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Reviews in Brief

Planning Process of Community Development: Village Development Plan, Asian Productivity Organization, Tokyo, Japan, 2002. Pp. 332.

The volume contains proceedings of an International seminar on ‘Comparative Study on Planning Process of Local Community Development: Village Development Plan’ organised by the National Productivity and Economic Development Center (NPEDC) of Nepal in collaboration with the Asian Productivity Organization (APO), Tokyo in 1999. The broad theme of the seminar was to discuss participatory local level planning by focusing on village development plan and the merits and demerits and cost of involvement of such participatory planning. Specifically it aims “to identify the basic principles of sustainable village development planning by analysing the experiences of village development planning practices in member countries and to suggest future directions to improve village development planning in member countries”. Divided into four parts, the volume includes the summary of findings, 11 resource papers, 12 country papers presented by 18 participants, field visits and discussion. The papers in the volume deal with thematic studies covering topics such as the conceptual framework of village development planning, information collection and situation analysis for village development planning, preparation of village profiles, planning procedures of the village development plan, strategies for the participation of local population in the planning process, role and function of facilitators to proceed with such planning process and changing role of central government towards a trend for local level planning with decentralisation and center-local relation in the changing context. The country paper presentations based on the experiences of selected twelve APO member countries, Bangladesh, Republic of China, Fiji, India, Iran, Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam provides useful information on commonalities and variations of planning process among the member countries. The findings and recommendations that emerged from the papers reached a consensus on the importance of local peoples’ participation in the planning process for sustainable local community development. It was felt that participatory planning should be incorporated into the entire development administration process through a policy of decentralisation. Besides co-operation and strategic alliances among three major stakeholders of participatory planning, viz., government organisations, non-government organisations, civil society and private sector are also important to create a holistic approach to participatory development. The study concludes that participatory planning process should be strengthened for sustainable local community development in their respective countries. The volume would be very useful to policy makers, planners, training

officers, academicians, NGO staff and other concerned with planning for effective local community development.

Trees on the Farm: Assessing the Adoption Potential of Agroforestry Practices in Africa, Edited by S. Franzel and S. J. Scherr, CABI Publishing, CAB International, Wallingford, Oxon, U.K., 2002. Pp. x + 197. £ 35.00.

The study attempts to build a synthesised package of biophysical and socio-economic information on agroforestry and its adoption by farmers by assessing the adoption of selected agroforestry practices developed with African farmers, describing methods for assessing the adoption potential of agroforestry practices through participatory on-farm trials and drawing out the implications for research, development and policy. The approach and methods described in the book are based on four conceptual issues: (i) we assume that a systems approach is required in assessing adoption potential; (ii) Participatory research approaches are needed to ensure that farmers play a leading role in problem diagnosis, testing and evaluation of new practices; (iii) Financial analysis and farmer assessment are both needed to complement biophysical assessment of a technology; and (iv) the interaction of actors made possible through the on-farm research process itself can strengthen the technology development process, and accelerate dissemination of new information, by compressing in time the conventional sequential information transfer pattern. The study presents five case studies from three contrasting zones: hedgerow intercropping for improving soil fertility in eastern Zambia and western Kenya, improved tree fallows for improving soil fertility in eastern Zambia and western Kenya, multipurpose agroforestry trees in western Kenya, and fodder trees for dairy cows in central Kenya, to evaluate the adoption potential of agroforestry. Maize, the main food staple in eastern and southern Africa is the most important crop component of all the agroforestry practices examined in the case studies. The insights provided by the case studies indicate that agroforestry reduces the risks that farmers face from input markets by investing small amounts of land and labour, rather than spending cash on expensive inputs, for improving soil fertility, feeding their livestock, or providing wood for fuel and construction.