

BRIDGING THE GAP

Policies and Practices on Indigenous Peoples' Natural Resource Management in Asia



Indigenous knowledge, innovations and practices on natural resource management are little understood by outsiders. Yet they are highly complex systems, closely interlinked with other indigenous systems. They incorporate a keen awareness of the environment and an appreciation for conservation and continuity. They also encourage sustainable innovation and place the long-term wellbeing of the community as the focus of all activities.

Indigenous resource management systems are also closely linked with other indigenous systems – including social, cultural, spiritual, economic, governance, juridical, health, technological and learning. The case studies from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand contained in this book reveal how indigenous natural resource management systems can be viable alternatives to current attitudes and practices to natural resource management. They also show why it is important that autonomy and indigenous rights to their territories are crucial for the successful implementation of their natural resource management systems.



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PREFACE

Natural Resource Management and access to and control over resources are identified as a critical concern faced by indigenous peoples throughout Asia. To address this, UNDP's Regional Indigenous Peoples' Programme (RIPP) conducted analytical studies on indigenous natural resource management systems and their interface with national laws and policies in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Consultations carried out with indigenous communities, governments, NGOs and academics have enriched and informed the studies and enabled the inclusion of a wide range of perspectives. The regional synthesis paper draws on the country assessments to identify gaps in policy and practice, and compiles key recommendations for further work on this issue.

The series provided substantive input at the 8th Conference of the Parties (COP8) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Curitiba, Brazil in March 2006. They also inspired the Regional Dialogue between government and indigenous representatives on Natural Resource Management in November 2007 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Through these processes, UNDP-RIPP aims to strengthen regional cooperation and dialogue to assist indigenous peoples and governments in adopting more inclusive and participatory approaches to natural resource management.

Several individuals, organizations and bodies have played a key role in realizing this Natural Resource Management series. We acknowledge and are grateful for the support provided by the UNDP Country Offices involved, particularly in Bangladesh and Cambodia, and for the generous sharing of information, knowledge and experiences by indigenous communities and governments. We would like to express our appreciation to PACOS Trust and COAC, Malaysia; IMPECT, Thailand; ICSO and NGO Forum, Cambodia; and Taungya, Bangladesh for their cooperation in this endeavour.



Special thanks also goes to all the NRM teams who have made the country studies possible and enabled wide consultations among communities and governments, and to Helen Leake for editing the reports.

AIPP is both an organization and network of indigenous peoples groups in Asia, with a secretariat based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It has several activities to advocate for indigenous resource management including coordinating participation of indigenous representatives in international fora such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; active engagement by indigenous peoples with national governments; and promotion on indigenous systems.

UNDP's Regional Programme on Indigenous Peoples aims to strengthen policy dialogue at the local, national and regional level on indigenous peoples' rights and sustainable development in the Asia region. The programme focuses on policy dialogue, advocacy and capacity-building measures and is part of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia-Pacific (2008-2011).

We hope this publication will help bridge the gap between policy and practice, and inspire greater collaboration and engagement towards participatory and inclusive natural resource management in Asia.

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