



Gender implications of forestry  
land allocation and land use  
changes: A case study in Trung  
Chai commune, Sa Pa district,  
Lao Cai province

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## 1. Introduction

According to government sources, the initial process of land reform in northern Vietnam culminated in the establishment of collectivised agriculture, whereby all agricultural means of production were owned by the State and managed by co-operatives – a process said to have been completed by 1960. However, the co-operatives managed cultivated land only, and most of that was in the lowlands. The process of collectivising uplands agriculture, however, was slower and rather ineffectual for a range of political and administrative reasons. It had little impact throughout this period and minority peoples generally continued to practise their traditional versions of swidden farming.

Forest lands everywhere were under the control of the state's Forest Protectorate (Kiem lam) for both exploitation and protection. A policy of in-migration of Vietnam's ethnic majority, or Kinh, people, into areas populated by minority peoples, was implemented throughout the 1960s and 1970s throughout the country ostensibly to 'tame the wilderness' and bring its resources into economic play. However, the objectives of the policy, called *khai hoang*, were both economic and political, seeking to neutralise political dissent through cultural assimilation of minority peoples during protracted periods of war, and to harness the natural resources abundant in the mountainous regions where they lived through the massive clearing of forest land for both crop production and timber exports. There are no known studies on the impact of this policy on traditional land tenure of the H'mong people in Lao Cai.

Since Decision No.100 in 1981, and *Khoan 10*, (or *Contract 10*) in 1988, farmers have gradually been afforded increasing legal control over their land. Two subsequent government decrees issued in late 1993 and early 1994 - N° CP64 (for agricultural land) and N° CP02 (for forestry land) – effectively set the household as the basic unit of production (replacing collectivisation), provided a contract system for forest protection and development, and defined the process of allocation of land to a range of individual entities, including households.

In the lowlands, land allocation was easier because a market in land had already begun to emerge. In the rural uplands, however, land allocation has proceeded much more slowly as there is no market in remote and isolated farm land on hillslopes which is often degraded and has little potential for commercial development. It is this issue which constrains the allocation process most significantly, and the reason why this study has focused on the upland commune of Trung Chai in Sa Pa district, Lao Cai province, in northwestern Vietnam.

### Location of study

This study was conducted in Trung Chai Commune in March, 1998, and focussed on the two villages of Chu Lin and Mong Sen. The whole commune of 5 villages has a population of 2,248 people of mostly H'mong (68%) and Dao people. Both of the villages involved in this study are Black H'mong communities eking out a subsistence from swidden agriculture with terraced rice on the middle of hillslopes in Sa Pa district, about 25 kilometres from the town of Lao Cai. Both villages are of similar population : Chu Lin is a village of 894 people in 126 households, while Mong Sen has 696 people in 104 households.

The local topography is characterised by high slopes (up to 1700m a.s.l.) with rocky karst outcrops and deep ravines. Transport infrastructure is nonexistent – only forest tracks for walking or riding small horses. Data from the area describe a climate characterised by a hot rainy season between May and September and a

dryer, colder season, with the possibility of snow between December and February when the temperature can drop to  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

### **Objectives of study**

A significant body of research from developing countries has identified the important role played by rural women in the use of land and other natural resources but to date there has been very little done in Vietnam. Since this study ultimately seeks to identify the impacts of land allocation on local land use practices to feedback into the development of appropriate forestry resource use policies, it is imperative that the dynamics of gender in land use be understood.

This study then, focuses on 3 areas of land allocation – current and past land use and forestry management practices and their gender implications.

### **Methodology**

It is essential to gain an overview of the socio-economic situation and land use practices during two distinct periods: before 1988 and the advent of Contract 10, and the period since then but before land allocation in 1996. The study then looks at the process of land allocation itself, the role played by local people, and the current gender division of labour in land management. A number of research tools were used, including:

- A survey of secondary data on land use from the relevant local government offices including extension, the Cadastral Division and the State Forestry Enterprise (SFE), at district and provincial levels;
- Interviews with commune and district extension staff about land use;
- Discussions about land use with individual farmers and focus groups (men and women separately);
- Use the following PRA tools for village discussions on land use:
  - Land use map
  - Village transect walk
  - Village meeting
  - Venn diagram
  - Time trends diagram
  - Seasonal calendar

After discussions with the district cadastral and extension staff, and the Sapa SFE, the 2 researchers, accompanied by a district extension officer, visited commune leaders and other local government officials, to discuss an appropriate study site. Households to be interviewed in the 2 villages selected were chosen by village leaders but researchers stressed that the majority of them (44 in total) be of H' Mong ethnicity and from different socio-economic groups (rich, better off, medium and poor). The interviewees were both men and women and they were interviewed separately.

Household interviews were followed by group discussions of men and women, both separately and combined, and using the various PRA tools mentioned above. Interviews with villagers had to be conducted through an interpreter since most H' mong women do not speak Vietnamese.

## **2. Changes in land tenure over the past 50 years**

### **1. Traditional land tenure**

A study of nearby H'mong villages describes previous local farming systems as 'composite swiddening systems' for subsistence, where people live in permanent villages and develop home gardens with vegetables, fruit trees and medicinal plants while cultivating wet-rice terraces and staple crops in swidden fields (Prutzer citing Rambo, 1995, p.69f). H'mong and Dao peoples have been cultivating wet-rice in the area for at least 80 years on fields often a long distance from the village at suitable altitudes of around 1000m. At higher altitudes they could grow annual crops of beans or maize in swidden fields. Crops were supplemented with foods collected from the forested tops of hills and by hunting.

According to Prutzer (p.7) traditional ownership of land was originally determined by lineage at the time that new land was being cleared but only in as much as a man would seek out new areas, establish fields and build a house, and then invite his brothers to join him. Once a household settled and cleared swidden land it would operate as a discrete economic unit.

However, ownership of land was patrilineal, i.e., from father to son, although a married woman would have the right to own land with her children in the event of her husband's death. Divorce was a different matter and a woman would often not be granted a share of the land as it was assumed she would remarry and get land from a new husband or return to her maiden family's land (Prutzer & Ngoc, pp.31-2).

Daughters would not receive land as they would marry and the land, and her children, would transfer out of the family. The eldest son usually remained in the parents house and consequently inherited the largest portion of land, while younger sons lived as separate households and farmed smaller plots of land.

Although it is often claimed to be for personal use only, the growing of opium was almost certainly a major source of income until the recent past when it was banned in 1993.

### **2. The collective period – from land reform to *Khoan 10 (Contract 10)* – 1960-1988**

Although exact dates are unclear, a period of co-operative formation did happen in Trung Chai commune, probably between 1962 and 1977, although it seems the actual collectivisation of agricultural land was difficult to implement or monitor. However, nearby farmers do speak of abandoning the work brigades in favour of cultivating their own land at some stage in the late 1970s, despite the official view that co-operatives were still functioning up until 1990. It is probably true that the co-operative structure remained mainly as a formal link to government extension supplies, and even tax collection.

One reason for the lack of penetration of collectivisation is that farming communities at this altitude most likely worked swidden fields cleared in what was technically/legally forestry land, or, at least, land which came under the control of the (then) Ministry of Forestry, and which was not subject to the collectivisation policy since it was not used for crop production and was already owned by the state. In fact, most uplands communities farmed swiddens in forests and on 'forestry land' - a legal category which ostensibly meant forests, but which throughout the 1970s and 1980s increasingly meant bare hills as migrating lowland farmers and illegal loggers joined indigenous farmers to clear vast tracts of forested land.

In the nearby commune of Hao Thao during this period, all wet-rice as well as swidden fields on the hills were owned by the co-operative. Only the homegardens were private – the 5% of the cooperative land which had been allocated to farmers under *Prime Ministerial Decision No.100*

on agricultural land in 1980. All cattle used for ploughing were owned by the co-operative but their care was hired out to families who were paid for this service in rice or in calves.

Much clearance of forest for agricultural land took place during these years using the organised labour of the work brigades. This land, which had no owner before – as it did not exist as agricultural land – was subsequently allocated to new families and immigrants during the first land allocation period, called *Contract 10*, in 1988. The name describes the first contract relationship between state and user of land – the first official guarantee of rights to private land.

According to commune officials, land use was categorised as below:

*Paddy land:* terraced fields on the hill sides produced one summer crop of local species rice. No other crops were grown on this land during fallow perhaps because it was under the control of the cooperative and not for private benefit.

*Home garden land:* This land had been officially decreed for private profit since 1980 and was used for household vegetables and staples such as cassava and corn. Occasionally fruit trees such as peach or banana were grown in homegardens, and these were most likely the most significant cash crop after opium.

*Natural forest land:* Bamboo, Sa moc (*Cunninghamia spp.*) and Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*) trees were grown on natural forest land, and extraction controlled by government through the commune level Kiem Lam, 2 or 3 state foresters, who were responsible for forest protection.

Farmers extracted timber for house building, fire-wood and illegal trade, and during this period the forest was seriously depleted. Men usually cut timber trees for house building and sale to private traders while women and children collected fire-wood for household use and for sale. In areas near the roads, on market days, fire-wood was sold for low prices to town people who transported it to the lowlands for sale in Hanoi and other cities.

Commercially valuable non-wood products, such as medicinal plants and edible plants grew under the forest canopy. Naturally occurring medicinal plants such as Sa nhan (*possibly H'mong name, species unknown*), Do trong (*Rhamnoneuron spp.*), Hoang ba (*Evodia leptota*) and Thao qua (*Amomum costatum*) were harvested without replanting or maintenance, and sources were gradually depleted. This work was done by women and products either sold at local markets or to lowland traders.

Opium was often grown in cleared fields in the natural forests where the soil was fertile, moist and away from built up areas so that it could be protected. According to informal discussions among households and commune staff, more than 70% of households planted opium crops at this time. This work was mainly men's work as opium was mainly for personal use, but it was also sold to private traders. Male addiction to opium was widespread and caused serious social problems – including violence, absenteeism and debt, according to local women. The government has been implementing a major anti-opium campaign since 1993 and most women say that their lives have improved because of this.

*Plantation forest land:* During this period, forestry was done at the Sa Pa SFE. Land for afforestation was bare land or scrubland. Forest tree varieties were Tong Pu Sui (*Pinus spp.*), Sa Moc (*Cunninghamia sp.*) and Po Mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*). Plantations were not well maintained and large areas of afforested land were allowed to degenerate from lack of staffing and poor management. Grazing cattle destroyed seedlings while low levels of technical expertise and inexperience in everything from species selection to planting densities resulted in lost forests.

***Gender issues during this period:***

- H'mong cultural traditions are thought to have largely excluded women from general participation in community affairs since traditional times. Community meetings were almost exclusively male, and land use decisions, therefore, were made by men. However, the only decisions being made at that time regarding land involved the selection of land, not its uses, since these were rarely open to innovation by either men or women, and market integration was not an issue.
- It seems that women may not have had individual rights in land during this period. However, it would seem that since Decision No.100 allocated homegarden lands to private control, their influence in family decision-making may have increased during this period.
- Another issue during this period must surely relate to the relationship between land use and labour of men and women during the collective period, where tasks were supposedly allocated equally and childcare and cooking at least were largely collectivised, that is, not the sole responsibility of the woman. Farmers interviewed were very vague about these questions and others related to social organisation during the collective period.
- It seems also that the woman's decision-making role may have become more influential as the only 'private' land during this period, the only land from which a household could make a profit, the homegarden, was traditionally managed by the woman. However, more research is needed to elaborate on this situation.

### **3. Land uses between 1988 and Forest Land Allocation in 1998**

It is during this period that Vietnam began the conversion of its economy from a centrally planned one to a market system, setting the scene for massive changes in socio-economic conditions around the country. One significant result of this change was recognition that ownership of all means of production would ultimately be privatised, and in 1988, a land law was drafted whose basic tenet was to guarantee the farmers' long term right to use (although not yet own) land.

It also implied the establishment of the household as the basic unit of production, and the necessity to allocate land use-rights to farming families. This initially involved paddy land in the lowlands, and increasingly included land formerly under the control of the Ministry of Forestry. In the uplands this land was often unofficially under crops already, bare hills with degraded soil, or depleted forest stands.

The passage of Government Decrees No.64, and No.02 (concerning the extension service and the allocation of forestry land) in 1994 revitalised the government's credibility with farmers who had become jaded with policy changes during the last 30 years. This in turn led to their more enthusiastic participation in government economic development programs, and the rapid incorporation of more natural resources into production systems.

In Trung Chai commune, the governmental Program 327 has been running since 1993. It allows the SFE to contract farmers to plant seedlings provided by the enterprise on bare forestry land. Farmers were paid for their work but had no further responsibility for the planted areas which soon withered from lack of care. Further contractual arrangements were made and farmers were paid for weeding and watering, but this was equally unsuccessful.

Land use categories during this period included:

*Paddy land:* a single annual crop of local variety (Ta lenh) was grown between April and September. However, fixed settlements and population pressure from both within communities and from in-migration of lowland settlers, forced farmers to intensify production to increase yields. The use of manure and chemical fertilisers on rice fields during this time is said to have increased yields by between 25 and 30%. Those households who could afford it started planting corn or potato during the traditional winter fallow in order to produce more food. Formerly, corn was grown only on the hills in swidden fields, and the adoption of this cropping structure is

believed to have been instrumental in reducing the tension between deforestation and food security all over the uplands.

*Homegarden land:* Here the growing of vegetables for subsistence has been increasingly supplemented by corn and cassava as food staples. More households began to grow fruit trees such as peach, persimmon or plum, in addition to certain forest species and small bamboo (*Bambusa sp.*), while medicinal plants, such as Do trong or Hoang ba, were used for covering the soil as well as income generation.

**Seasonal planting calendar in Trung Chai commune**

(after Prutzer & Ngoc.p.25)

Crop	(Lunar) month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
wet-rice				xxxx	oooo	-----	ssss					
hill rice			xxxx	oooo	-----	ssss						
corn		xxxx	oooo	-----	ssss							
beans			xxxx	oooo	-----	ssss						
potatoes			-----	ssss							xxoo	-----
cabbage		sssssss									xxxxoo	-----
cassava			xxxx	oooo	-----	ssss						
collect forest foods			cccccccccccccccc									
collect fuelwood	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddddddd	dddddddddddd	dddd
tree planting	--o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o	---o

**Key:** xxx = land preparation: ooo = planting: ----- = fertilise & care: sss = harvest  
**Women's tasks =** xxoo--ss

*Forest garden land:* This is believed to be land formally under the control of the SFE but actually already in use as secondary crop fields. Forest gardens come in 2 kinds:

- Forest garden land with planted trees: This type is on land formerly contracted to the farmer by the SFE for tree planting and protection. At the time of land allocation, these parcels of land were seen as inconsequential and were allocated to the households currently managing it on contract, or to households simply living nearby, often growing crops on it. The households were issued Red Books identifying their land. The total area of forest land allocated in this manner is thought to be very small.
- Forest gardens on bare land and scrubland constitute by far the largest portion of forest land allocated, and was often allocated to households who were already using it for crop and fruit tree production.

Most forest garden land is used for annual staples (maize, cassava) but with Red Books and supporting government programs, those households who can afford to invest, do so in fruit and timber trees Mo (apricot), Tong pu sui (*Pinus sp.*), Que (cinnamon), and medicinal plants.

*Natural forests* are managed by the SFE. In an attempt to overcome past mismanagement which resulted in depleted forests, the SFE identified 2 basic forms of forest protection for densely forested land, and re-assigned certain parcels of forestry land in the natural forest category:

- The SFE has distributed parcels of densely forested land of usually 3 times the maximum household 'ration' (5 ha) to households or groups of households to protect. This land includes both natural forest and former SFE land which has been densely planted – both

categories of high commercial and environmental value and requiring protection and conservation. Each household will be paid 40,000 dong/ha annually to actually manage this land but they must have adequate labour and investment capital, and sign contracts with the SFE. Informal discussions revealed that it was usually commune and village officials who were given contracts. These households have the right to collect fire-wood and off-cuts in accordance with specific regulations and with approval of the SFE and the commune. If other households want fire-wood or timber for house repairs, they must get permission from the contractor or the commune if it's a large amount.

People acknowledge that this form of allocation has created inequities in the community, with certain well-placed people getting contracts on huge tracts of land. For example, the household of a 33-year old couple with 2 children, has been contracted to protect 120 ha, more than half the total forest land area of the village (216.75 ha). This couple is already wealthy and has to hire other farmers to protect their forest (presumably protection involves some kind of patrolling or physical presence). People were not afraid to complain that land had been unfairly distributed but were also pretty powerless to know what to do about it. Hence there is the potential not only for conflict in the future, but also that such large areas cannot be protected when the poor households need more land or forest products and a single family is charged with its protection.

- The SFE and commune Kiem Lam officers transferred responsibility for other areas of forest land to whole villages as early as 1989, after *Contract 10*. The density of trees on this land is lower than the above category, possibly regenerating, and seen to be of less value. These forests are nearby residential areas and the communities themselves have assigned a group of households living close to the forest to protect it. These households are paid in kind only, and have the right to collection of firewood and timber in accordance with the law. This seems to be a more successful method of allocating land for the purpose of protection inasmuch as it involved the entire community. Chu Lin villagers organised an "Oath-taking meeting" in which people promised to protect the forest and defined penalties which would apply for those who violated their oath.

Apart from collecting fire-wood, fallen timber and mushrooms, some households also used this land to grow Thao qua (*Amomum costatum*) and other medicinal plants for significant supplemental incomes. One such family in Chu Lin village decided to plant some 4.5 ha of Thao Qua as early as 1989 upon hearing of a market for the herb in China. They have been harvesting since 1993 and realising as much as 6 million dong each year.

Opium was also a crop grown in the natural forest but since 1993 a national opium elimination program has been conducted in mountain areas in general and in Lao Cai province in particular. Special funds have been allocated to local banks for no interest loans for farmers to replace their opium with other commercial crops. In Trung Chai commune, opium production has dwindled but not entirely disappeared because it used to be so profitable it is hard to find an acceptable replacement crop.

One household in Mong Sen village to benefit from the low interest loans (the so-called *Account No.6*) borrowed 1.3 million dong in 1995 to buy a buffalo after uprooting the entire opium crop. Mr Think has since sold a calf and repaid the loan in full. His wife says that the whole family has benefited from the lending program but it remains difficult to find alternative short-term crops to invest in.

#### *Plantation forest land:*

The SFE contracted farmers to plant, tend and protect seedlings they provided. For this task they received VND 700,000 for planting, VND 30,000 for protection (first and second years), VND



280,000 for tending (first year) for each hectare including weeding and replanting where seedlings died.

From the third year, farmers receive VND 40,000/ha/year for protection (similar to protection of natural forests). In addition, farmers can use the land for annual crops such as cassava, maize and groundnut, which can be intercropped on newly planted land until the shade from the forest trees has covered the land.

#### **Gender issues during this period:**

- The major change has been the concentration of government supported cash income generating activities in and around the home, enhancing women's influence within the households, and probably, within their communities (although this latter was never expressed to us directly). This has also occurred at a time when men's cash earning capacity has been gradually diminished through the progressive removal of their 2 major sources of income – opium growing and logging. (This must be somewhat offset against the gains in cash income derived from forest protection, since this is a male task, and presumably, the cash income derived from it remains with the male.)
- The change to household based cash generating activities has also allowed women to reduce their workloads in the forest where the need to collect fuelwood has been reduced to just household need and not in the quantities required to make a profit from selling. This has helped women and helped the forest too.
- Again it seems likely that changing land uses accompanied by increasing integration into government programs and the developing tourism market around SaPa may have served to highlight the role of women in diversifying crops, intensifying medicinal plant production for sale, and developing handicrafts for sale to tourists.
- Another issue related to the focus of activities in the homegarden is that women now had the opportunity to work closer to their homes and reduce, or ameliorate, the onerous task of labouring in the swidden field on steep sloping land for staple foods. This would have benefited their health directly, as well as enabling a more diversified diet for the whole family.

#### **4. Land allocation and farmer participation**

Land allocation preparation began in Lao Cai province in 1995, initially in Trung Chai commune. Land allocation committees were set up at provincial, district and commune levels. Training in land allocation was widely carried out. At the grassroots level, all village leaders took part in training. At the end of 1996, land allocation was completed in Trung Chai commune. Since that time, forestry land has belonged to the farmers.

In theory, a lot of changes in land utilization were to be expected, but few changes are visible yet. This is because it has only been 1 year since allocation, but also because most farmers are cultivating the same land they have for years but now it has been allocated to them. However, officials say that more timber trees have been planted in the forest gardens and some farmers are talking about planting more commercially valuable trees such as cinnamon, cardoman, bamboo and fruit trees.

In Trung Chai commune, land was largely allocated in accordance with existing the land use situation although some adjustment was made to ensure that the growing population received fairly equal shares.

A *Land Allocation Committee* was established and provided with training. Meetings were arranged in every village to notify farmers and explain the purpose, process and procedures to them. Farmers then registered with the committee and the physical process of allocation – measurement, marking borders, cross-checking information - was conducted.

The process itself produced much useful information about the limitations of land allocation as a swift solution to deforestation and uplands development.

Farmers either do not fully understand the purpose of land allocation or they do not agree with it. Their reliance on the subsistence economy means that they do not particularly value this opportunity to become part of the new market system. Furthermore, the land allocated to them is far from roads and towns and even markets, so has little market value. They continue to cultivate as they did before.

Likewise, farmers seemed not to have understood the process itself and do not know why they were given a Red Book, or what the certificate means. This means that they possibly understand neither the obligations nor the benefits of allocation, and this will have consequences for forest protection.

The extent of land areas was often understated at registration, and therefore in the Red Book, in order to avoid possible government taxes in the future. Neighbours, however, had private agreements which recognised actual land areas.

Land allocation officials could not decipher the true situation where, in the past, some households had borrowed land from households who had large holdings but no labour. These borrowers have now declared the land as their own and had it registered as such. Because it was impossible to verify the original 'owner's' claim, this land area was recorded in the Red Book of the borrower. There are no serious conflicts at the moment but in the future when land ownership becomes critical to the livelihoods of the next generation, new taxes arrive, and government project investments are available, many questions will arise and there will be nobody to answer them.

The SFE was not involved on the Land Allocation Committee but was allocated, and received Red Books for, land which is currently contracted to several families for protection. These families have registered the same land as their own and these areas are now listed in the Red Books of these households. The exclusion of the SFE from the process has therefore led to further future problems.

The method of disseminating information was obviously inadequate or inappropriate and did not cater to the needs of the illiterate or isolated so that they could truly be involved in the process. Women are traditionally not involved in public decision-making, and so only received information second-hand and from husbands who probably did not understand either.

## **5. Gender and land allocation**

The Red Book itself carries only one space for writing the name of the householder. That is usually understood to mean a man and there are no lines for the name of his wife or those of other family members. The provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Extension Division of Sa Pa district have joined forces to produce a "Member Book" for households, in which the name of all family members can be written. However, with regard to land allocation, this book has no legal weight: the only document acceptable, for example as loan collateral, is the 'Red Book'. The H'mong women in Trung Chai were currently not concerned that their names are not in their family's Red Book and in fact, it has not yet had an impact on their lives.

As stated earlier, traditionally a H'mong woman is not concerned about land tenure in the event of her husband's death as it is customary law for her to continue on the land and share ownership in conjunction with her children. However, others told us that upon the death of a husband, land rights transfer to the wife only if (and while) her children are small. If her first son is of adult age, the land will transfer directly to him.

Divorce is different, as she will be expected to leave the land and house without taking anything with her: she may even have to pay back some money that her husband's family gave her as dowry. Usually, the more years racked up, the less has to be paid back. When the divorce is requested by the husband, if sufficient years of marriage have passed, the wife can expect a certain share of the property, including land. These arrangements are still largely seen as 'family issues' which should be settled within the family, and not publicly, ie., with recourse to State law. Occasionally, however, disputes over property have been settled with the intervention of the commune People's Committee.

Whatever the legal situation, it is not known whether having her name on a Land Tenure Certificate would over-ride the power of customary law where a woman was left destitute on the death, or abandonment, of her husband.

### **3. Conclusions**

- Land allocation is an essential process for the socio-economic improvement of ethnic minority people. All communal and village leaders and many farmers understand this. However, inappropriate extension materials and methods have left farmers with a poor understanding of the purpose and its implications.
- Women are doubly excluded from this process because of local customs which preclude their participation in public affairs and their lack of access to advocacy through the Women's Union.
- The advent of the first Land Law in 1988 which allocated agricultural land had a significant impact on forest land use. The major changes in land use between the two periods (before and after 1988) were double cropping wet-rice, planting fruit trees in the garden and eliminating the opium crop. The major result has been that since 1988 deforestation has slowed because people had more options than to clear land in the forest.
- The omission of a place to record names other than the husband in the Red Book has not yet affected household development. People are not concerned because the consequences of divorce are minimal and rare and since there is no real market in land because it is so remote as to be economically unviable.
- Household economic development has a major impact on forest land use. Better off households often invest and exploit forest land more effectively and sustainably. Their income from forests is considerable. Meanwhile, poor households get little income from forests and do not have the resources to invest in it.
- Contracted protection of natural forests and plantations brings considerable income to farmers. However, the method of protection is not effective and teams or groups have not been formed for this task because there is little incentive to do so.

### **4. Recommendations**

- The registration of land in both the husband's and wife's names is an essential beginning to guarantee women's long-term rights to land use. However, it seems likely that customary law will over-ride any state decisions while women continue to lack access to advocacy support. Women and their communities must be equipped with the tools – knowledge, literacy, time, information, power – to participate fully in community affairs.
- Land allocation extension must be better prepared and more carefully carried out to ensure that its purpose, procedures, obligations, benefits, opportunities and implications are clearly understood by all – cadastral officers, local authorities and farmers alike – and extra measures be taken to ensure that women are fully engaged in the entire process.
- Land allocation must be accompanied by appropriate extension focussing on technical training, village extension capacity, establishing demonstrations models, providing adequate resources to intensify/diversify new areas of production and thereby increase the farmers' incomes.
- Women must be given priority in both technical training and in capacity building to enable them to participate more fully in community planning.
- Break up the forest protection contract monopoly to allow other people and other methods to participate. A more flexible and innovative approach may allow forest land to be more effectively used.

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