

## THE BAMBOO STUDY

### Study objectives

The objectives of the study were as follow.

- To determine traditional and current relationships between the bamboo resources and human inhabitants of the area; most importantly, the **role of bamboo in the local economy and in commercial enterprise and the impacts of commerce on the resource.**
- To identify and record **traditional uses, indigenous knowledge, and local resource management systems** related to forests generally and bamboo specifically.
- To determine the **vulnerability of bamboos to commercialisation and other outside influences** (timber logging, grazing, roads, and so on), using a **Rapid Plant Vulnerability Assessment Scale** adapted with modifications from a previous example in the literature.

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<sup>1</sup>There are two main studies of AFRs in Bhutan (FAO 1996 and Dorji 1995). Several more specific works are also available, including on the medicinals *chirata* (Pradhan et al. 1998) and *pipila* (Pradhan et al. 1999), *shu-gu* or *Daphne* for paper-making (Hadorn and Wangda 1999, cf. Messerschmidt 1988), citral or lemongrass oil (RNR-RC 1996), and varieties of 'shi' or bamboo (Stapleton 1994a,b).

- To consider ways to promote **participatory management** of the resource considering the rights and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders.

### Research timing and methods

The research was conducted during the dry winter months at the height of the traditional annual bamboo harvesting season. A combination of expert, semi-structured, and focus group interviews (rapid appraisal methods) was used (see Plate 2), coupled with on-site observation of the resource in the forest and of roadside bamboo mat production. Discussions were held with a variety of local decision-makers, forestry officials, traditional forest users, and bamboo harvesters. These included the sub-district administrator (the 'Dasho Dungpa'), divisional foresters, forestry extension officers, forestry operations' staff, village leaders (including the 'gup', or headman), and local residents (men and women) who identified themselves as contract cutters, mat-makers, and end users. The villagers interviewed were residents of the village of Wamrong in Lumang Block ('geog') and Khaling (Khaling Block) of Tashigang District (see Figure 1). We also reviewed the field notes of colleagues associated with the project,<sup>[4]</sup> and pertinent documents such as the Khaling-Kharungla forest management plan and operational plan (Chamling 1996, DFO 1997).<sup>[5]</sup> To guide the fieldwork, data analysis, and write-up, a topical checklist was prepared by the research team.<sup>[6]</sup>



Plate 2: Bamboo cutters' focus group meeting with the research team.