Globalization and Indigenous Peoples in Asia

Changing the Local–Global Interface
GLOBALIZATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ASIA
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Editors

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SAGE Publications
New Delhi  Thousand Oaks  London
For

Krishna Raj

in memory of shared thoughts
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China has, for a long time, been the fastest growing economy in the world. India, too in recent years, has managed fairly high rates of economic growth. Yet, both countries have regions of intense poverty, regions whose conditions have been little relieved by overall national growth. These regions are those inhabited by the indigenous peoples, called minority nationalities in China and Scheduled Tribes in India.

The indigenous peoples, at the same time, provide valuable environmental services to the national, regional and global economies. As this book points out in detail with case studies from India and China, the indigenous peoples are asked to bear the costs of providing environmental services, the best example being the logging bans in both countries in order to improve flood control in the plains, without, however, there being any positive link between provision of these environmental services and their own livelihoods. This book makes a persuasive case for setting up compensation mechanisms to enable indigenous people to benefit from the provision of environmental services, in place of the current system of extracting these services through state regulation. Such a measure would link improved livelihoods of indigenous peoples with enhanced provision of environmental services at the national, regional and global levels.

Setting up compensation mechanisms for the provision of environmental services inevitably means increasing the scope of market mechanisms. While pointing out the possible benefits from an increased scope for market mechanisms, the book also bring out various negativities involved in the process and discusses possible ways of dealing with them. The measures proposed in this book, for instance, continued non-market access to critical livelihood resources, land and forests, and new combinations of private and public decision making, go some way towards enabling market-based decentralization to be designed in a manner that protects the interests of the indigenous peoples.
Over the 1990s the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has concentrated its work on poverty reduction among indigenous peoples of Asia. It is this concern which led IFAD to fund a research project on Creating Space for Local Forest Management in Asia. As part of the overall Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) research project, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok, Thailand, carried out the studies, many of which are published here. Although the case studies are of China and India, with one on Nepal, the analysis and lessons learned have a much wider relevance.

As the world comes to grips with the problems that need to be tackled in achieving the Millennium Development Goals the link between reducing the poverty of indigenous peoples and increasing the supply of globally needed environmental services (carbon sequestration, regulation of hydrological flows, etc.) looms large in the attention of policy-makers. This book is an important contribution to the designing of policies for the enhancement of the supply of environmental services and for the use of markets in a manner that contributes to the development of the indigenous peoples of Asia.

March 2004
Rome

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Most of the papers in this book (all except those by Nathan and Shrestha and Nathan and Jodha) were funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome. They were carried out at the Gender and Development Studies Center of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), as part of the research project Creating Space for Local Forest Management, carried out by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia. In China our collaborating institution was the Institute of Ethnology of the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, Kunming, China. Due to space limitations it has not been possible to include all of the case studies, in particular the studies by Prof. Guo Dalie, former Director of the Institute of Ethnology, Dr. K. S. Singh, former Director-General of the Anthropological Survey of India, and Samar Bosu-Mullick of Ranchi. The editors acknowledge the contributions of these scholars to the overall research project, without implicating them in the actual analyses of different papers.

The paper by Nathan and Shrestha was carried out under the IFAD–UNIFEM Gender Mainstreaming Programme in Asia; while Jodha worked on the paper (Nathan and Jodha) as part of a project on Globalization and Mountain Communities, financed by the MacArthur Foundation at International Centre for Mountain Area Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal.

Earlier versions of many of the papers were published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*. The papers on environmental services (Nathan; Kumar; Wang Qinghua; and Yu Xiaogang) were published together as a special section of the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 July 2001, vol. 36, no. 30; while the concluding paper (Nathan and Kelkar) was published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17–23 May 2003, vol. 38, no. 20. The paper by Nongbri was also published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3 August 2001, vol. 36, no. 31. Some of the papers were discussed at various workshops at Bangkok,
Thailand; Kunming, China; Shillong and New Delhi, India; and Victoria, Canada among other places.

A collection like this incurs debts to a large number of people: Phrang Roy and Ganesh Thapa at IFAD, Rome, Italy; Prof. Gajendra Singh, who was co-principal investigator of the research project; and various members of the staff of Gender and Development Studies, Emelyn Madayag, Emilyn Mission, Agnes Pardillia and Yee Yee Swe, for their administrative support at various stages of the research project; at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok, Thailand, Yu Xiaogang, who not only contributed some of the case studies, but played a key role in coordinating the Chinese studies; Prof. Guo Dalie, former Director of the Institute of Ethnology, Kunming, China who has been a constant source of support and encouragement for our work on China; the other coordinators of the CIFOR research project—Lini Wollenberg, David Edmonds, Madhu Sarin, Neera Singh, Liu Dachang and Antonio Contreras; Sadhna Jha, Krishna Kakad, Vandana Khurana and Lora Prabhu, at the IFAD–UNIFEM Gender Mainstreaming Programme in Asia, New Delhi, India; Krishna Raj and Padma Prakash, at the Economic and Political Weekly, for their work in editing some of the papers and for permission to reproduce them here; numerous participants at the various workshops who commented on the papers; a reviewer who gave us comments to help improve the manuscript; and Omita Goyal, Mimi Chowdury, our editors at Sage Publications, along with Larissa Sayers and the rest of the Sage production team, who saw this book through its various stages of publication.

Our thanks to all the institutions for helping carry out the research studies and for the publication of this book. Needless to say, the institutions involved are not responsible for the analyses and opinions in the papers, which remain the responsibility of the authors’ alone.
INTRODUCTION

Dev Nathan and Govind Kelkar

Indigenous peoples are faced with two processes that are profoundly influencing their ways of living and their livelihoods: the role of their resources in providing environmental services and the civilizational change of privatization with the generalization of market systems. These two processes form the subject matter of this book.

The indigenous peoples of Asia are generally embedded within various states. Their territories, with forests and mineral resources, have historically been important for extracting minerals and timber and other forest products from which the indigenous peoples have gained little but which have been used for accumulation by the states, both colonial states and their successors. Currently, there is great global concern over the necessity of ‘preserving’ the forests to meet various needs for environmental services, e.g., absorption of greenhouse gases and the regulation of hydrological flows. Two major Asian states, China and India, have both imposed ‘logging bans’ in an attempt to extract the necessary flood protection services from the uplands. In areas of community-owned and privately-owned forests this imposes great costs in terms of livelihood options.

Breaking the resource exclusion policies of the states and acknowledging the rights of the indigenous peoples over the forest resources they have historically managed is a way of reversing the current marginalization of the indigenous peoples in both the states within which they are, and from global actions. Sale of environmental services through the introduction of markets for these services, rather than their forced extraction by state fiat, will signal a redistribution of resources within globalization and give the indigenous peoples an increased stake in the provision of needed global public goods.

At the same time, the indigenous societies and economies, under the impact of the generalization of market processes, are undergoing changes in their economic and social system that mark a civilizational
change from a system based on stability to one based on accumulation. The new norms of production increase productivity, provide an advanced mode of self-activity and also provide improved well-being to many, but they come at the price of loss of guaranteed access to productive resources, the decline of traditional social welfare systems and the spread of commoditization. Such a transition, however, need not be a surrender to laissez faire or neo-liberal policies, but can deal with the negativities, including increasing masculine domination. New forms of community and continued non-market access to critical productive resources, like land and forests, would allow for a greater spread of the benefits of globalization.

Consequently, how to simultaneously deal with the marginality (exclusion) of indigenous peoples in global flows and with the laissez faire, nowadays called neo-liberal, privatization of indigenous peoples’ economies, in order to craft a more equal and democratic alternative, both globally and locally, are important issues in the context of globalization.

In the rest of the introduction, we will set out the background to the discussion in the book.

GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS

A recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-sponsored study identified six global problems that require urgent attention: the challenges of global warming; growing international inequality; crisis-prone financial markets; emergence of new drug-resistant disease strains; rapid loss of biodiversity; and genetic engineering (Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc Stern 1999).

To this list we should add an additional problem, which figured quite prominently at the Johannesburg Conference on Sustainable Development, 2000: providing clean and safe water. Further there are additional elements in the question of inequality. Inequality is no longer just a matter of international inequality, i.e., of inequality between nations. There is also the factor of inequality within nations—of regions within nations (or within multinational states); and of inequality within communities—i.e., of gender and class inequality.

Of these seven global problems requiring urgent attention, four are concerned with hill-forest regions and the indigenous peoples, either as the locus of the problem (inequality) or as pivotal actors who are suppliers (climate control, preservation of biodiversity and provision of clean and safe water).