

THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF
FOREST LAND POLICY IN VIETNAM:
A CASE STUDY OF LANG BEO VILLAGE

By

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Abstract

Vietnam's 1993 land law gave land-use rights to individuals to improve forest management by allowing individuals to reap the benefit of their work while managing the land within government regulations. This thesis analyses the impacts of forest land policy on livelihood security, forest protection, and gender equity, and considers the future challenges facing people in a specific village.

The general research method is a case study of an ethnic minority group, in a rural, primarily subsistence village, in northern Vietnam. The specific research methods included: 8 weeks of field observation, 4 participatory rural appraisal activities, 20 in-depth interviews with 8 key informants, 12 sample household interviews, and 20 semi-structured interviews.

This thesis shows that privatising forest land has had a negative socio-economic impact on poor people in the village, placing their livelihood security at greater risk. This negative impact is primarily attributable to the inequity of the forest land allocation process and the outcome of the allocation, as well as vague and inconsistent policies.

The land allocation policy and government afforestation programs have helped increase the amount of trees planted and reduce the amount of forest exploitation the farmer does on his/her own land; however, it has contributed to new socio-economic problems. Growing wealth disparities have created a new deforestation problem; namely that poorer households now resort to stealing forest products. This acts as a disincentive for farmers to engage in agroforestry on the barren hillsides. Furthermore, women are

being left out of the forest protection planning process and are losing decision-making authority both in their households and in their village.

In conclusion, the case study demonstrates that without an equitable, inclusive land allocation process to prevent further poverty, land policy can have negative socio-economic impacts. Forest protection cannot occur when people live in poverty; they cannot invest time and money into agroforestry, nor can they afford to protect the hillside crops and forest for the long-term gain unless their immediate food needs are met.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

Much modern interest in common property resources was instigated by Hardin's seminal article, *Tragedy of the Commons*, first published in 1968. Since this time there has been debate over the concept in the academic literature and arising from field work done in the social, environmental and economic aspects of common property rights. Although a flourishing field of study now exists on common property resources, in policy practice, only two options of land policy, either singular or in combination, seem to be considered and employed. These options are private land rights or state-ownership, or a combination of the two, such as private tenure on state-owned land.

The current trend of liberalising globalisation is making the market-oriented, land privatisation model more prevalent, to the point that there remain few examples of state ownership, socialist-modelled nations. In the past two decades, we have seen many examples of major economic reforms, with some form of land privatisation being the primary change. They have had significant impacts in rural areas of Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, Poland, Nicaragua, Mongolia and others places. This thesis is concerned with land policy changes in Vietnam.

Since 1987, the government of Vietnam has been implementing a program of economic renovations (Doi Moi) to move the country from a centrally-planned economy toward a more open market-oriented economy. The greatest change affecting rural

farmers, who represent over 80 percent of the nation's population, is "the total abandonment of the public land ownership system that had existed for thirty years" (Kolko 1997:47). With this change, the legal status and rights of the household (family) economy are now legally recognised, with land-use rights, assigned to households for 20 to 50 years (according to type of land-use), being established (UNDP 1996). This reform has been described as quasi-private or "defacto privatisation" (Irvin 1997:47) since the land remains owned and controlled by the government, though the majority has been allocated to individual households. Since the 1993 amendments allowing land-use rights to be transferred, leased, inherited and used as collateral, this in effect establishes "the beginnings of a land market" (Dao The Tuan 1995:157).

Forest land allocation is of particular importance since about 55 percent of this mountainous country consists of land defined as forest, and over one-third of the population relies directly on forests for livelihood. Furthermore, land-use rights to forest land are being passed from the State to the households for the first time, whereas agricultural land-use rights have been transferred from the collective (communes) to the households. This meant people had some prior claims to land that their family had generally maintained during the collective period. Thus, the agricultural land allocation process was more straightforward in delineating individual plots largely on the basis of land division under the collective system. In the forest land allocation process, more discretionary authority can be exercised by those involved locally in the process. Although it is impossible to isolate the forest land allocation effects from agricultural land distribution effects, the primary focus of the thesis is the forest land allocation process and the consequences that have occurred since this land distribution.

In many villages, forest land has remained a common resource, generally the only commons, up until this most recent land policy change. Common land is one of the only resources that women have traditionally had free access to "relatively unfettered by the control of men" (Jacobson 1993:69). This loss of the common resource notably impacts women, especially those of poor households, since they are generally responsible for meeting their family's daily food needs, and other basic needs, and since they have historically relied significantly on the forest for additional resources to meet these needs, especially in periods of food shortage.

1.2 Purpose

There is a need for more systematic and extensive research to examine the socio-economic and environmental impacts of such land reform, including reform where quasi-privatisation supplants state ownership and/or common management¹. The goal of the thesis is to answer the question: *in what ways has the privatisation of forest land created social dynamics that impinge on livelihood opportunities in agroforestry² utilisation?*

Because lower levels of government implement the Central government's forestry policies, this results in great diversity in the way in which they are executed, studying a specific area is necessary to assess how the policy change actually affects a situation.

Much of the socio-economic effects that are recorded in Vietnam are on the basis of agricultural land reform. This thesis evaluates Lang Beo village, which is primarily dependent on land classified as forest (75 percent of the village land). The case study

¹ The primary organization representing this interest is the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP).

focuses on changes that have occurred in the village of Lang Beo since the forest land allocation and reforestation program began in 1996. The case study serves to examine the particular local impacts of the change in land policy, documents the process of policy implementation in this specific location, and briefly compares the case study village changes to those occurring in other places in Vietnam. The village studied for the case study is located in the North Central region of the country. In this region, 74 percent of rural dwellers are estimated to live in poverty, a higher percentage than for any other region in the country (Irvin 1997:59).

Lang Beo village is also ideal since it is located only about 5 kilometres from the district capital and can be accessed by vehicles. Due to this easy access, the market economy has already had a strong effect on the people's lives. For example, each week, 2 to 3 large trucks on average come from the district and provincial capitals to purchase corn, pigs, wood and other items. A more remote village, where the residents are even more dependent on forest land, could have been studied; however, these more upland villages are often not accessible by road and, in most cases, have not been strongly affected by the market economy. In evaluating the forest land policy impacts, it is important to assess both the new land market, as well as the market for cash crops, the emerging wage-earning class, and the extent of valued added work.

To provide context for the case study the thesis discusses the theoretical underpinnings of community-based resource management and property rights, documents general land reform effects in the country, and briefly traces the history of Vietnam's

² Agroforestry is "the deliberate growth and management of trees, along with agricultural crops and/or livestock, in systems that aim to be economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable" (APAN 1996).

land policies to understand the sequence of transitions that have occurred to bring the reforms to where they are today.

The specific objectives of the research are:

- to gain an understanding of the current situation and trends in forest land use and land allocation in Lang Beo village;
- to document the current status and trends in the new and emerging economic stratum in Vietnamese society, and to identify characteristics of each strata in Lang Beo village;
- to assess the forest land policy and Programme 327 impacts on the access to resources, equity of opportunity, decision-making authority, and work load, and in particular, the gender contrasts between men and women;
- to consider the future challenges the people of the village may face in regard to forest protection, livelihood security, and gender equity in opportunities.

1.3 *Methods*

Gaining official approval to research relatively freely at village-level can be very difficult to obtain in Vietnam. To achieve this, I volunteered to work for an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) at a project site in Ngoc Lac District of Thanh Hoa Province (see Appendix I for the location map). The objective of my work was to evaluate the effectiveness of the forest-related assistance that the NGO was providing in one of the 44 villages included in the project. Furthermore, I was asked to employ

participatory rural appraisal (PRA) research approaches to assist the people in identifying the causes of deforestation, and to seek to develop a forest protection plan to alleviate these problems. PRA techniques were used to involve a variety of people from the village in conducting their own needs assessment, problem identification, community action plan, and strategy implementation (Slocum 1995). At the completion of the field research, a meeting was organised to share the research findings with local residents and project staff, to assist and encourage other villages to conduct similar evaluations, and to promote the development of a district-wide forest protection strategy. About 50 people attended the meeting, including most of the village and commune leaders included in the NGO's project, the NGO staff, local government officials, and district forest protection unit representatives. Upon returning to Canada, I prepared a report summarising my findings and submitted a set of recommendations to the NGO.

1.3.1 Research Style

During my time in the field I worked with two different interpreters who travelled with me from Hanoi to Thanh Hoa province. We lived in the home of the village leader and his family. The village leader is the village spokesperson and primary decision-maker for the land allocation process, forest protection planning, and implementation of the international NGO's project. The village leader is the most informed person regarding government policy and implementation, the NGO project and village participation, and the changes and dynamics occurring within the village. My regular interaction with him and his family was extremely helpful in gaining basic information and insights, and in being able to discuss my findings on a daily basis.

The field research was conducted over an eight week period, with the majority of my time being spent living in Lang Beo village. Both direct observation and participation observation were used as research methods in the village. During the first two to three weeks, an anthropological approach was applied, to learn how the people live and interact on a day-to-day basis. This entailed observing, informally interviewing people, and facilitating participatory rural appraisal activities regarding: (a) what type of work they do and where they work on a day-to-day basis, (b) what resources they depend on for livelihood, and how they use these resources, and (c) how they organise themselves in distributing the resources. As trust and understanding were established between the people of the village and myself, key informants revealed more personal information, including observations on social problems that were arising within the village. This information was generally shared in informal settings, such as while sharing meals, or in late-night discussions.

1.3.2 Specific Research Methods

The methods employed to gather empirical data included: 8 weeks of field observation, 20 in-depth interviews with 8 key informants, 12 sample household interviews, 20 semi-structured interviews, and 4 PRA activities. To verify key findings, up to 3 research methods were employed in order to cross-reference information.

The majority of my time was spent with 8 key informants, including the village leader and his wife, the Women's Union Leader, 2 forest security guards, the District Forest Protection Unit representative, and men from 2 of the wealthiest households who purchase products from people in the village and sell in the District capital. Some of the information provided by key informants that related to village-wide issues was verified

by conducting sample household interviews with families of varying income levels. Households were also selected to represent a diverse spatial area of the village, since primary concerns and issues can vary depending on location of house and land access.

The 20 semi-structured interviews were often conducted as follow-up to information gathered from key informant interviews. These interviews were conducted with the following people: representatives of Programme 327 at each government level (district, provincial and central); 2 village leaders and 6 farmers from a bordering village to Lang Beo village; 7 staff with the international NGO working on a project in Ngoc Lac District; and representatives of 2 different NGOs working on forestry issues in other areas in Vietnam.

Small groups of men and women were gathered together to conduct PRA activities and for semi-structured discussions (see Appendix II for a description of the PRA activities and the findings). My role was as facilitator to assist the people in using tools such as maps and land-use transects to identify the problems, and to develop effective ideas on practical solutions. During the small group, semi-structured discussions, we sat in a circle in order to facilitate participation by all group members. I often went around the circle asking each participant similar questions to retrieve information about their specific household activities and work schedules. Discussing in a group format facilitates spontaneous discussion, and the exchange of ideas and opinions with one another. This approach was particularly successful for the women who responded to help the group formulate their ideas and share their opinions.

Initially, a mix of men and women were gathered together, however, this was deemed unsuccessful since women tended not to participate or contribute to the

discussion when men were present. In fact, women tended to be timid and cautious with their input if a man was present, even if he wasn't formally participating in the discussion. To address this, the women and myself began to gather at the leader of the Women's Union house. She is a divorced woman and the head of her household. In this atmosphere, the participants were much more confident in stating their opinions, even when these opinions were critical of the power structure and of the attitudes and behaviour of some of the men of the village.

The history of Vietnamese land policy has been summarised in order to evaluate current changes in a historical context. Books and articles by both Vietnamese and foreign scholars were consulted to gain an objective and balanced perspective. A detailed chronology of forest policy since 1945 was obtained primarily from government documents. Such specifics are necessary in order to evaluate and understand the wide ranging socio-economic effects that are involved in such policy reform and how they can impact people's lives.

1.4 Limitations

Although the study provides important insights into the land allocation process, and the socio-economic impacts of this at the village level, as well as its relation to national policies, it is important to realise its limitations. The research is a micro-study of a particular ecological and cultural region, subject to a particular local government jurisdiction, and therefore the findings must be seen as specific to this community. One of the most important limitations in this study is the fact that the forest land allocation process, and the degree of access to and dependence on the market-oriented economy, are

still in their early stages. More time will be required before the full socio-economic impacts of these changes can be evaluated both in this particular village, and for Vietnam's rural communities in general. However, the data presented in this study could be used as baseline information for a follow-up study in 3 to 5 years.

In addition, the study was limited by time. Ideally, the field research would have been conducted over a year in order to assess the uses of forest products, the threats to forest protection, and the changes in men's and women's work schedules in each season. Furthermore, it would be useful to conduct follow-up studies in the future, perhaps every 3 to 5 years, to assess the on-going and new trends relating to wealth disparities, livelihood security, natural resource sustainability, and inter-generational and gender equity.

Several other field studies conducted in the rural areas of Vietnam have sought to employ rapid rural appraisal research methods. In general, however, these studies have sought to cover a much larger area of land and population, and have been conducted over even a shorter time frame, often as short as 3 to 4 days. The present study illustrates the value of building up respondent confidence and close collaboration on the basis of day-to-day participation in local community activities.

1.5 Organisation

This thesis consists of five chapters that are written in such a way that they can be read and understood individually. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework for the research by summarising property theory and providing examples of socio-economic and environmental impacts of property right's implementation, especially in eras of land

reform. Chapter 3 provides a brief summary of Vietnam's land management, including specifics of the forest land policies since 1945, and surveys the effects of the agricultural and forest land reform. Chapter 4 gives a description of Lang Beo village and reports the findings of the case study, describing the land allocation process, its outcomes, and the impacts on wealth disparities, forest protection, and gender equality. This chapter also discusses the future challenges that people of Lang Beo will likely face under a market economy. Chapter 5 then summarises the thesis and the research objective findings, and suggests implications for theory and policy and practice.

Chapter 2: Property Rights and Land Transformation

This chapter provides a summary of common property theory and the implications of this for the management of natural resources. It provides information on the current state of forests, their importance in environmental protection and in terms of livelihood strategies, and summarises recent trends in forest resources management.

2.1 *Common Property Theory*

Over-exploiting of natural resources and the critical state of resource scarcity has led to the need for the development of the resource management field; the application of ecology and economics. Community-based resource management is an alternative to resource management generally controlled by central government agencies. Community-based resource management provides local people decision-making authority and control over their immediate resources (Grima and Berkes 1989).

Common property theory provides the theoretical underpinning for community-based resource management systems. In recent decades, a group of economists and political scientists have emerged promoting and studying common property approaches as viable options to previously prevailing methods of resource management. (Berkes, Bishop, Bromley, Ciriacy-Wantrup, Ostrom, et al.).

Common property theory recognises four general categories of property rights (Bromley 1992) involving the following alternative systems:

- i. open access -- access to the resource is unregulated, and is free and open to everyone (i.e. the absence of well-defined property rights);
- ii. communal property - the resource is owned or occupied by an identifiable community of interdependent users, and these users are able to exclude outsiders while regulating resource use by members (such communal rights may be either de facto or legally recognised);
- iii. state property - the rights to the resource are vested exclusively in the government; and
- iv. private property - individual legal title exists, involving the right to exclude others from using the resource; with such rights generally recognised and enforced by the State.

There are few common-property resources that are held exclusively as open access, communal or state property. More prevalent is a combination of more than one of these categories. For example, historically, many traditional societies' communal property resources have been nationalised and turned into state property. Changes in resource management can complicate ownership status, confuse people, and create social disharmony and anarchy, often causing further resource depletion (Berkes and Farvar 1989).

Garret Hardin's influential paper *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968) presented a scenario involving open access grazing, and concludes that each 'rational herdsman' will take advantage of the other herdsmen by continuing to add one more animal to his herd, then another, until the commons (in this case grazing lands) are depleted. The article has

been criticised for not recognising historical and contemporary examples of success stories in devising common property regimes and in portraying destructive competition for resources as inevitable. The paradigm has been deemed a typical neo-classic economic perspective, in which individual behaviour is expected to be dominated by an obsession with individual self-interest.

Mancur Olson, in *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), questioned the relatively common belief that a group of rational people can be expected to cooperate, even if such cooperation is in their collective interest and benefits each individual (Prakash 1998). This argument has frequently been applied to the commons, leading to the control of resources being removed from local people's power and placed under private or state control (Berkes 1989:39). Under today's prevalent market-economy paradigm, common property is more often privatised, since this is often viewed as or asserted to be the only viable option (Prakash 1998).

Despite this criticism, historical examples of 'commons' have typically not represented a system of open access exploitation, but a resource-use regime able to apply social and orderly arrangements to promote sustainable practices. For example, prehistoric hunting and gathering societies often used land communally with some means of regulation. These varied from control by tribal heads, limiting access by closing during certain seasons, and various types of social taboos. "These institutions managed the resources on a sustained yield basis, and common ownership, far from being the cause of overexploitation, may have been the primary reason for preservation of resources" (Stevenson 1991:47).

As resources become scarcer, there is need for a mechanism to allocate and conserve the resources, either through a market process, a communal agreement, or a coercive regime. Resource allocation can thus be defined as "rights to access and use a resource, rather than the right to the resource" (Grima and Berkes 1989:39). The most important aspect of the allocation of rights-to-use is that it is "perceived as being fair within the institutional - cultural context" (Ibid.). "Lack of explicit allocative decisions, or allocations perceived to be unfair or unenforceable, lead to resource degradation and the related injustice among resource users" (Ibid.).

Hardin (1968) pointed out that there is need for mutual coercion, and defined it as the force of law that respects the right of property, or the community's peer pressure, that enforces responsible use. Peer pressure may be easier to implement and may be more sustainable since this comes from the interactions and culture of the community.

The main advantage to community-based resource management systems is that the community has an incentive to apply sustainable practices for their long-term benefit, and able to benefit from a cost savings through the ease of facilitating information and through avoiding having to apply peer pressure, as opposed to an outside enforcement regime (generally from government or private ownership). "In many circumstances, common property is a superior solution to private property, depending on the natural resource configurations, technological constraints for renewing the resource at the pace it is depleted, and the [savings of] transaction costs" (Stevenson 1991:70).

However, once a market economy is established, communal ownership and control are usually extremely difficult to maintain. For example, "even Amerindian peoples cheat each other because there is a world outside the reservation where the fruits

of cheating is called success." (Grima and Berkes 1989:39). Powerful outside interests often combine with the process of resource degradation to result in dispossession of local users, and the disappearance of community-based management systems (Ibid.).

It thus appears that the debate as to whether communal systems are feasible need no longer to be the focus of debate given the abundant historical and contemporary examples of such systems. Instead, these examples should be recognised as potentially viable, and the focus should shift to devising practical and successful approaches to propose to implement communal systems in today's competitive, capitalist-dominated society.

On the other hand, community-based or collective social systems are no guarantee of sustainable natural resource management. Socialist policies generally involve the State owning all or the majority of property and "having a security apparatus which tightly limits the expression of disagreement with government policies" (Pelzer 1994:5). This dominance by government authority and policies can simply facilitate foreign capitalist firms access to a country's natural resources (Ibid.). A businessman engaged in seeking lucrative foreign investments commented, at an international conference on Japan-Vietnam relations, that:

"When it comes to extraction of natural resources, all you need is a strong government and some kind of tradition that whatever is not owned by the private sector is owned by the State and therefore it is alienable by the State in some sense" (Ibid., 2).

Both liberal capitalism and state socialism are culpable for exploitative development and natural resource destruction (Regier 1989). Continued deforestation

affirms the failure of conventional forest management, generally state-controlled lands with policies that facilitate commercialisation and the ever-more rapid depletion of timber resources. "No longer can management objectives for forests lands rest on commercial extraction of a limited range of timber and pulpwood products to supply industrial demands. Neither can we realistically expect that establishing fast-growing tree plantations will halt or replace degrading natural forests." (Ibid., 112).

2.2 Global Forestry Trends

Below is a discussion of forestry trends related to policies and the community forestry movement in developing countries.

2.2.1 Forest Policy Trends in Developing Countries

Until the 1950-60's, most of Southeast Asia's tropical forests were managed by indigenous people as communal property, rather than by government. It is now widely thought by individual analysts that the forests were better managed under indigenous people's control, since they used the forest resources sustainably in a variety of ways, both to hunt and farm. The forest remained more diverse, and larger areas remained protected from clear-cutting. Over the past 40 years, over 80 percent of the world's tropical forest have been brought under government ownership, abrogating or over-ruling traditional rights to forest control. In this same time period, more acreage of tropical forests has been deforested than ever before in history (Miller 1991).³

Foreign investment has had severe effects on forest ecosystems and environmental health. A majority of the timber cut in developing countries is exported to

³ The author recognizes other factors have contributed to this rapid deforestation rate, such as an increasing population.

feed developed countries' demand for wood. This foreign investment does not just affect extraction rates, it also influences what species are planted. For example, despite the devastating effects of eucalyptus trees in lowering water tables and in depleting soil nutrients, Vietnam still plants these fast growing trees to supply Japan's unsatiable paper demand (Pelzer 1994:3).

Early attempts at forest management in many developing countries resulted in most forested areas coming under the control of central governments, which enforced a prohibition of any "unauthorised" activities within the forest zone. The assumption typically was that, if rural people were given control over the forest, they would exploit and clear it for survival or profit. Foresters were thus empowered to act as guardians and law enforcers, and sought to keep the people away from the resources. In contrast, by the late 1970s, the birth of the community forestry movement, came to recognise local people as the best solution to forest protection, rather than as the main problem. Forest management policies and projects in several countries then began to encourage the participation of local people, and these led several governments to assign "stewardship rights" to local communities to manage the resource. In the course of the 1980s, acceptance of community forestry principle and practices continued to gain momentum under a variety of names, such as "social forestry" and "trees for the people." The assumption was now that local people are better able to manage forests than under-financed government forestry departments, so it was recommended that all except protection forests should be turned back to local community or traditional control. The only role assigned to forest department officers should be as extension agents, rather than land managers.

The community forestry movement continues on a small scale, generally through the efforts of NGOs, but the most recent trend in developing countries has been toward privatisation of government-owned enterprises, including forestry resources (Pardo 1993). In Vietnam the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), including state forest enterprises, are in the process of being privatised and in some cases have accepted joint foreign investment arrangements (Kolko 1997). As in other developing and developed countries, multi-national corporations are coming to own extensive and increasing amounts of the remaining forest land.

Vietnam's sequence of forest management policies mirror quite closely the experience of other developing countries, with policy changes generally occurring a few years behind other developing countries. Vietnam, however, has never experienced either full communal or widespread private property management in their true forms, since the government has always applied top-down control and has tended to dominate decision-making authority. Vietnam's forest policy history is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.2.2 Community Forestry Movement

Community forestry has continued to be implemented in a handful of developing countries over the past 15 to 20 years, primarily with assistance and encouragement from international NGOs, and in North America for just the past 5 to 8 years (Hawkins 1998). Community forestry is increasingly recognised for its capacity to address integrated development and conservation objectives, often objectives that have been designated in many countries as urgent national priorities (Mittelman 1997).

In Vietnam, for over a decade there have been community forestry pilot programs, largely funded by foreign donors and technical assistance agencies. The progress of these efforts has been substantial, although actually implementing long-term community forestry projects is far from being accomplished, and there remain many obstacles and constraints to accomplishing this (Mittelman 1997).

A primary constraint to community forestry is the 1993 Land Law. Although land-use rights are being reallocated from the State to households, this privatisation of forest land can be in conflict with the potential for promoting community forestry. As households replace cooperatives as the primary economic units, this has resulted in some cases, in reduced cooperation among the farmers. Furthermore, government 'safety net' programs have recently been down-sized or completely eliminated, leaving the disadvantaged with no government or communal assistance, and thus has often left many families in a vicious cycle of poverty.

2.3 *The Effects of Land Reform*

Following World War II, land reform was a primary policy by which the more powerful nations sought to influence other countries (especially Japan, Korea and China). The Bretton Wood meetings of 1944 established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now known as the World Bank) to act as world-wide policy advisors and to provide funding respectively for long-term structural adjustments and development projects.

In the 1970's and 1980's land reform became a focus of the IMF and World Bank as a means to promote rural development in developing countries. During this period, the

World Bank made land reform a condition to receiving money through their structural loan program. Of 63 out of 71 countries that introduced structural policies and received World Bank loans since 1980, "70 percent have failed to maintain their 1970's level of food production and nutrition per head⁴" (Riad 1990:72). "Land systems historically become highly unequal, not because rich farmers produce better and more crops, as the World Bank argues, but principally because they capitalise on credit and its human consequences" (Kolko 1997:97).

However, even today, these institutions tend to acknowledge only two types of property rights options; either private ownership or state-owned. The idea was that privatising land increases agricultural crop yield, providing more cash crops for export and raising the nation's standard of living. One problem with this approach is that wealth disparities usually occur in this process of privatisation, pushing the poor and landless deeper into poverty. There are several examples of countries that were able to avoid such wealth disparities following reform, or at least were able to quickly recover from such disparities, but more frequent are the cases where long-term disparities prevailed.

The developing countries, the institutions that were required to undergo land reform, were for the most part, previously managing resources under some type of common property system. Common property management is a risk-sharing mechanism between people and across generations, and, when this social contract is eliminated, serious consequences can follow. The most significant impact of these negative consequences is upon the poor. Land privatisation is especially difficult for the rural poor, since it often has many regressive socio-economic consequences (Griffin 1988),

⁴ By 1987, 71 countries had implemented adjustment policies in accordance with the IMF and World Bank's advice. The 63 countries do not include South Africa, the European countries and two others that

with the poorer people often losing access to land, resulting in them working for the wealthier people.

The loss of access to 'common' resources is a major set-back to the poorer families that rely most intensively on these resources. Some resources and certain types of communities are especially suited for communal management systems, such as forestry, fisheries, irrigation and pastures. Moreover, securing subsistence in certain communities requires a cooperative system to manage their resources. In fact, such resources are usually managed cooperatively, not so much for the benefits to natural resource conservation, but simply "because a system of joint supply of inputs and joint consumption allows individuals to pool risks within the settlement of [the] village" (Prakash 1998:172).

2.3.1 Land Reform Effects Specific to Forestry

Global population growth clearly is a prime reason contributing to accelerated environmental degradation world-wide, and in particular deforestation. In agrarian societies, the primary impact on deforestation is farmers cultivating more land, and increasing tillage of more ecologically sensitive land, to meet the ever-higher food demand. However, it is an over-simplification to regard deforestation simply as the consequence of exogenous population growth; and other influential factors must be acknowledged. "It is nearer the truth ...to regard deforestation and population growth as joint manifestations of exploitative social relations" (Poffenberger 1995:72). Increased levels of per capita consumption in developed countries, and the resulting demand for natural resources, (especially clear-cutting of trees), is the primary contributor to global

do not have information on food production (Riad 1990:71).

deforestation (Ibid.). Moreover, the privatisation of forest land facilitates access of outside interests to the developing countries' timber who generally have a less intense stake in preserving sustainable forest practices.

2.4 Land Reform Effects Specific to Vietnam

Concentration of land in the control of fewer households as other households lose land, seems to occur as soon as the market system penetrates the countryside. Despite the fact that individuals in Vietnam do not actually own land, (but can only lease it from the government), land concentration is already evident. Only since the Doi Moi market reforms, have people been allowed to buy and sell land, "though under the guise of ceding user rights" (Kerkvliet 1995:96). Concentration of land control is especially apparent in the southern provinces, and in some central provinces, while in the north the trend currently appears much less pronounced (Ibid.).

2.4.1 Socio-economic Effects

The concentration of land is associated with widening wealth disparities between the rich and poor, and also the emergence of a "landless" wage-earning labour class within agriculture (Kerkvliet 1995). Many wealthier landowners have diversified the means by which to earn income by offering 'essential' services and products to poorer farmers. This is one of the most important processes at work in rural areas as a direct manifestation of the market system (Kolko 1997:92). As a result, it is both poverty and "dissatisfaction with the excessively low standard of living that impels peasants to seek countless alternative sources of livelihood" (Dang Phong 1995:165).

Many peasants have found themselves overwhelmed following the liberalisation of agricultural policies ostensibly allowing them more decision-making power. This has led to classic problems emerging, as have occurred in many other traditional rural societies. For example, once the new land system is put in place, the government no longer provides the extensive social service safety net that existed under the cooperative system. Moreover, an adequate credit system has not been put in place to assist farmers and prevent them from going into an endless cycle of debt. "Very little credit is available to poorer peasants, and being high risks they pay far more" (Kolko 1997:97). Even the less expensive, government subsidised credit "does not end up benefiting the poor since influential households compete more successfully for these limited resources" (Ibid.).

Land allocation can have significant effects in increasing farmers standard of living, but only if credits are available and technical assistance in agroforestry is provided to the poor farmers who have little to no savings (Vu Long 1996). As a consequence of a void in this regard, "in some regions, over half the poorer farmers have already accumulated debts that amount to triple their assets, and their lives are entirely at the mercy of usurers" (Kolko 1997:97). Without a suitable credit system, and with household debt being legally linked to land-use titles, even peasants of above-average income are vulnerable to loss of their land-use titles. Since the 1993 Land Law was implemented, many land defaults have occurred, and many informed sources expect that many more can be expected (Ibid.).

By 1993, the land market had produced a new class society. Studies by Vietnamese experts are finding that disparities are occurring rapidly, and that in most regions differences in income between households are 'quite extreme' and continue to

grow. In 1993, the income ratio between the 'rich' (4.1 percent) and the 'poor' (20 percent) was 13:1, (and twice as unequal if the 'very rich' and 'very poor' are included in the measure). Put another way, by mid-1993 one-fifth of farmers were 'relatively rich' and a quarter were 'desperately poor' (Kolko 1997). A 1996 survey shows the situation getting worse and estimates that "40 - 50 percent of the production households do not have enough to eat" (Ibid., 177). "Rural society is becoming significantly more like the one against which the Communists first mobilised the masses" (Ibid., 96).

2.4.2 Forestry Effects

Since 1993, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has been funding a major forestry project Renovation of Strategies for Forestry Development in the 5 most northern provinces of Vietnam. An evaluation, by an external group of Vietnamese experts, concluded, that in 3 of the pilot project communes, following land allocation to households the rate of "forest destruction declined sharply" (Vu Long 1996:4). A primary principle of the project is the inclusion of farmers in the land allocation process, referred to as 'self-allocation'. The independent panel evaluating this 4 year (1993 - 1996) project concluded that conflicts were avoided due to farmer participation and that, in turn, time and money were saved in the allocation process. Although government officials and farmers participating in the project seem receptive to the self-allocation approach, the importance of this approach "has not been adequately reflected in official documents related to land allocation and forestry contracting made by the Ministry" (Ibid., 6).

The East-West Centre (EWC) and the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES) evaluated this same SIDA-funded project seeking to

identify trends and to analyse factors influencing development in the uplands of northern Vietnam. Three of their published reports in preparing this thesis, were reviewed to identify information on the process and outcome of forest land allocation. Some of the findings are discussed below.

The main criteria for forest land allocation in the villages was reported as: availability of labour to reforest the land and interest in replanting trees. Several times, however, the research team was told that one individual in the hamlet had received substantially more than the others, as much as 7 to 10 times more. Often it was the village leader who received the significantly larger amount. The average amount of forest land allocated amounted to less than 3 ha per household (CRES 1996:164).

In one province, the research team noted that forest land allocation and tree planting appeared to have little impact on levels of household subsistence or income. However, in provinces that seemed to have longer food shortage periods, "the forest assumes much greater importance, serving as a safety net." (CRES 1997:173).

The research team conducted a survey including 100 households in 11 villages in the 5 provinces. Survey findings showed a strong consensus that the lives of participants were better now than 5 years ago, and that most respondents anticipated the trend of improvement in their socio-economic condition to continue. Although all participants anticipated their financial situation to improve, the people of poorer villages saw a smaller likelihood of improvement. If such a difference of socio-economic improvements was to occur between wealthier and poorer villages, then this would result in a greater wealth disparities. A wealth "spread between villages will have nearly

doubled over the ten years, increasing the polarisation between the rich and poor" (CRES 1996:176).

2.4.3 Women and Gender Equity Effects - Land Titles

A phenomenon, referred to as "feminisation of agriculture" is becoming more common in Vietnam, as married men move to urban areas to seek cash income especially when the small parcel of land they are allocated or can maintain is no longer large enough to sustain a family. Young, single men, especially, tend to give up on low-return agricultural work to seek higher incomes in the urban areas. Married women are often left in the village to raise the children, maintain the home, and work the fields. Single women also tend to stay in their rural villages to "take care of their parents, younger siblings, the sick, and the elderly" (UNDP 1998:123).

This family separation appears to be a no-win option for the wife, in that men can only afford to return home once or twice a year. Some return discouraged by the limited job opportunities they find in the cities, and get involved in drugs and alcohol, sometimes leading to family violence. Others succeed in finding urban employment and decide to stay in town, often taking a second wife (Trang Hoang Nguyen 1998).

Female headed households are estimated to make up 27 percent of all households in Vietnam (UNDP 1998). A higher percent of female-headed households than male-headed households also tend to live in poverty (Yarr 1996). The main causes for this poverty often can be traced to women being left with all of the agricultural work and child raising responsibilities when men leave the village. When families separate geographically, risks of family break-up increase, especially with the availability of so many single women looking for husbands in urban areas. There is a significant male-

female imbalance in Vietnam, especially in the urban areas, due to the male loss of lives in wars and to a higher percentage of men migrating overseas (Trang Hoang Nguyen 1998).

Another disadvantage impacting female-headed households is that women often lack equitable access to the resources necessary to secure subsistence, and especially those assets necessary to survive and compete in the market economy. Most of the officially-designated heads of household are men, and they tend to decide all the important issues in the family, from production to spending, including the use of fundamental resources such as land, capital and income (Le Thi 1997). With the male absent, women are often unable to access financial credit to purchase the necessary inputs and equipment to increase yields, or to reduce work load.

Land-use rights certificates (land title) are an example of an obstacle to fair access resources. Land titles are usually issued in the name of the head of the household, who is almost always an adult male. Such land-use rights certificates can be used as collateral to receive loans to purchase equipment and other assets. Studies of many other developing countries show that, when women's names are placed on the land title, this "acts as an important means to gender equity, and it helps reduce family, community and legal disputes" (UNDP 1998). Oxfam UK recently funded a project to try to include women's names on land titles in one commune in northern Vietnam. The outcome was that many local people did not understand the intent or significance of the project objective, or saw it as too sensitive or divisive to discuss (Oxfam 1996).

Resistance to female land rights is bolstered by the tradition of women moving away from their birth home into her husband's family's home, thereby being seen as

potentially taking family land rights with her upon marriage. These and many other cultural norms and traditional roles tend to perpetuate gender inequality.

The implications of who holds the land certificates has not received adequate attention from policy-makers, local authorities, or the households immediately involved. This can have serious impacts on women who become separated from their husbands or when family conflicts occur.

2.4.4 Women and Gender Equity Effects -- Division of Labour

Women work more hours per day than men in almost every country in the world. Household work in both developing and developed countries is often not adequately accounted for in the formal economic system, and often people generally do not perceive it as "work" (Waring 1988).

The United Nations Development Program published in 1995 an analysis of this involving extensive survey data, which found that one of the major areas where gender inequality persists is in regard to household work. Women continue to do at least twice as much work at home than men (UNDP 1995). To make this situation worse, both men and women do not even consider household chores as work, as indicated by their answers outlined above. The report concludes that this "restricts the time they can spend on productive activities, training, and extension courses" (Ibid., 3). Furthermore, the disparity of total working hours widens for poverty families, with women working 12 to 18 hours per day and men working an average of 8 to 12 hours per day (Jacobson 1993).

In many Asian communities (including those of Vietnam), women do the marketing and seem to control the cash flow, and to be involved in decision making on

spending, generally household food and other daily necessities. However, cultural norms that maintain divisive labour roles also, prevent women from seeking opportunities for better paid work, and in some cases, deny them access to any cash income. This, in turn, affects the power relationship within the household (Meur 1997).

A recent research project conducted in Long An Province found that the major changes of the economy are now being focused on households, rather than on the community (as under the cooperative system), that this creates additional burdens for the women. Since, under the market economy, only labour that earns money is considered a contribution to family income, "women are expected to increase their work at the expense of their time for rest, training, community activities, and self-development" (Yarr 1996:115).

The transition to greater reliance on cash income can result in a household's income increasing, but not everyone in the household necessarily benefits. An assumption often made is that both men and women benefit from the higher family incomes, but, in fact, women often fall further into poverty. Men spend a higher percentage of the household income on beer, cigarettes, tailored clothes, shoes, bicycles, motor bikes, gasoline, etc, relative to women's spending. The income spent on resources to meet women's and children's basic needs, such as daily food intake, may even decline in what may generally be portrayed as prosperous times (Jacobson, 1993).

2.5 Conclusion

There is no 'intrinsically superior' land allocation instrument. For instance, the market mechanism may work best in some areas and in certain cultures, just as

government control and regulation may be superior in others (Grima and Berkes 1989).

It must also be recognised that there are many sound examples of sustainable management of resources through common property regimes. The most important aspect of these regimes is that the members perceive the allocation process to be fair, and they are able to retain some power to determine the group and control the resources (George 1998). Although there is need to respond to rapidly changing forces (such as modernisation and globalisation), it is possible for common rights systems to adapt and evolve to survive and still prove themselves to be viable and sustainable.

Chapter 3: A Review of Vietnam's Post-Colonial Forest Policies

Land reform is a central part of development in Asia, and some view it as essential to stimulate stagnant economies and achieve economic growth with equity. Land reform is most broadly defined as "all policies relating to transformation of the agrarian economy" and more narrowly, as "a provision of land to the landless" (Mathur 1980:4). Land reform is particularly important in rural development given that agriculture is the largest economic sector in most Asian countries and that the "rural population is the poorest, most exploited, and most unorganised stratum of Asian societies" (Ibid., 1). The process by which government implements land reform programs is extremely critical, given that land is also a symbol of authority and prestige in most Asian societies. In order to understand the land distribution process, and its outcome in a specific place, both the nature of the land reform policies, and the particular land redistribution effects at that location, need to be reviewed.

3.1 *Significance of Forest Land and Forest Resources to Vietnamese*

As with the situation in other developing countries, the majority of Vietnamese people gain their subsistence directly from agricultural work. In 1992, an estimated 72 percent of the employed labour force were engaged in agriculture. The country remains poor although its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing at around 6 percent per annum (Irvin 1997). An estimated 37 million of the 77 million Vietnamese

people live below the poverty line, with an average annual income per capita of only USD309 (UNDP 1997). Ninety percent of all people classified as poor live in the countryside (Irvin 1997).

Mountainous and hillside land (most considered forest land) comprise of about two thirds of the total land mass of Vietnam. This is mostly forest land and provides the natural resources necessary for the survival of some 24 million people, representing more than 50 ethnic minority groups⁵ (Vu Van Me 1993). Almost one-third of the total population relies directly on the forests for their food, fuel, building materials, medicinal plants, and other basic needs.

Maintaining the forest cover is critical to the protection and stabilisation of the environment, particularly given the steeply sloped topography and the torrential tropical rains. Trees play an important role in maintaining soil quality water storage, preventing soil erosion, and mitigating the direct impact of heavy rainfall. Forest cover protects watersheds from sedimentation caused by soil erosion and land slides. Forests are also critical in maintaining biodiversity by providing habitat for vast amounts of different types of species (Soussan 1995).

Much of the upland areas of Vietnam are not suited for intensive agriculture, leaving the inhabitants dependent on forests for subsistence and for supplemental income. Due to the forest covers' ability to stabilise land, and protect abundant resources, degradation has a potentially enormous effect in further impoverishing the marginalised population that draw their subsistence from the land (CRES 1996).

⁵ There are about 54 ethnic minority groups that make-up 13 percent of the total population of Vietnam. The remaining 87 percent are Kinh, generally referred to as Vietnamese.

3.2 Current State of Vietnamese Forestry

From 1945 to 1995, Vietnam's forest cover (including natural and planted forests) decreased from an estimated 43 percent (14.3 million hectares) to 28 percent (9.3 million hectares) of the country's land area (Ministry of Forestry 1995). Over the last 50 years, the primary factors contributing to forest destruction have been increased demand of and more intensive and extensive timber extraction and accelerated conversion for crop land. Further causes of deforestation include: forest land reclamation to establish economic settlement zones, on-going population increase⁶, shifting cultivation practices, forest fires, and damage from war⁷ (Ministry of Forestry 1995; UNDP 1995).

Deforestation has contributed to the exposure of Vietnam's principal watersheds, and has had negative impacts on fresh water quality (Mittelman 1997). Currently, 57 percent of the population does not have access to safe drinking water (UNDP 1997). Floods and landslides have increased in both frequency and severity and are continuing to destroy farmland and infrastructure. Vietnam's exceptional biological diversity has also experienced an accelerated decline, as forests are cleared and smaller, more fragmented sections are unable to support the same number and diversity of species.

New roads are allowing loggers and trucks to reach previously inaccessible forested areas. Although most of the exploitation of forests for timber is technically illegal, it is nearly impossible to enforce regulations. Despite the fatal impacts to be expected from further deforestation, both State forest enterprises and millions of poor farmers continue to depend on forests for their income and livelihoods. A steady increase in regional and global demand for forest products, and the Vietnamese people's own

⁶ Vietnam's population is increasing at a rate of 2.3 percent per year, one of the highest rates in the world (Mittleman 1997).

increasing material expectations, are placing ever-heavier pressures to intensify timber exploitation (Mittelman 1997).

From 1993 to 1995, Vietnam's forest cover officially is estimated to have increased an estimated 3 percent, about 1 million hectares, credited largely by the new land law and government afforestation programs. It has also been claimed that "most of this land has become covered by forest by natural regeneration in areas under effective control and protection by local people"(Warfvinge 1995:10). The large amount of trees planted with support through Programme 327 has also contributed to this increase in forest cover.

In developing countries where the majority of the population still practices subsistence farming, the equity of the land policy implementation is extremely important to the economic stability of the people. In fact, in Vietnam, the amount of land a household has largely decides its economic strata (Irvin 1997). Living in poverty coupled with survival dependent on subsistence lifestyles places great importance on the amount of land a family can use.

3.3 *Brief History of Vietnam's Land Reform*

In northern Vietnam, the feudal system whereby wealthy landlords owned the majority of the land was challenged as early as August 1945⁷. Government first put pressure on landlords to reduce rents, and then, from 1949, began to redistribute their land among landless people. A primary objective of this land transformation was for the government to assign an equal amount of land (primarily cultivated land) to each

⁷ Over a 30-year period of war about 13 million tons of bombs and 72 litres of herbicides and defoliants were released resulting in a loss of 2 million hectares of natural forest (Ministry of Forestry 1995).

household, on the basis of the total area within each collective. After 1954 in the North, and 1975 in the South⁹, the country began to systematically implement uniform socialist development principles and policies. The tempo of land transformation accelerated, with the communists seeking to destroy the landlord class entirely (Mason 1997).

Subsequently, “agriculture was collectivised” (Pham Bich San 1997) whereby people were grouped into collectives, with each member “assigned points for the quantity and quality of work done each day. Payment at the end of the season was determined on the basis of the number of work points accumulated” (Vo-Tong Xuan 1995:187). If a family did not earn enough points to provide food for their household other cooperative members generally assisted them by providing them with food .

Since Doi Moi forest land allocation is of special importance, in comparison to agricultural land, since this land is being divided and land rights are being passed from the State to the households directly for the first time. Forest land not held by state forest enterprises is generally left as ‘open access’ or may be claimed by households in an informal manner. For example, some households (families) have cleared trees to cultivate the land, thereby making claims to this land. The land is not formerly recognised as theirs by way of a land-use rights certificate however, but in some cases the community recognises this household as having user-rights to the land. Whereas, in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, agricultural land-use rights had been transferred from the collectives to the households within a collective, households generally could make a more formal land claim when one family would maintain a specific area. The allocation

⁸ In August 1945 the Communist Party declared Vietnam an independent country.

⁹ In 1954, the country was divided to be formally governed under two different regimes.

process largely followed the land division under the collective system, and therefore the decisions as to who received what land was more straightforward.

3.4 History of Vietnamese Forest Policies

It is likely that almost all of Vietnam was once covered in dense tropical forest with the exception of a few dry, open areas susceptible to periodic fires (MARD July, 1996). The indigenous ethnic minority groups, the primary residents in isolated communities in the mountain regions, were by de facto the main managers of the forest. Today, official management rights and in particular government-controlled policies have reached almost all local communities, even those in the highlands.

Beginning in the 1960s, the Central government formally began to manage the forests, by establishing large-scale plantations as state forest enterprises (SFE). SFEs are state-owned enterprises in the forestry sector, and by the 1990's these eventually totalled around 400 SFEs. Until 1975, the state plantation system was developed only in the northern part of the country. The primary function of these enterprises was to sustain and exploit the forests. A 1996 report from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) states that SFEs were more "successful" in exploiting the forest than in protecting it. In addition, people living near the edges of forests tended to move in and cultivate the land after the trees had been cleared. Eventually, the managed forest resource became smaller, as increasing population and greater demand for agricultural land converted more of the remaining forest area to agricultural land uses (MARD July, 1996).

Many SFEs eventually depleted their forest stock. In response, the Central government ordered them to increase efforts in reforestation to re-establish the economic resource, and to better protect the soil and water resources. SFEs were also ordered to mobilise local people to replant the forest. However, the MARD report states that, “while plans and programs carried out in this spirit have reached significant results, they have also been marred by inefficiency. Activities were often poorly designed, either technically or in relation to the local socio-economic situation”(MARD 1996:18).

In some areas of the country, as early as 1968, the government began to allocate forest land to cooperatives to manage (People’s Committee of Hoa Binh Province 1997; Ministry of Forestry 1993). From 1968 to 1982, about 2.5 million hectares of forest land were allocated to 3998 cooperatives (Ministry of Forestry 1993). These cooperatives were organised by local People’s Committees and controlled by the Communist Party. Coop leaders usually came from outside the local community, and were assigned to the area to enforce government laws and regulations in a top-down style.

In 1977, the cooperatives were given more authority to increase agricultural and forest production. This began the process of joint management of forests by both the Central government and the local people. As the Central government usually retained the power to plan and implement activities to manage forest use, these efforts largely failed because the local governments did not have the authority or the resources to effectively monitor and control forest use by local people (MARD 1996). Furthermore, the Central government did not consult with locals regarding their forest resource needs, and did not include these interests in protecting and managing the land. Many individuals took the opportunity to exploit forests for their own purposes, even though this was in

contravention of the law (MARD 1996). Plantations were also exploited as a result of “everyone yet no one” having claims but lacking clear ownership rights to them (UNDP 1996:5). A new strategy was clearly needed to involve the people in more cooperative participation, and to secure their livelihoods, before giving priority to protection of the natural resources.

A second cycle of forest land allocation occurred between 1983 and 1987, that included collective units and households as well as cooperatives as land recipients. During this period, 1.9 million hectares were allocated to the recipients (Ministry of Forestry 1993). Since 1987, forest land has been primarily allocated to households. From 1987 to 1992, 96,000 hectares were allocated to 440,000 households, averaging about 2 hectares per household (Ibid.).

Table 3.1 summarises the types of land recipients and the amounts of land received between 1968 and 1992.

Table 3.1 Time Period, Amount of Land Allocated and Recipients

Time Period	Land Recipients	Amount of Land
1968 – 1982	3998 cooperatives	2.5 million hectares
1983 – 1987	Cooperatives, collective units, individual households	1.9 million hectares
1987 – 1992*	440,000 households	796,000 hectares

* statistics from 1992 to present could not be found

Vietnam’s recent forestry allocation policy is, in its stated intent, consistent with the broader objectives of economic renovation (Doi Moi) that the country has been undergoing since 1987, especially in recognising individual households as having land-

use rights. Through Programme 327 SFEs are supposed to pass management rights to individuals and households (Lonnstedt 1995). "The forestry sector has closely followed what has happened in agriculture and has been impressed by the rapid growth in agricultural output following the changes introduced in rights to the land and its production introduced in the late eighties" (Warvinge 1995:7).

The Central government has been implementing policies to move the country from a centrally planned economy toward a more open market-oriented economy. Major changes in perspective include: recognising the private sector as a major source of decision-making, removing most price controls, encouraging private and foreign investment, reducing trade restrictions, abolishing most subsidies to state enterprises, and allowing some degree of decentralisation of the planning process to provincial and district-level administrations. Changes directly affecting rural farmers and foresters include: recognising the legal status and rights of the household (family) economy, assigning land-use rights to households for 20 to 50 years, enabling farmers to make their own production and marketing decisions, and lifting prices for industrial and agricultural commodities closer to market levels (UNDP 1996).

The Central government realised that, within the context of the emerging market economy, greater emphasis must be given to enabling economic benefits to be reaped by individual households, if reforestation and improved management was to occur. To more effectively achieve this, the Ministry of Forestry and Ministry of Agriculture were merged into one ministry, naming it the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). This was intended to better coordinate agricultural and forest concerns and development efforts. The need for such coordination became more vital, for example

with the increase of intercropping of agricultural products and tree farms on sloped land, which, among other things, makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between agricultural and forestry land.

In 1991, the National Plan for Environment and Sustainable Development was published in response to widespread environmental degradation. This National Plan establishes a target of 50 percent of Vietnam to be covered in forest by year 2000 (SRV 1991), (a 22 percent increase from the current cover). This plan distinguishes Vietnam as “the only country in Southeast Asia to elaborate a comprehensive approach to environmental and economic management” (Viellieux 1994-1995:346).

The Forest Resources Protection and Development Act (Forest Law) of 1991 introduced a critical change in forest management by giving top priority to rural people’s food security. This law also intended to allow people to reap the fruits of their labour, to give them a vested interest in protecting local resources over the long-term. The size of the land allocated varies with labour availability within a family, meaning the more labour available, the more land the family is eligible to receive (Ministry of Forestry 1991).

The 1993 Land Law then made it clear that, “land is the property of the State, however it may be leased to economic organisations, units of the armed forces, state offices, political and social organisations, as well as households, and individuals for long-term use” (Ministry of Forestry 1994).

Crop land is allocated to individuals for 20 years for annual crops and for 50 years for perennial crops, generally on land with slopes greater than about 25 degrees. Land-use right certificates are provided to the head of the household and contain information

on the land user, land description, and also specifies the purpose for which the allocated land can be used (CRES 1996). Under this law, land users have the right to transfer, change, rent, inherit, and use the land-use rights as collateral. Households and individuals are allowed to transfer land-use rights if they are moving, changing to a different occupation, or have lost labour capacity (Pham Ngoc 1996). Although technically illegal, a common reason why poor households have transferred their land-use rights is the dire need for money. (CRES 1996).

Forest land is defined, in Article 1 of the Forest Law, as “forest land and non-forested land for which plans have been made for forest plantation” (Ministry of Forestry 1991). Forestry land is divided into two main categories: land with forest cover, and land without forest cover. Despite these definitions, “the concept of forest land is not well-defined, even in official government documents” (Vu Long 1996:4). For example, in a district in Hoa Binh province, sloped land steeper than 25 degrees that is currently being used for agricultural crops is not classified as forestry land. This land is not considered agricultural either, and, as a result, it is not formally allocated to farmers (Ibid.).

Once farmers receive forestry land-use rights certificates, they are required to reforest the allocated plots. Pilot projects in Hoa Binh found that allocated forest land is generally used for agricultural crops unless the government specifically provides money for afforestation purposes. Furthermore, some farmers do not apply to receive forest land allocation due to this regulation, especially those farmers practising forest burning and shifting cultivation, or households who primarily rely on hillside cultivation for their food supply. About 40 percent of upland farmers in the province had not received forest land. An incentive for farmers to participate in forest land allocation would be to change the

regulation to allow farmers to use land classified as forest for agroforestry (Vu Long 1996).

The Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI), an agency within MARD, undertakes most of the land surveying and measurement for forestry planning (Tran Thi 1993). According to FIPI, the status of land use as of 1993 is as follows ('000 hectares)¹⁰ (Ministry of Forestry 1995):

Table 3. 2 Amount of Forest and Non-Forest Land

Land Type	Total Forest Land	Total Land	Percent
FOREST LAND		19,000	57
Natural Forest	9,000		
Forest Land Without Natural Forest	10,000		
NON-FOREST LAND		14,000	43
TOTALS	19,000	33,000	100

In 1993, the average share of forest area was estimated at .12 hectares per capita (Ibid.). Natural forests are defined as forestland with tree cover. The vegetation of Vietnam's forests is classified into three different categories, according to their function:

¹⁰ The total amounts have been rounded-up to simplify comparisons.

Table 3.3 Forest Land Classifications and Amounts

Forest Class	Area with Forest Cover ('000 ha)	Percent
Protection	2,800	32
Production	5,200	60
Special-Use	700	8
Total	8,700	100.0

The main stated purpose for the protection forest category is to protect watersheds and prevent soil erosion. The State is responsible for regulating and financing the establishment of permanent forests in this forest category. Special-use forests are intended for scenic, amenity, scientific, and cultural values (Ministry of Forestry 1994).

Article 13 of the Forest Law states that, "all organisations and individuals who have obtained forest and forest plantation land to be used for other purposes shall pay compensation for the values of forest and forest plantation land, the fruits of the labour and of investments made therein based on current market values. (Ministry of Forestry 1991). This is interpreted to mean that households receiving land classified as special-use and protection forests should be paid to protect the land by state-owned enterprises. This payment can be in the form of an initial investment or a monthly salary. However, many cases have been reported of farmers not being compensated due to a lack of government funds assigned for this purpose.

The production class of forests includes primarily forests capable of yielding wood and other forest products, but also those that have protective and special-use qualities. Production forests are allocated both to SFEs¹¹ and individual households

¹¹ Provincial-level authorities (UNDP 1996) own nearly all SFEs.

(Ministry of Forestry 1995); however, Article 11 of the Forest Law states that "important production forests are to be allocated to SFEs when necessary" (Ministry of Forestry 1991). Some commentators are of the opinion that the SFEs have been allocated the most productive land (Lonnstedt 1995). Most SFEs that manage production forestry land are business-oriented, with a goal to show a profit. The Vietnamese government has listed about 170 SOEs (and most likely some of these include SFEs) out of 6,000 to be privatised this year, with the intention to continue to privatise SOEs by getting them to show a profit without government assistance (Vietnam News 1998).

In response to the rapid pace of deforestation, the Vietnamese government has in recent years enacted increasingly more restrictive timber laws. First, government banned the export of logs, then exports of unprocessed lumber, and most recently, exports of all wood products except finished furniture and art products (Warfvinge 1995). The Vietnamese government is currently considering banning commercial logging in primary forests (Mittelman 1997). Moreover, SFEs have recently been more heavily regulated by restricting timber exploitation with a goal to gradually bring it to an end (Vu Long 1996).

3.5 Programme 327

In 1992, the government established Programme 327, to fund projects to improve forest land management in areas designated as barren land, degraded hills, coastal alluvial flats, or water bodies. Projects under Programme 327 are also required to be designed so as to reduce poverty among the local people, enabling them to improve their standard of living (Ministry of Forestry 1994). Initially, the SFEs were given responsibility to implement forestry projects within Programme 327 "thus providing them with a duty for

which they were paid.” “At the time, many if not most of the SFEs were not in a position to survive on their own in the market (Warfvinge 1995:15).” In 1994, however, Decree 02 gave forest land allocation to households and individuals, and with this the responsibility of forest land was primarily transferred from SFEs to households. Today, the “SFEs are only intermediaries, the main target group for the [Programme 327] projects being the households in the area” (Ibid., 25). During the period of 1996 to 2000, the government is investing USD 400 million in this program (Salmi 1997).

In September 1995, the scope of Programme 327 was more narrowly focused to provide “the preservation and restoration of natural resources in upland areas by the people living there.” (Warfvinge 1995:22). For example, one goal of the program is to protect and develop 9 million hectares of special-use and protection forest land for biodiversity and environmental purposes, while plantation of production forest is no longer an activity within this program (Ibid.). Now, a different government forestry program has the function of investing USD 1.5 billion to establish 3 million ha of production forests to meet future demands for forest products (Salmi 1997).

3.6 Conclusion

Vietnamese land policies, especially forestry policies, have thus undergone major changes over the past decade. These policy changes were precipitated by the dire need to prevent further deforestation, and to improve rural livelihood food security. These changes are providing more decision-making authority to the farmers, with the expectation that these additional choices will steadily improve their standards of living.

It is impossible to provide an overall assessment of forest management policy and practices in Vietnam because the landscapes, resources and village and commune-level organisations, differ dramatically from one region and locality to the next. The process used to allocate forest land-use rights also varies from commune to commune, and even from village to village. Therefore, the most accurate way to critique the effects of land-use rights allocation is to focus the analysis of its evolution and effects in a specific location.

Chapter 4: A Case Study of Lang Beo Village¹²

This chapter provides a detailed description of the socio-economic impacts of forest land policy and the process of privatisation in one village in Vietnam. The discussion includes a description of the land allocation process and its outcomes, the implementation and impacts of Programme 327, and the accomplishments and limitations of their forest protection strategies.

4.1 *Description of Lang Beo Village*

Lang Beo village is set in a valley among two hillsides, located in the north-central midlands, about a 6 hour drive south of Hanoi. It is adjacent to a large lake between these hills with bamboo and wood houses set on 2 meter high stilts, scattered along the lower sections of the hillsides. Lang Beo is home to 506 people, in 91 households, belonging to the Muong ethnic minority group. Ancestors of today's families founded the village more than 300 years ago. Beside the lake, lies most of the limited amount of agricultural land which is cultivated mainly with rice and other food crops.

Fifty years ago, the village was rich with dense forest, and had ample agricultural land to meet the rice and other consumption needs of local residents. Over the past fifty

¹² Most of the information cited in this case study directly reflects the thoughts and words of the people of Lang Beo, and a few government representatives. In some cases, the researcher took the liberty of summarising the data in a more user-friendly manner and supplemented some sections of this report with outside sources to better clarify the issues

years, however, the forest has been continually cleared further and further up the hillside, in order to plant agricultural crops¹³. In 1979, a dam was built below the village flooding the valley and causing the loss of over half the pre-existing agricultural land. These factors have led to the current situation where only 5 percent of the 310 hectares is agricultural land, whereas 55 percent is classified as forested (sloped) land¹⁴. Another 20 percent of the total land area contains homes and gardens. The remaining 20 percent of land is natural forest, but this is now designated as protected, and is not legally available for use by farmers. These 60 hectares of natural forest are rarely accessed today due to difficulty of reaching the distant forest at the top of the mountain, the limited resources it has to offer, and the stringent government forest protection regulations.

Table 4. 1 Land Type and Amount of Each Type

Land Type	Total Hectare	Percentage of Total Land
Planted Forest	170	55%
Natural Forest	60	20%
Garden/Houses	60	20%
Agriculture	16	05%
Total Land Area	306	100%

Although the number one cause of deforestation nation-wide is the demand for wood as a fuel source (World Bank, 1995), the largest contributors to deforestation in Lang Beo have been local population growth, coupled with the loss of agricultural land,

¹³ This information was obtained by facilitating a group of village elders in drawing a land-use transect (see Appendix II).

¹⁴ The hillside land is classified as forest, although both agricultural crops and trees are planted on this sloped land.

and, in turn, the increasing demand for new crop land. Local people use dried corn stocks and cobs and branches as their primary fuel source. They do not experience wood fuel shortages, primarily due to their being located in the midlands which have relatively mild winters, requiring less fuel wood for heating.

Today, the average household harvests enough rice for 2 months of consumption, and, they must then sell other products to purchase rice. In the past, during the lean months, people were able to rely on the natural forest for wild animals, timber for construction, medicinal plants, and supplementary food such as honey. Since there is no longer 'common' forest land available, they can no longer rely on forest resources when in need. Instead, households fortunate enough to have bamboo, largely depend on this as their main income source to buy food during food shortage months¹⁵.

Text Box 4.1 Loss of Common Resources for the Poor

Forest loss has eliminated common resources for the poor. Ms. Me is an elder widow of the village who now lives with her eldest daughter and family. She recalls a better life when reflecting on the days prior to the dam being built. She observes that the loss of agricultural land, decline of forests and population growth "have resulted in food shortages that were never a worry up until the last 20 years." The poor no longer have the forest to depend on for food or to sell its resources for cash income.

Local farmers derive most of their food and cash income from cultivating crops and bamboo on forest land, growing vegetables, raising pigs and chickens in home gardens, and producing rice, sugar cane, beans and peanuts on their agricultural land. Some households engage in value-added activities such as making tofu from soybeans,

¹⁵ Bamboo is the most important tree to protect, especially for the poorest households, since it is the only self-reproducing tree planted in the forest. This means the only cost is the original seedling.

wine from rice, or processing corn and rice. In place of the natural forest that has been depleted, additional crops now have been planted. Recently, the farmers have begun planting thousands of wood and fruit trees, and bamboo stands, among the crops on the hillside. Given the government's assertive afforestation efforts, the village has undergone vast changes in recent years. Below is an examination of some of the main socio-economic concerns that have occurred in response to these policy changes.

4.2 *Socio-Economic Impacts of Policy Changes*

Lang Beo Village currently faces a critical time as the farmer's experience the effects of transition from a centrally planned to a free-market economy. The village is also making a transition from a village-based cooperative economy to the household becoming the primary economic unit. The most evident change is the shift from collective agricultural production to self-help responsibility of individual households. With government assistance, and to a lesser extent, assistance from an international NGO, farmers have begun planting trees on a large scale for the first time, totalling over 62,000 trees in just two years (or on average 125 trees per person). The farmer's day-to-day tasks are also changing, especially for women farmers, as they adjust from agriculture to agroforestry. They are struggling to maintain their current standard of living as they wait to harvest the bamboo and fruit trees over the next few years. If the farmers cannot sustain themselves over this time period, they will have to resort to prematurely cutting the newly planted trees, selling them for a low price, or to stealing wood or other crops from their wealthier neighbours. Both of these eventualities would clearly work counter to the afforestation efforts.

Since the household has become the primary economic unit and the land has been privatised¹⁶, wealth disparities have been growing in the village, and poorer households in particular have become more impoverished. The recent socio-economic problems in Lang Beo village are a symptom of such growing disparities, and has led many poorer households to resort to stealing from wealthier neighbours to provide food for their families. In some cases, even hillside crops, such as cassava, maize and rice, are stolen for home consumption or to feed animals. Theft in the village has become so prevalent that some farmers resort to premature cutting of their more valuable products, such as bamboo shoots, to eat or sell. They see this as the only alternative to having them stolen. In some cases, theft has also acted as a disincentive for farmers to invest time and money into planting trees.

Some of the theft in the village is attributed to people living in neighbouring villages. Several farmers stated that one of the nearby villages suspected of stealing, has not been included in the government Programme 327, and there is no NGO assisting them. The leader of this village was interviewed and asked why they were not involved in Programme 327, and he replied, "they have not invited us to participate." One informant from Lang Beo village was of the opinion that this village had the opportunity but chose not to participate in Programme 327. However, it is possible that this village's forest land is not State Forest Enterprise land and therefore these people did not have the option to participate in Programme 327.

Some male respondents in Lang Beo village estimate that 70 percent of the people who steal do so because they are very poor and urgently need money for food, while the

¹⁶ Privatized to the extent that they have private land-use rights, however, the government owns all of the land.

other 30 percent can meet basic needs, and steal to increase their income. In some cases, men steal who are not from the poorest households; these men have a reputation for seldom working, and for living off their parents or their wife's income. One man from an average household stated that these men steal to earn cash since their wives manage the household funds and don't give them money to "foolishly spend on alcohol".

The growing disparities of wealth can also have unforeseen effects, leading poorer households to give up land-use rights to become wage earners. This widens the gap between rich and poor, as the poor are forced to work for the wealthier households within the village. Although there has been no permanent in-migration or out-migration, if there are not enough wage earning positions within the village, the poorest households may be forced to move to other rural or to urban areas to look for work. Furthermore, new couples who are allocated too small a plot of land to sustain themselves may also have to leave to seek livelihoods elsewhere. The trend generally is that the man of the house will first move to an urban area to earn cash, and send this back to the family members who remain in the village. Eventually, the entire family may move to join him. There are obvious social consequences that could occur from a family separating, namely the woman's work load increasing and the children quitting school to be kept at home to work. Husbands may also stay in urban areas and take a second wife leaving behind his wife and children. Even if the entire family moves to the urban area, they are leaving behind their extended family and the social network that they have known and relied on for generations.

Text Box 4.2 A Less Cohesive Community

Household land-use rights have led to a less cohesive community. Mr. Thuy is an elder of Lang Beo village and his family has lived there for over 3 centuries. He reflects back to just a few years ago, prior to the cooperative dissolving, when the village lived more harmoniously. He stated, “when families were running low on food they could always rely on their neighbour to provide them with rice to get through the shortage. Back then, people would give you 5 kilos of rice with no expectation of you paying them back. But today, a household can rely only on their relatives to help them in times of need. And if they ask for help outside of the family, the neighbour will give only a small amount and will expect to be compensated once the household is able to repay.” Mr. Thuy also spoke of how upsetting it is that the village is experiencing theft for the first time ever. He fears this reflects a different relationship between households, and views it as indicative of declining community spirit and values.

4.3 *Wealth Disparities Beginning with Varying Access to Land*

Given that land privatisation has been shown to have negative consequences for the poor, it is especially important that the land allocation process be conducted in an equitable manner, with special consideration being given to the poorest households. In 1994, the agricultural land allocation process in Lang Beo village was complete, and the heads of the households received 20 year land-use right certificates. Today, all agricultural land is divided up and managed by individual households. The amount of agricultural land that each household received averages 0.18 of a hectare, and ranges between 0.05 and 0.3 hectares. A prime consideration governing land allocation process was the number of people in each household, with larger families receiving larger land areas.

Recently, the village leader has worked with the District Forest Protection Unit representative to divide the 170 hectares of planted forest land allocated to individual households. This was a more difficult task than dividing up the agricultural land since

most agricultural land had already been claimed and utilised by individual households in the cooperative system. Although, in the past, some of the land classified as forest was managed by the cooperative, individuals had cleared trees and planted crops on their own initiative to supplement their incomes beyond that earned by working on the cooperative's agricultural land. These claimed forest lands were first allocated to the appropriate families, and then the remaining forest land was divided among households who had no prior claims to land. Those who were fortunate to have parents and grandparents who had worked at clearing land to plant crops, and who had larger families with more available labour, received larger plots. Distributing forest land-use rights unequally to households has led to a wide range from .25 of a hectare to 6.3 hectares per household. The village leader stated that every household has received some forest land, and on average each household received 1.2 hectares.

The land containing the homes and gardens have been considered individual family land for centuries. One farmer stated that it is the most secure land on which to plant since traditionally it has been recognised as individually managed. The 60 hectares of land classified as natural forest is segmented by the natural borders of 2 streams into 3 land plots, each plot with about 20 hectares. Three individuals in the village have been selected to receive land-use certificates for these plots for 50 years. This natural forest is classified as protected and, under Article 12 and 13 of the Forest Law, households are to be compensated by the SOEs for protecting the land. Despite this, the District Forest Protection Unit representative stated that the households will not be compensated since there are no funds available for this purpose.

Table 4.2. shows the total hectares of each land type, the average received by each household, and the range of hectares received by each household. The average per household was calculated by dividing the number of households by the total amount of hectares of each land type. The range was determined by household interviews to identify the actual amount of land to which each household currently has land-use rights.

Table 4. 2 Land Type and Distribution

Land Type	Total Hectares	Average Per Household (in hectares)	Range of hectares per Household
Agricultural	16	0.18 (3 - 4 sao)*	0.05 - 0.30 (1 - 6 sao)
<i>Planted Forest</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>1.9</i> <i>(38 sao)</i>	<i>0.25 - 6.3¹⁷</i> <i>(5 - 126 sao)</i>
Homes and Gardens	60	0.66 (13 sao)	0.20 - 1.0 (4 - 20 sao)
Natural Forest	60	0	0 - 20
Total	306	2.74	0.50 - 7.60**

* Sao is used to measure smaller quantities of land, 1 sao = 500 square meters, = 0.05 hectare, or 20 sao = 1 hectare

** Natural forest is not included in the average per household column and the hectares are not included in the total amount and total range rows since only 3 households are expected to receive land-use rights to this land.

Three main factors can be identified as having led to large disparities in the amount of forest land that individual households received. First, the land allocation process recognised prior land use claims, as described above. Second, newly married

¹⁷ The household with the largest land holdings, 6.3 hectares, acquired some of the land by purchasing land-use rights from neighbors. The exact amount initially allocated to this household is not known.

couples had to rely on their parents to receive land of their own¹⁸. In the past, the cooperative provided new couples with land. The final factor contributing to disparities in the amount of forest land households have is due to some poor families, in need of money, having sold their land-use rights to wealthier neighbours.

The household with the largest share of land (6.3 hectares) initially was allocated a larger amount than average, and has also bought some land from poorer neighbours. Last year this household earned over \$700 USD from selling two truck loads of bamboo alone, contributing to a total income of about \$1,800 USD, while over 60 percent of the households in the village are classified as poor or very poor, and earn, on average, from \$90 to \$110 USD annually.

Some poorer households sell land-use rights on a temporary basis, with the expectation of being able to acquire them back when they can afford it. The problem is that the new land-use rights holder will then expect to be compensated for all the perennials he or she has planted on the land. It is difficult for poor households to acquire enough cash to compensate the land holder, and thus it is nearly impossible for them to regain the land-use rights. Farmers in Lang Beo have already begun transferring land-use rights, even though they have not yet received their land-use rights certificates.

About one-third of the households in the village have borrowed money through an international NGO project and the Vietnamese Bank for the Poor. Both credit programs are administered through the Women's Union, a village-wide organisation in which the majority of women participate. The programs lend mainly to women, at between 0.7 to 1.5 percent interest per month, over a 6 month period. The most common investment the

¹⁸There is at least one household with only 0.25 of a hectare and this household is a new couple from a family that was only able to provide them with a small plot of land.

women have made has been buying chickens, piglets, buffalo, or equipment for fish raising. Several people complained that the 6-month lending period is not long enough for them to turn a profit to be able to payback the loan. For example, they purchase a piglet with the credit, to raise and sell, but it takes more than 6 months before the piglet gains enough weight to sell at a profit. This short lending period makes it difficult to pay the loan on time and the accruing interest can place them further into poverty.

4.4 Programme 327

In 1992, the government established Programme 327 to fund projects to improve forest land management in areas designated as barren land, degraded hills, coastal alluvial flats, or water bodies. Projects under Programme 327 are required to reduce poverty among the local people, enabling them to improve their standard of living (Ministry of Forestry 1994). In Lang Beo, the government has provided tree seedlings, money¹⁹, and technical assistance to support 52 of the 91 households (about 60 percent) to plant trees. These households were selected because they all had land in the highest sections of the hillsides, which the government deemed to be most important to protect, and on which it wanted to encourage farmers to plant trees. The problem is that, this further contributes to wealth disparities. Disproportionate amounts of above-average and wealthy households, relative to poorer households, were included in the program.

Farmers are required to plant only tree seedlings provided through the program and if they fail to do this they risk losing their land-use rights. In addition, they are expected pay the cost of seedlings if any of the trees die. About 50 percent of one type

¹⁹ Farmers were paid between VND700,000 and 800,000 per hectare (about USD70 to 80).

of tree have died, and the farmers were required to pay the government for this loss.

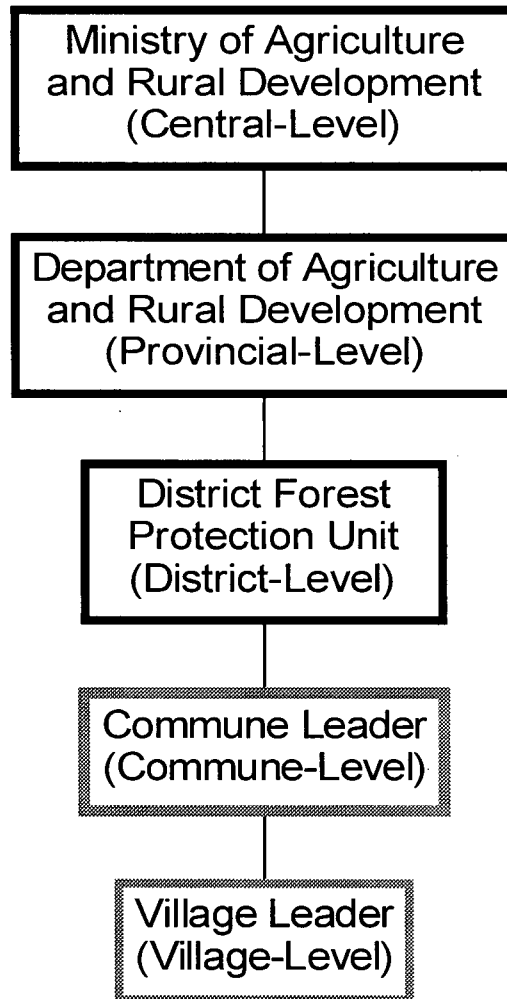
However, the farmers complained that the main cause of low survival was the poor and ailing condition of the tree seedlings that they were required to plant.

The farmers understand that before they are allowed to cut trees planted through Programme 327 they must submit a request to be approved by the Provincial Government. However, the farmers are under the assumption that they do in fact own the trees they have planted, and as many even envision being wealthy once the wood trees are harvested in 30 to 40 years.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the organisational hierarchy of the departments and individuals involved in forestry land management at each government level. The policies are developed at the Central-level government and administered in a top-down fashion as indicated by the chart.

Figure 4.1 Vietnamese Government Organisational Chart

**Vietnamese Government
Organizational Chart for
Forest Land Decisions**



The interpretation of Programme 327 clearly differs dramatically between that of the Central government representatives in Hanoi, Provincial government representatives, District government representatives, and the farmers. The MARD representative

responsible for Programme 327 in the Central government stated that the “government stops investing in an area once trees are fully grown. Once the canopy closes, in 10 to 20 years, then the trees belong to the government.” He explained that the government has already paid the farmer for his work. The farmer may be hired to cut specific trees for the government to then sell, but, other than that, the farmer will not be compensated further. Provincial-level Programme 327 management re-iterated similar interpretations of the program.

In contrast, the District Forest Protection Unit representative, who works directly with farmers allocating forest land in Lang Beo village, stated that the land-use rights certificate is a management agreement, and therefore “the farmer has the right to logs and other forest products under Programme 327.” Moreover, the farmer is entitled to enjoy the fruits of his labour, as well as the products from the investments made on the land with public funds.

Article 3 of the Forest Law states that “for forest plantations established on land allocated by the State and funded by other entities, the plant end-products thereof shall be the property of the entity that financed the plantation” (Ministry of Forestry 1991). There are different opinions regarding whether this addresses ownership of the trees planted through Programme 327. Some forest experts in Vietnam hold the opinion that the government has yet to document clearly who has ownership to the trees planted through Programme 327 (Giang Phan Trieu 1998).

The Central government representative further stated that some farmers will not plant the tree seedlings because the land is steep, far from their homes, or because the government doesn’t compensate them for the tree seedlings that die. He acknowledged

that “the greatest challenge with the program is that the farmer has little incentive because he cannot have the final product.” He continued by saying that farmers prefer planting fast-growing wood trees, but the purpose of Programme 327 is to plant long-term trees to cover barren hills and enrich the soil. However, the majority of trees planted in Lang Beo through the program are primarily for economic value, with a much smaller amount of trees for soil quality enhancement.

The confusion between how the different levels of government and the farmers interpret the purpose of Programme 327, and the rights the farmer has to the land and products grown on this land, could lead to a devastating situation at tree harvest time. The farmers’ goal over the next few years is to have the entire hillside covered with wood and fruit trees, and bamboo stands, in place of the current crops. As the tree canopy grows more full, there will be less space for crops and therefore fewer crops will be planted each year. The fact that the majority of households live near or below the poverty line, and do not have forest product security, places them in a very vulnerable situation. The farmers anticipate that, once they receive land-use rights certificates, some of the land-use rights confusion will be alleviated; however, ownership of Programme 327 trees will still remain uncertain.

4.5 *Analysis of the Village Forest Protection Efforts*

Since the household has become the primary economic unit through land privatisation, wealth disparities have become apparent in the village, and the poor households have become poorer. The quick transition to land privatisation and the

market-oriented economy has left some less advantaged households without the resources to cope with these drastic changes.

Apart from efforts to educate people on the environmental and economic benefits of planting and protecting the forest, the village leaders have been instituting "solutions" by enforcing regulations and hiring security guards to protect the forests from thieves. The leaders now realise that these strategies have not fully succeeded, and they are seeking to introduce more community-oriented strategies to manage the new socio-economic problems. Specifically, the village has been divided into 34 forest protection teams, with each comprising of 4 to 5 households with bordering land. The purpose is to induce individual households to cooperate in protecting their planted forest. The largest landholder in each group serves as the group leader, and is responsible for organising the group and for facilitating a group decision on how to organise themselves.

There are several advantages to adopting such community-oriented protection strategies. For instance, traditionally the village leader has been responsible for the majority of the management in all aspects of village life. This new organisational structure delegates some of the responsibilities to the forest protection team leaders. These forest protection teams might also be used for activities beyond forest protection, for example, seeking to market forest products in larger volume, and perhaps being able to command higher prices through joint bargaining.

The existing forest protection approaches should only be used in the short-term, to attempt to control theft and prevent it from increasing. Simultaneously, the village needs to be developing longer-term strategies to address the root of the problem of poor people's needs. This is particularly important since the poorest households no longer

have the security net of the socialist policies, nor can they expect to rely on the generous support of neighbours. Some additional solutions that farmer's identified to improving the poorest household's standard of living are²⁰:

(i)- provide information regarding the market economy and price structures, new farming technologies and planting techniques, government policies, family planning and financial management;

(ii)- encourage the wealthy households to donate money, land, labour, and food to the poorer households;

(iii)- establish a fund to allow poor households to borrow money at a low or zero interest rates.

Abandoning communal land management has contributed to today's problems with forest protection, and the attempt to find more effective communal strategies is necessary to alleviate the problems of theft and wealth disparity. A combination of empowerment through individual land-use rights and village-wide cooperation through communal land management is needed to protect the forest over the long term.

Recommendations, to this end, include the suggestion that the village set aside some of the planted forest land to allocate to newly married couples when their own families cannot afford to provide them with enough land to sustain themselves. Furthermore, about 20 hectares or more of forest land included in the Programme 327 should be planted, maintained and sold cooperatively, with the revenue kept in a village trust fund to help households who encounter food shortages due to personal obstacles, such as illness, or low yield due to poor weather conditions. Wealthier households with

²⁰ Participants of a workshop sponsored by the international NGO made these suggestions. The participants were asked 'how can poor households be assisted in order to better protect forests'.

large land holdings should also be encouraged to donate land, labour and technical assistance for the common good.

4.6 Household Classifications and Characteristics

The household classification shown in Table 4.3 was developed from information provided through interviews with individuals of varying household incomes, small groups, and the village leader. Individual farmers, the village leader, and small groups of men, women, and mixed groups from different income levels suggested the characteristics and capabilities of various social strata. They shared information on their personal income profiles and provided information on households village-wide.

Table 4.3 Household Standard of Living Classifications and Characteristics

Household Classification	#	Characteristics of Household Classifications
Wealthy	3	large amount of land; enough labour or can afford to hire; some formal education/access to information; diverse sources of income especially off-farm income; men work an average of 8 hours per day; live near main road facilitating more access to markets and information.
Above Average	3	large amount of land; enough labour; some formal education/access to information; diverse incomes; men work an average of 6 hours per day; live near main road facilitating more access to markets and information.
Average	22	average amount of land; enough labour; some formal education/access to some information; men's working time ranges from 1 to 10 hours per day
Poor	48	small amount of land; small ratio of labour-to-household-member; lack formal education/access to information; some men work 1-2 hours per day
Very Poor	15	small amount of land; small ratio of labour-to-household-member; lack formal education/access to information; most men work 1 - 2 hour per day; men generally have all decision-power within their household; 3 out of 4 of the female-headed households in the village ²¹

²¹ The fourth female-headed household is in the average household classification.

Prior to the cooperative dissolving, some people were in a better position than others to benefit from a market-oriented economy. The amount of land, the labour-to-household-member ratio, the level of formal education and access to information, are factors of particular importance in determining the impact of the new economic system on a household. The standard of living classifications and characteristics are defined in greater detail below:

4.6.1 Wealthy and Above Average Households

The wealthy household is a new classification established to represent 3 out of the 91 households who have been able to acquire unprecedented levels of wealth over the past two years. These households are distinguished by their off-farm income, they have well-above average amounts of land, and are generally acknowledged to have some of the hardest working family members in the village.

Two of these households make the majority of their income as profits from the efforts of their less fortunate neighbours, buying wood, bamboo, corn and other products, transporting or hiring someone to transport the products 5 kilometres to the district capital, and generally selling them at a 100 percent profit margin. One of these households borrowed money from relatives and friends to buy an ox and cart to transport these agricultural and forest products. These two households also operate small stores from their houses, selling many small items to local people. They also buy agricultural products from their neighbours and engage in various value-added activities, such as making tofu from soybeans. Although one out of these 3 wealthy households does not engage in transporting products, this family has acquired great wealth. This has been achieved by having a large amount of land, labour and diverse 'on-farm' income

generating activities. The large amount of land and knowledge necessary to establish diverse income generating activities may have been facilitated by the head of household's position of commune leader.

The 3 above-average households differ from the 3 wealthy households in that they do not have transportation so they do not buy other people's products to transport or add value to for a profit. These households were fortunate in being assigned a large amount of land, and in some cases they have acquired additional land. The men in these households are noted for their hard work and farming skills.

4.6.2 Average Households

In general, an average household is defined as one that "has enough food to eat year-round." Access to information is critical in enabling farmers to compete in the market-oriented economy. About 30 percent of women and 40 percent of men in the village are considered well-informed, either from formal education (i.e. high school education or technical training of some sort), and/or through contacts that provide access to technical information. This education and these contacts place them in a position of advantage since they can diversify by engaging in income-generating activities beyond agricultural production. They also have the necessary information to decide where to most efficiently devote their energies. For example, some poor households have spent considerable energy and money to plant a specific crop and, when it fails, they find that their successful neighbours had technical information they did not possess. Most of these well-informed women and men are from average, above-average, or wealthy households.

The 30 to 40 percent of informed farmers often work together in planting adjacent land, and frequently exchange information. These farmers tend to leave the village more

often, and are able to access information from other farmers and business people they meet in the district capital. These farmers are also more likely to participate in activities such as technical training courses, and they tend to occupy leadership positions within the village. Some of the less well-informed farmers access information from farmers they see succeeding in increasing their yields or standard of living. Farmers seem generally to be receptive to sharing information with each other. However, one farmer stated that the men in very poor households are often discouraged, or are not interested, in accessing the information and advice necessary to succeed. One can even conclude that the new wealth disparity in the village is acting as a disincentive to the poorest households, and may also be contributing to setting them financially even further back.

4.6.3 Poor and Very Poor Households

These households often have a shortage of labour, whether due to a divorce, premature death, or to family members being unable to work because they are ill, disabled, or too old. This places a household in the position that, even if it does have enough land to produce enough food, the family does not have the labour to adequately farm the land. These households also generally cannot afford to pay others to assist them.

Another distinguishing characteristic is that men tend to work far fewer hours than women in these households, yet they seem to maintain the majority of the decision-making authority. It is often the poorest Vietnamese households who have the greatest gender inequalities. The poorest households are generally those residing in rural areas and who are from an ethnic minority group (UNDP 1995).

Most households classified as poor or very poor have been issued a card from the government certifying that they are poor, and entitling them to services such as health care and education free or at a reduced cost. It also entitles them to borrow money from the government banks with no collateral. To qualify, a household must earn the equivalent of less than 12 kilos of rice per month per person. The annual household income is calculated by converting all sources to rice equivalents. Currently, one kilo of unhusked rice is equal to about VND1,500. This means that at least 60 of the 91 households in the village earn about US\$1.50 or less per month per person, amounting to US\$90 to \$108 for an entire household per year. To qualify for the program, a household must show that the members of the household also work hard, or are people with disabilities. A village meeting is held, and, if the other farmers support the household in their request to receive a card, they are usually approved by the government to receive one.

4.7 *Analysis of Market Economy Impacts on Rural Livelihood*

As the thousands of trees planted over the past two years mature, they will crowd out the agricultural products currently being planted annually on this same land. This places farmers in the position of growing less subsistence crops and more cash crops, since most of the agricultural crops are consumed by the household or its animals, whereas, trees and tree crops are almost always sold. The result is greater reliance on the competitive market that could lead to an increase in cash income. However, this also places them in a more vulnerable position regarding food supply and income security, as

they rely on a system over which they have little control, and a system that many farmers do not fully understand.

Assuming the current transition of the primary income source toward forest products (cash crops), and away from agricultural products (subsistence crops), continues, forest products could in principle be a less risky product to rely on. Moreover, global trade liberalisation generally causes agricultural product prices to decline, which can result in a lower income for the farmers, and less savings being invested in upgrading agricultural techniques or diversifying into other income sectors (Mountain Agenda 1997). Regardless of neo-classical economists' projections, farmers in most developing countries are abandoning their traditional self-reliant lifestyle, and this does place them in a position of higher risks, more uncertainty, and potentially more extended months of food shortage.

Traditional home gardens supply a variety of food crops, fruit and wood trees, and scientific investigations have shown these gardens to be "highly productive systems" (MARD 1996:23). The liberalising of farmer's rights to choose what they plant, and the increased access to information, has induced many farmers in Lang Beo village to plant new crops such as potatoes, to further diversify cultivation. However, there is a movement within the village to plant crops and trees strictly on the basis of their current market value. Ginger and taro are currently being sold at a high price, and farmers frequently mentioned how they wished they had planted more of these crops. Next year, there will likely be large amounts of ginger and taro grown in the village and the surrounding area. Potential over-supply could then lead to the product having little or no value in local markets, as well as in the larger urban markets.

Deciding what to plant on the basis of the current market price will also likely lead to more monoculture, as farmers plant more of the fewer crops they anticipate will have a high value at harvest time. Monoculture tends to be more damaging to the ecosystem, namely through soil degradation, to yield lower harvests over time, and to encourage dependency on chemicals to maintain consistent yields (Glaeser 1995).

Another problem is that local knowledge of particular tree species is low, especially in regard to native species, and tree seedlings are often difficult to get in rural areas. Hence, the farmers tend to plant the same trees, and in many cases non-native trees. A large supply of only a few trees could again lead to over-supply in the market, as discussed above. In addition, the planting of a few types of trees, especially non-native trees, can lead to degradation, rather than to enhancement of the ecosystem, which defeats the primary purpose of the afforestation campaign.

4.8 *Gender Relations and Women's Concerns*

Although the researcher did not initially expect to include gender issues as a part of this research, it became evident that the relationship between women and men in the household is a key factor in determining a household's standard of living. If the amount of land, labour-to-non-labourer ratio, and knowledge are relatively equal between households, then gender roles within a household can be a determining factor affecting that household's standard of living. Furthermore, women's issues are becoming more important as more women become the heads of households in Vietnam due to the growing trend of family break-up or forced separation due to economic constraints.

For the purposes of this study, gender roles are defined by the amount of hours each person works each day, the gendered division of labour, and the degree to which the decision-making authority is shared. Below, each of these subjects are discussed in the following 3 sections. (Also see Appendix II, B and C for a description of the PRA activities and research findings).

4.8.1 Amount of Hours Men and Women Work

Table 4.4 provides a summary of the women's and men's responses to questions regarding the number of hours they each work per day, on average, and during the busiest and least busy months. The third column represents women's estimate of the work they perform in and around the house (child-rearing, cooking, cleaning the house and maintaining the animals), which averages 3 hours per day year-round, while men work one hour per day. The fourth column represents men's estimation that women spend 2.5 hours per day on household work, while men claim to work 2 hours per day on these household duties.

Table 4. 4 Women's and Men's Perception of Hours Spent Working

Hours Spent Working Each Day	Women's Perceptions	Men's Perceptions	Women's Perceptions (includes house work)	Men's Perceptions (includes house work)
Women work:				
average	8 (+3)	7.5 (+2.5)	11	10
busiest months	9	9	12	
least busy months	7	6	10	
Men work:				
average	7 (+1)	6 (+2)	8	8
busiest months	9	8	10	
least busy months	5	4	6	

When the group of women were initially asked how many hours per day they worked, they did not include the hours they worked in and near the house. More specifically, they did not include cooking and cleaning the house, or feeding and tending the animals. Women only included the hours spent working in the fields. They also did not include the number of hours men worked in the house. Men also excluded household work when calculating the number of hours both men and women work. After specifically being asked, men then included the hours spent working inside the house when calculating the average hours spent working per day, but included only hours worked in the fields when calculating the busiest and least busy months. Both men and women stated that men worked very few hours in the house in comparison to women. This is consistent with other studies related to gender equality in Vietnam that estimate that women work twice as many hours in the home in comparison to men.

4.8.2 Women's and Men's Division of Labour

Table 4.5 summarises some of the contrasts between the men's and women's work patterns. This information was retrieved through PRA activities (see Appendix II, sections B and C for a description and findings).

Table 4. 5 Comparison of Men's and Women's Work Patterns

MEN	WOMEN
Seasonal	Year-round
Range from 1 to 10 hours per day	Average 10 - 12 hours per day
Do few work tasks (mostly heavy labour)	Do almost all work tasks
Work most often in garden and a small amount in agricultural land and planted forest	Work most often in planted forest and also home, garden and agricultural land
Work most often with cash crops (bamboo, wood trees, sugarcane)	Work with both subsistence and cash crops

Men and women tend to divide work tasks according to traditional roles and geographical areas. Women tend to do the planting, field maintenance, and to harvest the smaller (generally annual) crops. Men help them with the heavier work, such as soil preparation and harvesting of heavier crops.

During this economic transition, the largest change occurring is that men are primarily working with cash crops, especially the highest value crops, and only secondly considering work tasks and geographic location. This change in work load occurring in Lang Beo village is typical of developing countries in that, as the transition occurs in sources of household income from subsistence crops to cash crops, men tend to control the cash income (Meurs 1997).

The large number of trees planted on the hillside will eventually crowd out the crops currently being planted, and this transition will also affects men's and women's work tasks, and the amount of work they each likely will do. It seems that the women's work load in the poorer households will increase most, whereas women from the

wealthier households may even be able to reduce their work load. As noted in Table 4.3, a characteristic of poor and very poor households is that the men work minimal hours per day and men tend to spend most of their time working in the garden. The women of these marginal households are forced to decide what work to do on the basis of which products have the greater income earning potential. The work tasks in forestry that will likely increase women's work load include: prepare the soil and plant tree seedlings, maintain, cut and sell them. Her work load in agricultural will have to be reduced to make up for the increase in forestry work. The work tasks in crops to be reduced include; prepare the soil, plant, maintain and harvest. Growing trees is less time consuming than growing agricultural crops; however, the work is more physically draining. The women of wealthier households should be able to reduce their work load, assuming the men continue to do the same amount of work and the tasks they are currently doing.

The past two years have been much busier than average for most farmers. The large afforestation efforts promoted by the government, and the new cash income earning opportunities (such as fish raising), have created additional work for the farmers. Even during this extremely busy period, several men, specifically in the poorer households, have not increased the amount of hours they work. It is fair to assume that they will not increase their hours of work on their own initiative, given their limited access to information and other resources, so it will likely take intervention and new incentives of some sort to accomplish this.

4.8.3 Decision-making Authority in the Households

The specific tasks and the amount of work that men and women do is very reflective of the culture. Men hold much of the decision-making authority and have more

influence over one another, compared to women's influence over men. Both men and women stated that women have little or no influence or control over men's behaviour. Men will likely have to instigate changes in other men's work patterns. This change could be caused by men putting pressure on each other to work more regularly and energetically. The impetus to this pressure may, for example, be fuelled by the anger due to other men stealing their forest products. Secondly, men could feel encouraged to work more frequently as they observe other men being rewarded for their work with rising incomes.

Both men and women informants stated that men's work is 'more important'. Women said this is so because it is "difficult and heavy", men reiterated this and added that they have the responsibility of making the decisions and managing the women and children. Women may actually over-estimate the amount of hours men work, because they view men's work as more important. However, in female-headed households, and in households where men do not work very often, women do most of the heavy work, including preparing the soil and cutting bamboo stands to sell.

4.8.4 Decision-making Authority within the Community

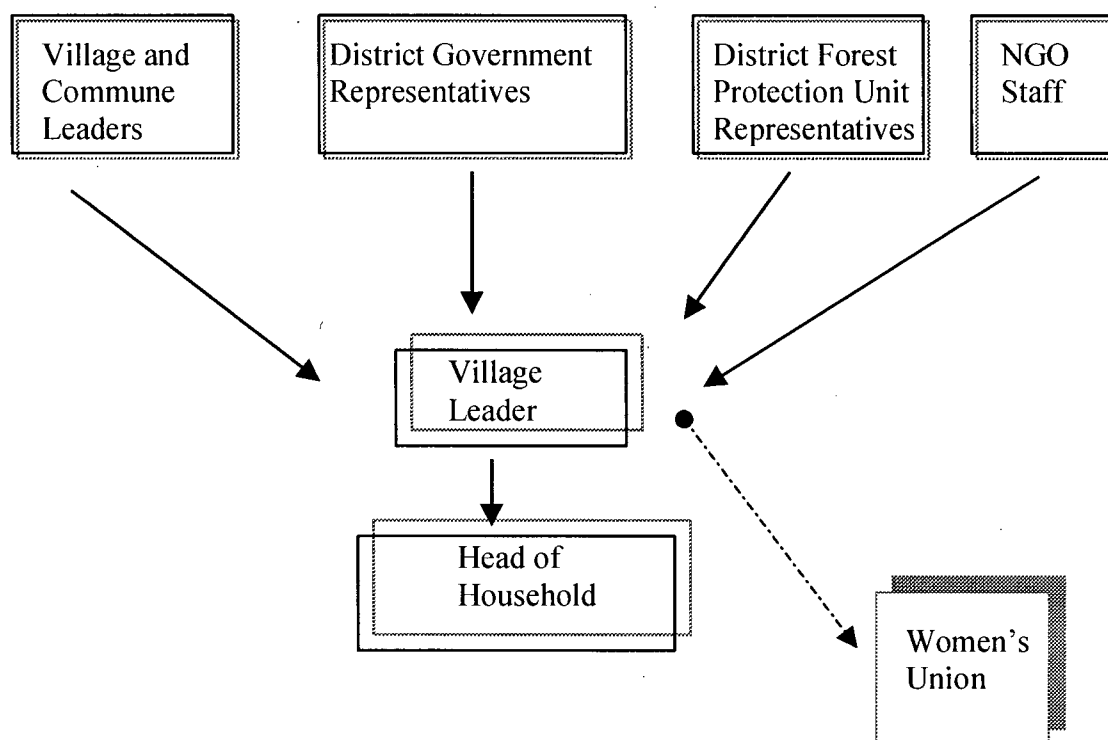
The village leader usually is the first point of contact for almost all information that enters the village from outside. He, in turn, conveys this information to the heads of households who attend the village meetings. The village leader facilitates the village meetings, and schedules a meeting whenever he has new information to disseminate or when village-wide decisions need to be made. Community discussions and decisions regarding forest protection occur during these village meetings, and the head of each household is expected to attend. The head of household is always a man, assuming there

is a healthy, adult male in the household. If an adult male does not reside in the house then a woman may be designated the head of the household, but only under these circumstances. Of the 91 households in the village, only 4 are headed by women. This results in women not being represented in these crucial meetings where forest protection is discussed and decisions made.

However, it is women who spend the majority of their days working in the planted forest, whereas men seldom work in these areas. And, according to women, they are largely responsible for the day-to-day decisions regarding which crops or trees to plant. Furthermore, the poorer households in the village have low attendance rates at village meetings, and thus remain uninformed and not involved in forest-related projects, though it is they who may be most pressured to deplete or steal forest resources. Even for households in attendance, the men seldom seem to share the information provided in the meetings with their wives or the rest of their households.

Figure 4.2 illustrates information flow from outside of the village, and within the village, and shows how the Women's Union is excluded from the formal information flow.

Figure 4.2 Village and Surrounding Area Information Flow



Village efforts to plan forest protection activities have thus generally excluded the key informants, the women in the village, as well as the poorer households who tend to resort most often to stealing from the forest to survive. Women do not generally discuss the important current issues of the village, largely because the Women's Union is not integrated into the formal information flow and decision structure of the village. Instead, the 'typical' women's issues that are discussed relate to such matters as family planning. If the Women's Union is to be effective in keeping women informed and is to represent their opinion in village-wide decisions, then it must be integrated into the information flow and power structure. This could be accomplished by including the Women's Union

leader in the meetings and some of the decisions that the village leader engages in regularly. Once she is informed she could act as a liaison to the village women to keep them informed and to assist in integrating them into the village-wide decision-making.

4.9 Conclusion

The people of Lang Beo village have experienced drastic changes in their lives in just the past 5 years. In general, the people are optimistic that their lives will improve by having greater livelihood security, however most stated they have not experienced such improvements in their lives to date.

The more liberal land and agricultural policies have greatly benefited those farmers who have better access to resources and more choices for income earning. However, those with fewer resources and limited access to these resources have experienced further hardships in their lives, and often less income than before the policies were enacted. Moreover, due to growing wealth disparities, they are now comparing themselves to the emerging wealthy households and feeling more discouraged than ever.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter the key findings are summarised, a brief synopsis of the entire thesis is provided, and finally implications for theory, and policy and practice are suggested.

5.1 *Conclusions about the Research Objectives*

The thesis goal (primary research question) and four specific research objectives within this broader goal were presented in Chapter 1. The information obtained to fulfil the research goal and objectives are the primary findings of this thesis. Below are summaries of the findings to each of the study's four research objectives.

5.1.1 Current Forest Land Situation and Trends in Lang Beo Village

The case study seeks to provide a systematic understanding of the current forest land situation, and trends for one village in Vietnam. In Lang Beo, farmers erroneously identified theft as the greatest threat to the forest, especially the replanted areas. After further inquiry it was found that at least 70 percent of the theft was done by poor people in need of money for food. Therefore, it can be concluded that theft is only an indirect cause of deforestation, and that poverty is the primary underlying cause.

Lang Beo's forest protection strategy was basically employing command and control approaches to reducing theft. These 'catch the thief' approaches failed (i.e., hiring security guards and giving them authority to fine people), and now the village is

instituting more community-based approaches, by forming forest protection teams and spreading the responsibility for monitoring and safeguarding forests among many members of the community. In addition, they are considering establishing more effective support systems to directly assist poor families.

A primary finding of the study is the drastic difference in the amount of forest land that has been received or accumulated by households through the allocation process; ranging from 0.25 to 6.3 hectares (5 - 126 sao). A detailed account of the forest land allocation process revealed that the district forest unit representative and the village leader make the majority of the decisions, and they excluded most of the village people in their decisions. Such exclusion in decision-making has also caused the process to take longer and to cost more, and has created confusion between people's understanding of historical borders that were established several generations prior. As a result of these misunderstandings, the conflict over land borders may continue well beyond the completion of the allocation process. Pilot projects in Vietnam that conducted participatory allocation processes had quite different results: a less expensive process, with more acceptable and sustainable decisions upon the completion of the process.

Women are the primary stewards of the forest land and forest resources; they average 8 working hours per day in this area, yet they are excluded from the forest land allocation process and the forest protection planning meetings. The Women's Union is the primary organisation for women to access information on major issues in the village; however, the traditional information flow of the village does not include the Women's Union in the main decision-making processes. Therefore, the main stewards and key

informants of forest and forest resources are excluded from the forest protection planning process.

5.1.2 Current Economic Strata in Vietnamese Society and in Lang Beo Village

Chapter 2 documents the emerging wealth disparities occurring in the nation and between rural households. The case study suggests that a major cause of the growing wealth disparities to be the land law that creates a land market and a market economy for other products. In general, the larger land-holders are diversifying their incomes and engaging in off-farm activities, whereas, the smaller land-holders are selling their land-use rights and are beginning to be just hired as labourers to wealthier land holders. There is an estimated 18:1 ratio of household income from the highest earners to the lowest earners in Lang Beo village, in comparison to a 13:1 ratio nation-wide.

The case study provides detailed household economic classifications and characteristics, and links the outcome of the land allocation process to the emerging household wealth disparities. Prior to the cooperative dissolving, some people were in a better position than others to benefit from a market-oriented economy. The amount of land, the labour-to-household member ratio, the level of formal education and access to information, are key factors in determining the ability of a household to cope during the transition to the new economic system.

The 3 wealthiest households in Lang Beo are acquiring unprecedented levels of wealth, and are distinguished by having control of a well-above-average amount of land, the most numerous sources of off-farm income, and some of the hardest working family members. Two of these households make the majority of their income as profits from the

efforts of their less fortunate neighbours, buying their products, transporting them and then selling them for as much as 100 percent profit margins.

Over two-thirds of the village is considered 'poor' or 'very poor' characterised by small amounts of land, often a shortage of labour, and they also generally lack formal education and access to information. Furthermore, gender inequalities are found to be more extreme in these households with men working 1 to 2 hours per day in comparison to women's 10 to 12 hours, and with men maintaining the majority of the decision-making authority. In fact, if the amount of land, labour to non-labour ratio, and knowledge and education level are relatively equal between households, then gender roles within the household can be the determining factor of that household's standard of living.

5.1.3 Forest Land Policy Impacts

The purpose of implementing the new forest land policies and Programme 327 is to improve rural people's livelihood security and to encourage more sustainable forest management practices. The first few years of these policies and this program has shown an increase in forest cover for the first time in decades. In Lang Beo village, the farmers have planted over 62,000 tree seedlings over the past 2 years, primarily by funds and technical assistance provided through Programme 327.

This has the appearance of a success story in afforestation efforts; however there is great uncertainty as to whether the program will assist farmers in securing or improving their livelihoods in the longer-term. More specifically, the farmers and local government officials assume that the farmers own the trees and have the right to sell them at harvest time and keep the profit for themselves. The central and provincial

government officials stated that the farmers have been compensated for the cost of the tree seedlings and their labour in planting them, and therefore that the trees belong to the government. The policy as to ownership of trees has not been documented anywhere to date, and some Vietnamese specialists believe it has been left intentionally vague.

The government policies and programs are a major impetus driving farmers from subsistence crops to cash crops, especially as the trees eventually crowd-out the food crops that are currently planted on the hillside. This change was not necessarily the farmers' choice. More reliance on a market economy that they do not fully understand, in comparison to reliance on subsistence crops, has the appearance of forcing them into a higher risk lifestyle.

5.1.4 Future Challenges

The primary challenge for farmers in forestry is to sustain themselves in the short-term while they wait for the forest products to fully grow and be harvested. They are employing strategies such as borrowing money to invest in items that turn a profit quickly. Learning how to profit from the market economy is a major challenge that most of the farmers are struggling with. This learning stage can be risky, in that they are largely determining which crops to plant on the basis of the current market price. The short-coming of this strategy is that most of them are making these same choices which will likely lead to an over-supply of products that will turn out to have little or no value.

The trend of men leaving farming looking for opportunities to earn higher incomes in urban areas is causing family separation, and resulting in women being left behind to raise the children and do all of the work. This raises the issues of women's and men's equality to even greater levels of importance. This is made even more difficult and

onerous when women's names are not included on the land title. When they are left to manage the home, they are not able to use the land title as collateral to obtain loans to make investments and improve household income and productivity.

The case study found that women of poor households, and possibly even average and wealthy households, will have an increased workload given that men's and women's work tasks appear so rigidly divided, and as the 'new' tasks that arise are more often than not becoming women's responsibility. Another finding of the study is that women are likely to lose some degree of decision-power within their homes, as households become more dependent on cash to purchase food. Men are taking a more dominant role of managing the cash crops, and the money received from the sales. In consequence, women in the village are likely to become more vulnerable and less informed as they lose control over money and decision-power.

5.2 *Implications for Theory*

The institution of private property rights is a foundation of capitalism, and is considered to be essential to democracy. In pure socialism, as defined by the Communist parties, the elimination of private property is an integral part of the economic system for attaining rural development via central planning and collective management. Vietnam's Communist leaders continue to espouse egalitarianism as an ultimate goal; yet, they are implementing open market economic policies to promote growth in such a manner that they are working counter to the ultimate goal.

Although market economies are dominating the global economic system on a massive scale, community-based natural resource management, especially for forestry, is

gaining credibility as a viable option. Deforestation is a world-wide problem, and current policies instituting privatisation or state control to manage forests are widely being acknowledged as having failed. Subsequently, the tree supply needed to keep up with timber demand in global markets makes it impossible for nations to maintain their current forest cover, let alone to increase it.

All common property regimes face challenges when functioning within a market economy since community members are rewarded by the market for individualistic behaviour. However, community forestry remains a promising approach to conserving natural resources, while also helping people to maintain and even increase their standards of living. Community forestry projects are becoming increasingly more prevalent in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries. These successes can be largely attributed to the fact that many natural resources are best suited to management under common regimes. Moreover, common property regimes facilitate risk-sharing among people and between generations, and such cooperation is critical for people living in poverty.

In contrast to countries that are embracing community forestry approaches, Vietnam has been moving in the other direction, and is implementing 'quasi-private' forest management by allocating land-use rights to individuals and households. The outcome of this new management regime is a new land market, involving the acquisition of large amounts of land for some, and the loss of land for others. The poorer people are becoming trapped in the poverty cycle with less access to quality social services, whereas a new wealthy class continues to acquire more resources, often at the expense of poorer families.

Furthermore, in Vietnam, forest land has been allocated inequitably, with large amounts provided to wealthiest households and smaller amounts to poorer households. This allocation system has resulted in increasing wealth disparities, and has created a new deforestation problem, namely, poorer households having resorted to stealing forest products. This acts as a disincentive for farmers to engage in agroforestry on the barren hillsides, which is the primary objective of the land policy and government Programme 327.

This study demonstrates that the loss of a resource held as a commons can be detrimental to poor household's food security and can even effect average households during periodic food shortages since they no longer have access to these common resources. Furthermore, forest cover is critical in stabilising the sloped lands upon which the majority of rural peasant are reliant and poor people are more negatively impacted by this environmental degradation that occurs with deforestation. Changes in forest land access tends to have greater effects on women, especially poor women, since 'common' land is the only type of land to which women have traditionally had 'rights'.

The growing wealth disparity presents further challenges to gender equity. Women are being left out of the forest protection planning process, and they are losing decision-making authority in their households and village-wide. Not only does this powerlessness breed hardship for women, but the exclusion of women in decision-making, especially in their homes, has contributed to further poverty. In other words, a consistent characteristic of poor and very poor households is that men hold the decision-making authority. Exclusion of women from village forest land- use decisions also

makes for inefficient implementation of forest management, as women do most of the work in this program.

5.3 *Implications for Policy and Practice*

Below are a summary of implications that were identified and discussed in previous chapters, plus a few additional implications on how the negative consequences of the forest land policies and programs might be offset or alleviated.

- The people of the villages, besides just the leaders, need to be included in the land allocation process. In many areas, the district-level government officials make the final allocation decisions with information provided by the village leader. In some cases, new land boundaries were drawn, but these did not recognise, or only partially recognised, prior land claims. This led to some farmers ignoring the formal land-use rights for which they will be receiving a certificate. This confusion could be reduced by including men and women of the villages in the land allocation processes.
- To make the land allocation process more effective and sustainable, the primary user-groups could be included in the land allocation process from the beginning. The user-groups consist of the people who do the majority of the work in a specific land area, and therefore who are most knowledgeable about current land use and prior land claims. Since women spend the majority of their days working in the forest land in Lang Beo village, and men rarely work here, women could evidently be included in the allocation process.
- To avoid some households achieving unprecedented wealth at the expense of their neighbours, the user groups and forest protection teams could coordinate the

sale and transportation of products to improve the price received by the producing households. This could be expanded to link people across villages and communes, to establish a network to exchange information and potentially to cooperate in marketing products. Lang Beo village may want to consider purchasing a motor bike to use to get to the district capital, to arrange transportation or to purchase an ox and cart for the cooperative to use in marketing their products.

- To reduce the time and costs of allocation, agricultural and forestry land could be allocated at the same time. To date, in most villages, these tasks are done at different times. Furthermore, allocating the land simultaneously could possibly help reduce the disparities in the amount of land that is distributed to each household.

- To reduce land inequity problems, the Central government could set a limit to the range that can exist between amounts of land each household in a village can receive. One way to better ensure equal land distribution would be to implement the household labour-to-members ratio as at least one of the factors determining the amount each household receives.

- To reduce land inequity the Central government could provide general guidelines for land allocation, as mentioned above. However, each village and commune should have the autonomy to conduct the allocation process as they deem most appropriate for their own community.

- At village level, some of the forest land could be left as a common resource for the local people to access and for women to manage. This could help control wealth disparities by providing poor families with an income source (or social security fund) during food shortage periods.

- Community forestry programs have been shown to be a promising approach through which to conserve natural resources in many parts of the world, while helping people maintain and even increase their standard of living. However, the weakness in community forestry is that women are still often excluded, even though they play a vital role in forest management and conservation. Ideally, these programs could be designed to foster women's participation, knowledge and decision-power.

- To increase opportunities to improve livelihood security by establishing credit programs with lower interest rates and longer payback periods that are more commensurate with the period of time of a piglet life cycle and crop harvest cycles. In addition, the village could make low and no interest loans available to the poor through a tax structure or a wealth redistribution plan.

5.4 Conclusion Statement

The leaders of Vietnam have been instituting major policy changes over the past ten years that continue to influence and change many aspects of the Vietnamese people's lives. Subsequently, many Vietnamese people are experiencing great difficulties in maintaining their current standard of living while meeting ever-increasing challenges during this transitional period. Rural farmer's greatest challenge stems from the land policy changes that are creating a land market. As Vietnam leaders are privatising forest land, organisations globally, particularly non-governmental organisations in developing countries, are establishing various community forestry projects to counter the rapid global deforestation rate they contribute largely to forest land privatisation.

Given this community forestry movement is often prompted by the failure of forest land privatisation in improving the sustainability of forests, it is recommended that the Vietnamese government and the people not completely abandon cooperative-oriented forest land management. Rather, some of the more sustainable aspects of the cooperative system could be retained in order to avoid the problems that are occurring primarily due to forest land privatisation. In addition, a more equitable land allocation process could be instituted to assist in preventing long-term problems such as growing wealth disparities and gender inequities.

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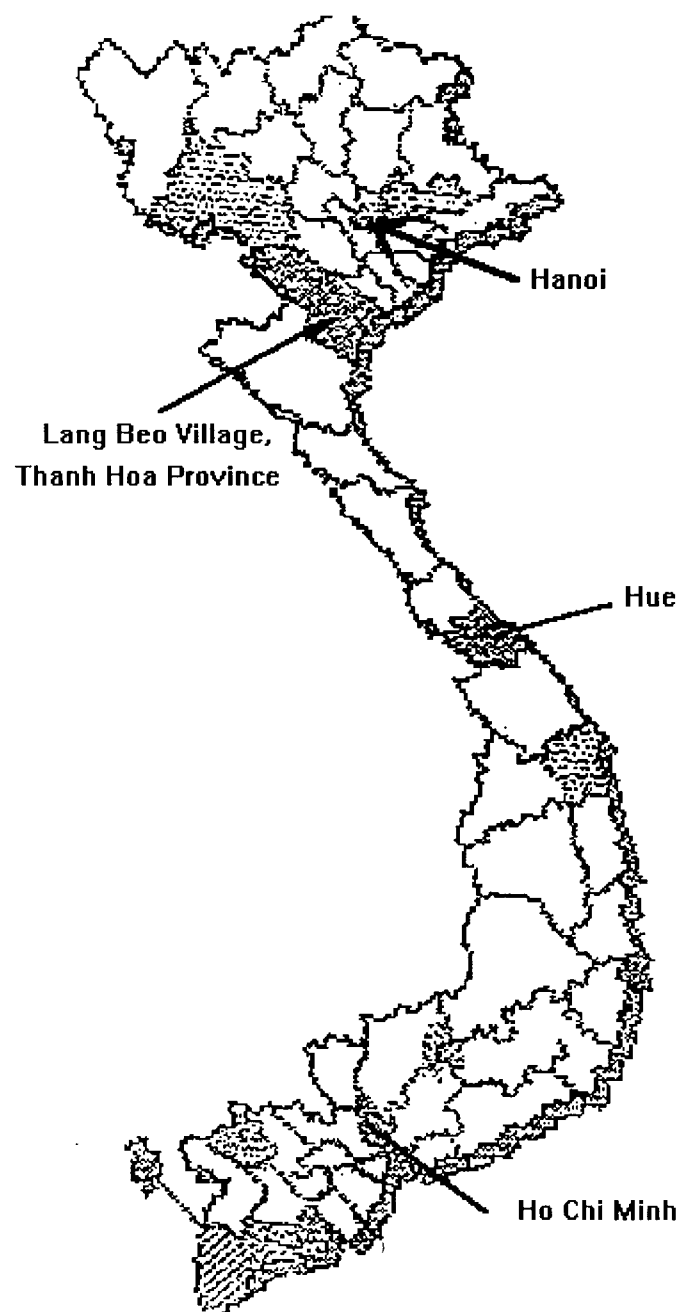
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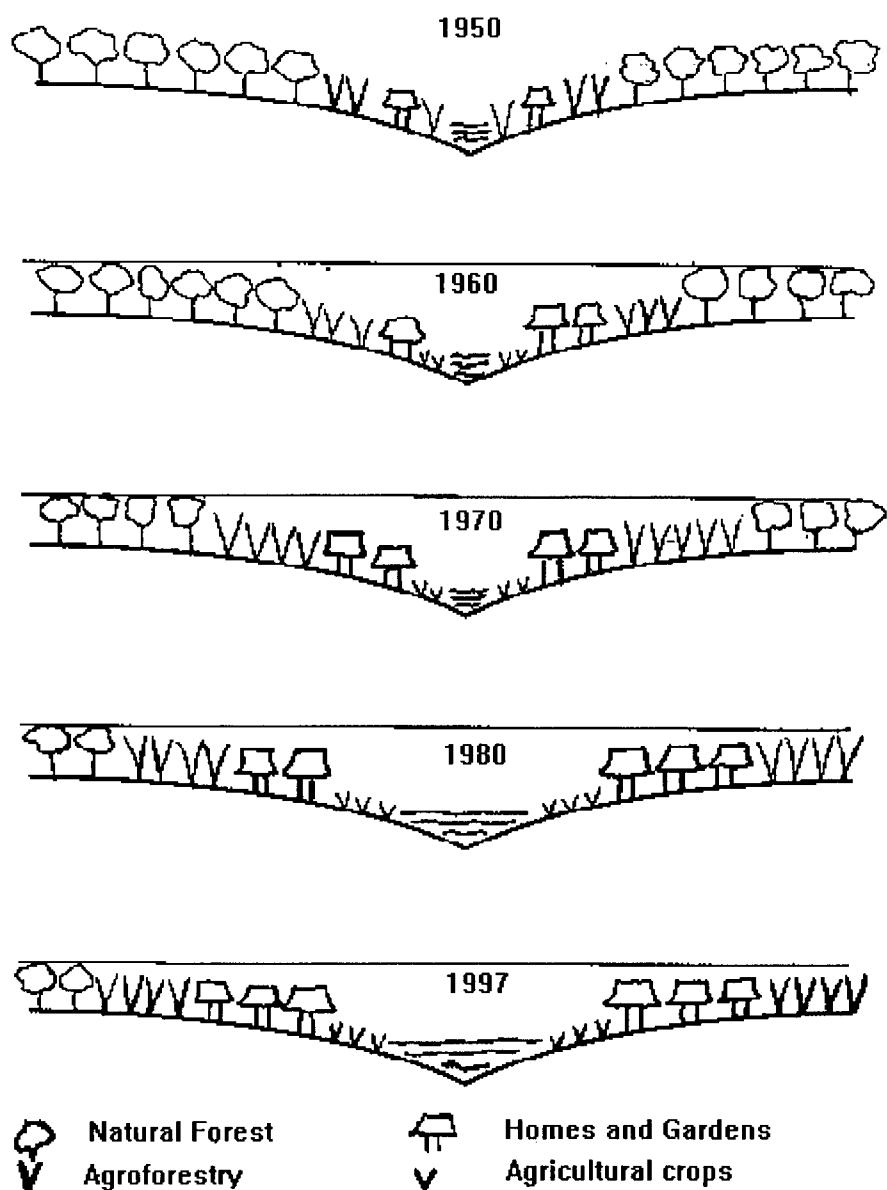
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Appendix I: Map of Case Study Location in Vietnam



Appendix II.: Participatory Rural Appraisal Activities and Findings

A. Land- Use Transect



B. Women's and Men's Perceptions of Labour Division and Decision-making Authority

Below is a description of 2 of the participatory rural appraisal research activities employed in the field and the findings from these activities.

A group of 10 women were asked to draw a map of the village (map is not included due to its large size). On this map the women drew the 5 main land areas, as well as, the major crops or resources grown in these areas. The women were asked six different questions related to the 12 crops, trees and animals they said they worked with. The six questions were:

Who decided what to plant here?

Who prepares the soil?

Who plants the seeds?

Who maintains the fields (i.e. weeding)

Who harvests the products?

Who sells the product or brings it to the home for consumption?

Table 6.1. summarises the information the women illustrated on their map by answering the six questions.

Table 6. 1 Women's Perception of Women's and Men's Responsibilities

Resource	decision	soil	plant	maintain	harvest	sell/home
wet rice	♀ ♀	♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀
sugar cane	♀ ♂ ♂	♂ ♂	♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀
potatoes	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♂	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀
cassava/rice	♀ ♀	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀
maize	♀ ♀	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀ ♂	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀
bamboo & wood	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀
collect wood	♀ ♀	-----	-----	-----	-----	♀ ♀
go to market	♀ ♀	-----	-----	-----	-----	♀ ♀

Resource	decision	build pen/pond	buy young	feed	clean pen/pond	sell at maturity
pig raising	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♂ ♂	♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂
fish raising	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂	♂ ♂	♀ ♂ ♂	♀ ♀	♀ ♀	♀ ♀ ♂ ♂

Key

- ♀ ♀ - women do all the work
- ♂ ♂ - men do all the work
- ♀ ♂ ♂ women do a small amount of work, men do the majority
- ♀ ♀ ♂ women do the majority of work, men do a small amount
- ♀ ♀ ♂ ♂ women and men do an equal amount of the work

Because the men's work is largely seasonal, a group of ten men decided to draw a calendar rather than a map to better illustrate their work responsibilities. The calendar below illustrates the work men do.

Table 6. 2 Men's Perception of their Responsibilities

Seasons	Winter Nov., Dec., Jan.	Spring Feb., Mar., Apr.	Summer May, June, July	Fall Aug., Sept., Oct.
Wet Rice	Harvest	Prepare Soil		
Sugarcane	Harvest/Sell Prepare Soil	Plant		
Fruit and Wood Trees	Prepare Soil Plant	Plant	*	*
Bamboo	Harvest/Sell Prepare Soil	Plant		Harvest/Sell
Maize	Prepare Soil	Plant	Harvest/Sell	
Cassava	Harvest Prepare Soil	Plant		
Rice (hillside)		Prepare Soil	Plant	Harvest/Sell
Pig Raising	Sell	Build Pen** Buy Piglets	Maintain	
Fish Raising	Sell	Build Pond **	Maintain	
		Buy Small Fish		

* Harvested and sold throughout the year

** This task is not annual

Note: The task of harvesting the product also includes selling it.

Table 6.3 summarises the information the men provided by answering the same six questions as the women (women's answers are summarised in Table 6.1).

Table 6.3 Men's Perception of Women's and Men's Responsibilities

Resource	decision	soil	plant	maintain	harvest	sell/home
wet rice	♂♂	♀♀♂	♀♀	♀♀	♀♀♂	♀♀♂
sugar cane	♂♂	♂♂	♀♂♂	♀♀	♂♂	♂♂
fruit & wood trees	♂♂	♀♀♂	♀♂♂	♀♀	♂♂	♂♂
maize	♂♂	♀♀♂	♀♀♂	♀♀	♀♀♂♂	♀♀♂♂
bamboo	♂♂	♀♀♂	♂♂	♀♀	♂♂	♂♂
cassava/rice	♂♂	♀♀♂	♀♀♂	♀♀	♀♀	♀♀

Resource	decision	build pen/pond	buy young	feed	clean pen/pond	sell at maturity
pig raising	♂♂	♂♂	♂♂	♀♀♂♂	♀♀♂♂	♂♂
fish raising	♂♂	♂♂	♂♂	♂♂	♂♂	♂♂

Men's and women's perception of decision-making authority differed dramatically. Men stated that for every resource that they are responsible for to any degree, they make the decision to grow or raise that crop or animal. Women stated that they make the sole decision for products that they are heavily involved in and men are minimally involved in. However, if the men do at least two or more of the tasks (even if women do all the tasks) then women stated that both them and the men equally make the decision to grow or raise a certain plant or animal.

Another great difference in opinion is related to which gender sells the resources. Women stated that they solely sell all products or bring them to their homes (i.e. rice they consume and do not sell), with the exception of fish and pigs, in this case they equally share the task with men. Men grouped harvesting and selling together since they always harvest and sell a product, as opposed to just doing one of these two tasks. Men stated that they sold all cash crops on their own with the exception of maize, in this case they helped women a little.

In the past, women did all of the selling when it was small items such as vegetables that they would carry to the market. Their answers indicate that they assume they will continue to do this task of selling products. For example, a large amount of the wood trees have not been harvested yet and will not be for several years, yet women stated they will sell these. They also said they are the sole sales persons of bamboo; however, in the few households where large amounts of bamboo are being sold, it is generally the man who arrange this. However, in the majority of households the bamboo is being cut and sold on an as-needed basis, and therefore in small amounts at a time. This small-scale selling is most likely done by the women.

Men stated that, in general, they did less of the work than women but helped them plant cassava and maize and did all the planting of bamboo, and most of the wood and fruit trees. Whereas, women said they did most of the planting of wood and bamboo and all of the cassava and maize planting. It is possible that men over-estimated the amount of work they did in planting these crops given that they also stated they spend little time on the hillside where the crops are planted, whereas women spend most of their day there. On-the-other-hand, men tended to under-estimate the amount of work they did in

preparing the soil for these same products. Women stated that men and women share the work of preparing the soil for cassava, maize, bamboo and wood trees equally, whereas men said women did the majority of the work and they only assisted a little.

Women seem to estimate a higher amount of work from the men in more traditional and heavier labour tasks such as preparing the soil. On the other hand, women estimate fewer hours of work from men in the less traditional male tasks of planting and selling. Men are estimating their task hours completely opposite of this. Men estimate higher amounts of work hours in the non-traditional tasks of planting and selling, and less hours in traditional male tasks of soil preparation. Another example is the task of maintaining the crops and animals. Women stated that men helped maintain the wood trees, bamboo, maize and cassava, and men said that they did not help with this task. In maintaining sugar cane, women stated that men even did an equal amount of work in maintaining the fields, and men said they did none. The only variation to this is in maintaining the pigs and fish. Women stated they did all the pigs and fish maintenance, whereas, men stated they did all the maintenance with fish and men and women equally split this task with pigs.

C. Identifying the Forest 'Hotspots' for Theft

The fourth and final PRA research activity was conducted with a group of men who are leaders of their forest protection unit in Lang Beo village. These men were asked to participate because they manage forest land in the parts of the village that have the highest rate of theft. They men drew a map (map is not included due to its large size)

of the village, identified the 'hotspots', discussed reason why these are 'hotspots', and generated ideas on how to reduce theft.