

## Forest Resources

### BACKGROUND

Throughout Nimpala, a significant portion of both the rural and urban population depends on resources from the forest as a main source of energy, construction material as well as livelihoods. The increased demand for timber and collapse of effective management and the declining welfare of the nation witnessed a rapid increase in the rate of deforestation and threatened the remaining forested areas.

Timber and forest resources have historically been a critical feature of the nation's economy, especially during the civil war while the viability of other critical industries were decimated. The high value of timber on international markets and lack of enforcement of logging filled the void of Nimpala's otherwise declining GDP as factories and industries closed or shifted production to neighboring countries. The proportion of revenue from timber in the country's GDP shifted dramatically throughout the civil war. The World Bank estimated that legal and illegal timber was roughly 10% of the total export earnings in the late 1970's and had risen to 50% by the end of the conflict, demonstrating the decrease in other industries and the increase in the harvesting of timber.

One study showed that the value of timber exports as part of the country's GDP was roughly 5% prior to the civil war. In 2006, a second study showed that it had risen to more than 30% by the end of the conflict. The result was that timber became the primary source of government income and a central component of both rebel groups' financing and the ruling central government. Despite the profitability, the timber resources and their revenue are unevenly distributed in the country, located primarily in the northern and western region of the country. These areas, predominately controlled by the Akola, continue to threaten the peace between ethnic groups.

Timber logging has a wide range of impacts on the integrity of the environment and stability of the country. During the El-Bardi dictatorship, timber concessions were concentrated with several companies. The shift in ruling powers quickly annulled these contracts and re-allocated timber concessions as a way to maintain power, money, and control of the ruling tribes. As the civil war intensified, disputes of ownership over the already unequally distributed forest resources intensified ethnic tensions. Illegal timber increased and the state's capacity to enforce management disappeared. Rebel groups increasingly harvested timber and smuggled them into the north country, utilizing ethnic ties and weak border monitoring and control.

Timber became the primary funding source for the war while simultaneously, a significant source of energy for domestic and industrial uses. According to one estimate from an international NGO, 79% of the population depended on charcoal for fuel wood and heating.

After several high profile reports from leading NGOs linking timber revenue from illicit logging to the purchasing of weapons that were fueling the civil conflict, the United Nations Security Council began discussing

the need for intervention in Nimpala. As a response to these allegations, the President tried to avoid repercussions by establishing a protected areas system comprising 30% of the remaining forest area. Efforts to reduce logging from rebel groups were even less effective. Within Nimpala's timber industry and abroad, calls were issued for an embargo on exportation until the logging could be reigned in and properly regulated. In 2005, the UN Security Council issued a resolution prohibiting the importation of Nimpalan timber products by member states.

This unprecedented move by the UN greatly influenced the Nimpala peace building process but has subsequently hurt the economy and government revenue. A review committee was established and holds great power over Nimpala's government and economy through the force of sanctions.

The sanctions quickly weakened the nation's economy. The sanctions have remained in place and the current government has prioritized forest management in an effort to have them lifted. The country remains hobbled without timber revenue to reinvigorate the economy. There is significant support from the President, who has repeatedly stated a review and overhaul of the timber industry and concessions is necessary for the country's development and progress.

A team of several United Nations agencies conducted a rapid assessment of the remaining forested areas immediately after the peace accord was signed. Using satellite imagery analysis, the team identified deforestation "hotspots."

The assessment team created a classification of land use and land cover, showing that the country has a wide distribution of micro-climates, including desert and semi-desert trees and shrubs, riverine forests, low rainfall woodland savannah, tropical forests, and plantations. A large portion of Nimpala has semi-closed woodlands with numerous ground cover of grasses and shrubs. Fully closed forests are located in the most humid areas in the North and Western regions.

Although Nimpala's forests are critically threatened, studies prior to the civil war documented rich forest ecosystems. Reports from conservation organizations found over 240 timber species, 2,000 vascular plants, 125 mammal species, 490 bird species, 54 reptile and amphibian species, and over 1000 insect species. Several rare species remain in the western regions.

The teak plantations, established by the British in the late 1800's, have been controlled by the government since the 1940's.

Deforestation due to local pressures for charcoal exist, but are hard to quantify. Nimpala has lost 30% of primary forests since the start of the civil war.

## **FORESTRY SECTOR KEY IMPACTS AND REMAINING CONCERNS**

There are several major concerns in this field:

**Deforestation:** This widespread and effectively permanent reduction in tree cover has wide range of impacts on the environmental, social and economic issues in Nimpala. The negative impacts include loss of rangeland, increased land, soil and water degradation, and loss of livelihoods from forest ecosystem services.

**Charcoal Production:** The absence of other sustainable and affordable sources of energy continue to increase the demand and harvest of timber resources. The Eastern regions have traditionally been reliant on the west and northern regions for large portions of their charcoal production. This only adds to the pre-existing ethnic

tensions. Recommendations for different management techniques are being discussed but so far enforcement capacity is too limited for implementation of a permit system.

Illegal Timber: The widespread harvest of timber remains unregulated and unmonitored. Concessions were given by multiple administrations and are poorly implemented. The Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture remains weak and without resources. Although UN sanctions have greatly reduced quantity harvested, it remains a serious problem.

Characteristics of forest and other wooded land			
FRA 2005 categories	Area (1000 hectares)		
	Forest		
	1985	2000	2008
Primary	6879	6048	5593
Modified Natural	23908	20890	18640
Semi-natural	1108	1048	983
Productive Plantation	2750	2084	1978
Protective Plantation	1048	509	483
Total	35693	30579	27677