



Lead Speaker I

SUSTAINABILITY OF FOREST-BASED PLANT BIOMASS EXTRACTIONS BY INDIGENOUS ETHNIC GROUPS OF NORTHEAST INDIA

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Abstract

The forest-based biomass extraction and consumption rates and patterns of Angami, Apatani, Nishi and Mizo indigenous communities in the Northeast India were studied. Apatanis extracted more fuelwood as compared to Angamis, Mizos and Nishis, whereas Mizos extracted more bamboo compared with Apatanis, Angamis and Nishis. An Apatanis family harvested more timber than an Angami or Mizo or Nishi household. Similarly, Nishis harvest most of other non-timber forest produces followed by Angamis, Apatanis and Mizos. The results show that all sections of the society are removing forest-based biomass equally. Timber and fuelwood removals by Apatanis and Angamis were greater than production.

Introduction

Policy makers, planners and foresters at the national and International levels are trying to conserve ever-depleting natural resources within the existing socio-political milieu. Solutions to such problems can't be found until studies quantify current level of exploitations and sustainabilities of such extractions. Unfortunately, quantitative data on forest-based biomass removals by local communities remained fragmentary (Hedge *et al.* 1996) despite millions of people extract forests products throughout tropics (Malhotra *et al.* 1991). Further, the sustainability of these removals has hardly been attempted (Rishi 1999). Such information form Northeast India in particular remained lacking.

Therefore, this study quantified extractions and consumptions of forest-based biomass by four indigenous communities namely Angami, Apatani, Nishi and Mizo of Northeast India with the aim of to assess sustainability of key forest-based produce in the region.

Methods

Survey used included two methods: first; general village level survey, and second; household level survey. The qualitative and quantitative information both at village and household level on forest-based plant extractions were gathered.

Generally, one interview with a group of villagers was conducted at the village level. During the village level interview, wide-ranging information about the village were sought following PRA method (Sethi & Hilaluddin 2001). Such interactions were generally good introduction to the purpose of surveys and therefore subsequent data collection at the village level became much simpler.

A total of 25 villages were surveyed in all, which represent four indigenous ethnic communities (Angamis 6; Apatanis 5; Nishis 8; Mizos 6). These villages were from the interior and exterior forest blocks among the settlements of these communities, thereby covering most of their habitation ranges.

After village level focal group interviews, the investigator was able to focus on the individuals, involved in some level of forest-based products extractions. Household data