THREE-YEAR MONITORING OF SHIFTING CULTIVATION FIELDS IN A KAREN AREA OF THE BAGO MOUNTAINS, MYANMAR

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We conducted a field survey in SN village, in the Bago Division of Myanmar. Through GPS mapping, interviews, and participant observation, we examined the present state of shifting cultivation in a Karen area by focusing on the vegetation in fallow lands and fallow period lengths. In 2002, 59 households (HHs) opened 60 plots for shifting cultivation. The village itself covered an area of 3970.62 ha (A). The 60 plots_covered 161.46 ha (B1), corresponding to an average plot size of 2.69 ha. In 2003, 62 HHs opened 65 plots for shifting cultivation, which covered 141.10 ha (B2) total with an average plot size of 2.17 ha. In 2004, 74 HHs opened 75 plots for shifting cultivation, with an aggregate area of 179.91 ha (B3) and an average plot size of 2.40 ha. Based on these figures, the potential maximum numbers of fallow years were 24.6 (A/B1) for 2002, 28.1 (A/B2) for 2003, and 22.1 (A/B3) for 2004. During the first fallow year, the land was covered with *Eupatorium odoratum*, which was replaced by bamboo (*Bambusa polymorpha* and *Bambusa tulda*) over several years. After 12 years, tree species such as *Xylia xylocarpa* gradually dominated the fallow lands. Despite the potential fallow periods, the actual fallow periods were only 17.9 years in 2002, 15.1 years in 2003, and 12.8 years in 2004. This difference may have occurred because lands left fallow for 12 to 18 years are covered with trees and bamboo. These lands can be easily cleared and they provide good burning material for shifting cultivation.

Keywords: Karen area, Shifting cultivation, Taungya, Fallow period, GPS mapping