributed to major cities such as Yangon and Mandalay, and some better-off households are heavily involved in this market, using trees they previously used only for fuel..

Potatoes and ginger are the main agricultural crops cultivated on the village farmland. Traditionally, they sold potatoes and ginger raw, but some Pa-O women

proposed to FREDa that they should learn to produce potato chips, being aware that potato chips are sold at Aung Ban and Kalaw markets. Potato chips are one of the most common snacks to be sold at bars and supermarkets all over the country. After conducting some tests on the most appropriate way to produce good quality potato chips, FREDa conducted training at the camp in order to provide villagers with potato processing techniques. Potato processing includes the use of special tools for peeling and slicing, then treating the potatoes with lime water, cleaning and soaking the potatoes in pure water, deep frying them and finally packing them for sale at the market.



Figure 5.5: Drying Ginger to Produce Ginger Slices

Pa-O women are very interested in producing potato chips to generate more income, and they are also fast learners, and now the potato chips produced by them are accepted by the market in terms of quality. The Pa-O women also participated in a ginger processing trial – the aim being to produce ginger slices in the form of pickles and dried ginger powder. They willingly participated in a number of discussions and in training conducted at the FREDa camp.

These outcomes show that Pa-O women have been able to propose and progress their own, new livelihood strategies - to utilize their cash crops for extra income. Although these income generating activities have been focused on the

landless and under-employed households, the better-off and medium-income householders who are business-minded have also been inspired to raise their living standards.

Most of the villagers were not familiar with growing vegetables and fruit on a commercial scale in the past; though some grew these on a small scale for home consumption. They were more interested in concentrating their activities on the cultivation of major agricultural crops on their farmland, such as potatoes and ginger. Since all the households have small plots of land around their homesteads, FREDA encouraged them to grow horticultural crops like avocado, jack fruit, mango, danyin and coffee, in their compounds as well as on the farmland, under an agro-forestry scheme.

The villagers already understood the importance of soil fertility and the need for adequate water resources, so when they were first provided with the revolving fund, the technical know-how to grow the right species at the right time in the right place, and improved road conditions, their ability to adopt new livelihood strategies increased. After this, they had the motivation and inspiration to grow more vegetables and fruit trees, in addition to their usual cash crops. This has since improved the local Pa-O people's lives, due to their ability to adapt to the various livelihood strategies that arrived at the same time as the community forest project.

The degree of adaptation and use of different livelihood strategies has varied among the community members and by gender. In Tingyikyat, both the men and women have participated in non-farming and farming activities and also the new activities introduced by FREDA; however, their roles vary as the men mostly engage in the hard, strong and physical work, plus that requiring high levels of skill, while the women tend to carry out activities that require patience, such as post-harvest food processing work. It is the women though who have responsibility for activities which ensure food security within the family, and with this task in mind, they have to work all day. The men are involved in the income-generating activities and even when the women are involved in the same activities, the men take the decisions; for instance, the calf purchasing and sales activities are done by the men, but the day-to-day care and feeding of the animals is done by the women and children.

The diversification of livelihood activities is an adaptive strategy used by the villagers, but the opportunities to increase their income are limited. The diversification of livelihood activities initiated by FREDa includes a transfer from natural resource based to non-natural resource based livelihoods, or a combination of the two. I found out that non-natural resource based activities require human and financial assets, such as training, skills and finances, and these requirements limit the ability of people to escape poverty if they do not have access to these assets. That is why, for financial assets, FREDa created a revolving fund system. The landless households cannot participate in agro-forestry because they do not have the required land, so they instead participate in other activities such as planting fruit trees in their backyards.



Figure 5.6: A Successful Corn Plantation - to Produce Grain and Fodder

Source: FREDa

In their negotiations with FREDa, the villagers utilized their knowledge, experience and skills in order to gain a higher income. Some villagers had their own knowledge or innovative ideas on farming, some of them better than the methods suggested by FREDa. For example, the planting of corn as a fodder grain was first suggested by FREDa, and motivated farmers volunteered to plant corn on their farms.

The farmers contributed labor while FREDA provided seeds and fertilizers. FREDA suggested the farmers adopt a spacing regime of one foot by one foot and the use of two seeds in one spot. However, a farmer by the name of U Aye (a carpenter) used only one seed in one spot, but with the same spacing. He suggested this seeding method because he wanted to grow over a larger area with the limited number of corn seeds provided by FREDA. Later, his corn grew more vigorously and was larger - as a direct result of his production method, plus it saved on seeds sufficiently to allow him to plant a larger area at reduced cost. Thus, it can be understood that local people have been able to use their local knowledge in negotiations with FREDA, plus generate higher yields by taking on board and adapting some of the new farming techniques introduced by the organization

The State wants to show its power in terms of controlling resources and people by drawing fixed boundaries between the traditional and the new, and between livelihood improvement strategies for local people and state conservation strategies. The State has tried to impose top-down models from outside on to most of the local people - in different locations that have different cultures and different ecological systems. The rigidity of the State's development strategies shows their lack of knowledge on local culture and imposes the power of the State on to its citizens.

The Myanmar military government has made an effort to develop the upland ethnic minorities using border region development policies - to alleviate poverty, reduce the insurgencies and improve livelihoods for local people. However, because they have tried to solve problems using their military mindset, and also because of the discrimination displayed against ethnic groups, many conflicts have arisen among the ethnic minorities as a result of state interventions, and the current government has not been able to show a policy of 'union solidarity' towards ethnic the minorities. The State has created opportunities for the development of most of the ethnicities, but progress has been inconsistent. The progress that has been made has acted as a catalyst for positive social change in remote ethnic communities. Under state intervention approaches, with development projects introduced that aim to reduce poverty reduction, the local communities involved have perceived that their traditional culture is gradually disappearing. Recognizing that development has a negative impact on their traditional culture, local people have articulated the local

knowledge they use in their everyday lives by maintaining their traditional culture and integrating it into the new, imposed culture systems.

One example of this can be seen in terms of maintaining their traditional language. When communicating within their community, the Pa-O people always speak their own language, despite the fact that their children study and learn exclusively using Burmese, but before going to school, these children have to study their own language at the monastery under the tutelage of the Pa-O monks. Pa-O is the common communication language used among many of the Pa-O communities - in different locations. In formal meetings with authorities like FREDA or in dialogue with the outside world, the Pa-O speak Burmese, but when they talk with each other, they speak their own language. When they disagree with the opinions of outsiders, they exchange views on the issues involved in the Pa-O language, and after that give their reply in Burmese. The Pa-O also their own Pa-O traditional music, songs and videos, which are widely available in the upland Pa-O communities and in cities like Taunggyi, and every family with a TV, VCD player or cassette player has Pa-O music tapes and VCDs.



Figure 5.7: Pa-O Advertisement at a Private Border in Aungban

Understanding the importance of education for their children is also an articulation of the Pa-O ethnic people. As they have gained access to towns and the market, they have developed a greater concern for the value of education. They are aware of the opportunities for a better life to be gained through education, and so many families, even the poor households, send their children to school. With the help of FREDa, they have set up a fund to provide a salary for two school teachers to teach their children at the village primary school. In town, there are also Pa-O majority private boarding schools, those which prepare the students for the matriculation examinations (pre-college examinations). Two of the better-off families have sons who have already finished their middle school education, and they went to such private schools in order to prepare for the matriculation examination, which if they pass, will give them the chance to choose a career.

To sum up, due to the long-term ethnic conflicts created by the State, the Pa-O have developed a general dislike of the *Bama*, the majority ethnic group in Myanmar. Although they seem to follow the development models brought in from outside, due to varying interests they have developed their own forms of resistance to outside intervention, in order to maintain their own culture and traditional systems. It can be seen that the negotiations the Pa-O carry out in pursuit of a better life are conducted using various forms. In addition to participation in state-led development projects, they have used local knowledge within the negotiation process and as one of the local responses to State intervention.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed how the local Pa-O people have engaged in negotiations with FREDa to improve their livelihoods and in the context of a state-directed community forest development program. I found that most local people consider the program as a way to support their livelihoods and so when introduced, adopted some of the activities introduced by the program. The way they participated passively in helping to establish the community forests can be clearly seen through their ideas on property relations within the community forests. The fact that they do not have a sense of ownership over the community forests shows most through their

lack of engagement in certain important steps in the participation process, such as decision making, benefits sharing etc. When the program was first introduced, they could not see the benefits it would bring due to the unclear and centralized management process introduced by FREDA, plus they felt unsure about the benefits they would gain from their involvement, and as a consequence, they lost a sense of having ownership rights over the CF plantations.

However, the road improvements that came along with the community forest project have brought real benefits to the villagers. Seeing the greater income generating opportunities brought by better linkages to the market in town, the villagers have adopted new strategies in terms of the post-harvest processing of their cash crops. For the local people; therefore, participating in the state-led development program has been one of their negotiating strategies. By negotiating through their participation in the income-generating activities of FREDA, the villagers have been able to utilize their knowledge, experience and skills in order to secure a sustainable livelihood. They have participated in income generating activities by growing the horticultural crops that FREDA encouraged them to grow in their compounds and on their farmland, under the agro-forestry system. As a result, the local people have been able to articulate the relationship between livelihoods and development on the one hand, and conservation and agricultural production on the other. By recognizing the impact of development on their lives, local people have tended to respond to state-initiated development program by articulating their local knowledge. The fact that they have situated their local knowledge within these negotiations can be clearly seen in their adoption of the new farming techniques introduced by FREDA.