

Profile of the PhD and Masters Thesis (T Gyamtsho)

- 1) University** : Asian Institute of Technology
- 2) Department** : School of Environment, Resources and Development
- 3) Authors/Student** : Thinley Gyamtsho
- 4) Supervisor** : Prof. Ganesh P Shivakoti
- 5) Title of Thesis** : Environmental Conservation Policy in Bhutan: Impacts and Implication on the Rural Livelihood and Natural Resources
- 6) Subject and Discipline** : Masters in Natural Resources Management
- 7) Total pages** : 144 pages
- 8) Year of Award** : December, 2007
- 9) Address of the University/
Institute with Country** : Asian Institute of Technology, P.O. Box 4, Klong Luang, Pathumthani 12120, Thailand
- 10) Abstract of your thesis** : The purpose of conservation is to ensure continuous human welfare

from the natural environment. In reality it has provided a tool to legitimize for those who are in power to control the resources often at the cost of social welfare of the common people who are powerless. Conservation history in third world was not of a happily shared interest between rural people and the state conservation bodies wherein the local resource users were considered as an unnatural presence and cause disturbance to ecological equilibrium by their grazing animals, hunting lifestyles, and shifting cultivation practices. While on the other hand tourist with cameras, hotel proprietors and tour operators, scientist and big game hunters were allowed.

Bhutan already had more than 64% of the country's area under forest cover, while arable agriculture land constituted only 8%. Although, modern form of conservation started late in 1970s, in Bhutan has managed to allocate 39% of the country under the protected area system by 2004 (NCD, 2004) through the creation conservation areas. Its diverse ecosystems are endemic to more than 5,400 species of vascular plants, 770 species of birds and 170 species of mammals are known as the crown jewels of the Eastern Himalayas—a region recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot.

Intention of this study was to assess socioeconomic benefits of environmental conservation policy by explaining the rural livelihood characteristics in five study villages in three Dzongkhags. The study revealed that on the average 35% of the arable land is being fallow mainly due to the crop damage by wildlife, lack of labour to guard crop, and policy restrictions on landuse (overage Tseri). Within the cultivated area 45% of the production was damaged by wildlife despite allocating 29% of effective labour for guarding crops and doing protection works annually. In the study villages 14% of the households had one room, 60% of HH were temporary structure, and 85% of the household were older than thirty years indicating poor housing condition due to poor socioeconomic condition.

The study concluded that despite enormous benefit environmental conservation policy has help to achieved at the national level, it had not benefited directly 70% of the country's population who are staying in rural area. Rather rural farmers are enduring untold socioeconomic loss by having to restrict entitlements to their livelihood sources for the purpose of environmental conservation. This has resulted in increasing incidence of food deficit and poverty forcing 44% of the household in Kenmang to migrate to urban centres. This explains why the rural area has higher incidence of poverty rate of 38.3% compared to only 4.3% in urban area (NSB-RGoB, 2004). Study recommends that there is a need to institute cost and benefit sharing mechanism if the intention of environmental conservation policy is to ensure the welfare of all citizens. This will provide basis for realizing the most cherish goal GNH.

karmatenzing506@gmail.com, t_rabgay@moaf.gov.bt