

# 베트남의 공동체 산림 관리

뉴엔 딩 하이\* · 김성수\*\* · 윤여창\*\*

\*박사과정 서울대학교 농업생명과학대학

\*\* 교수 서울대학교 농업생명과학대학

## A Review of Emerging Issues on Community Forest Management in Vietnam

Nguyen Dinh Hai\* · Sung Soo Kim\*\* · Yeo-Chang Youn\*\*

\*Ph.D Candidator, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Seoul National University

\*\*Professor, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, Seoul National University

### Abstract

산림관리에 있어 공동체는 중심에서 풀뿌리단위로 관심을 받아왔다. 베트남에서, 공유림은 오랜 기간 산림에 의존하고 있는 서로 다른 공동체의 존재 그리고 종교와 긴밀히 연결되어 있다. 지난 몇 년 동안, 지속가능한 산림경영의 필요성에 기초하여, 몇몇 지역 공동체는 산림 또는 임지를 마을과 가구를 포함하여 산림에 대해 소유권을 가진 지역공동체에 할당되었다.

게다가 공동체는 또한 산림을 보호, 천연갱신과 신규조림 등 정부기구의 프로그램에 참여하였다. 산림 관리에 근거한 지역공동체의 경험은 경제-사회적으로 적합한 산림관리 모델로 이것은 베트남의 서로 다른 민족의 전통관습에 따른다. 그러나 법적인 면에서, 지역공동체는 아직 산림 또는 임지에 연결된 실체로 인식되지 않고 있다.

공동체 산림관리의 두가지 형태는 (i) 그들에게 속한 산림과 임지를 공동체가 직접 관리하는 경우와 (ii) 공동체가 국가기관이 소유한 산림의 보호와 조림에 참여하는 경우이다. 이 논문은 공동체 산림관리에 대한 현재의 상황, 잠재력, 경향 및 이슈를 명확히 하여 정책담당자의 이러한 산림관리에 대한 이해를 돕는 데 있다.

키워드: 공동체 산림 현재의 산림관리, 산림정책, 베트남

Key word: community forest, current forest management, forest policy, Vietnam

## I. Background

The implementation of the policies on multi-sector economy, and orientation of forestry strategy from State-owned forestry towards people's forestry have emerged new elements, such as diversification of forest resource management practices. Community involved in forest manage-

ment has been adopted as a practice attracting attention from central to grass-root levels. In Vietnam, community forest has been existed for a long time closely connected with the existence and religions of different communities who are dependent on forests.

In the last few years, based on the need for sustainable forest management, some local com-

munities have allocated forests and forest land to communities, including villages and households, for management and long term utilisation, in which the communities have the ownership over the forests. In addition, the communities have also participated in contracting forests for protection, zoning for natural regeneration and new plantation programmes from governmental organizations. Experiences have shown that community based forest management is a socio-economically feasible forest management model, which corresponds to traditional customs of different ethnic groups in Vietnam. However, on the legal aspect, community is not yet recognised as an entity to be allocated with forests and forest land.

Sociologists and ethnologists have different views about "community". Here the concept "community" is used only in forest resources management. There are three types of perceptions on this:

The first one states that the term "community" refers to a pool of population who forms a society that has similar culture and customs, and has closely related production practices and livelihood, and often has a space boundary within a village. The second one defines a "community" consists of all individuals forming a society that has similar characters and close relationships. There are different kinds of communities such as ethnic community, village community, religious community etc.

The third one emphasizes the concept "community" used in forest management refers to groups of people who have close production practices and livelihood. According to this view, "community" could be an entire village population; ethnic communities within a village; family clans or groups of households. Even some opinions regard "community" as cooperatives, social-political organiza-

tions, and social-occupational organizations in the village.

Although there are different opinions about community, most of the ideas perceive "community" in forest management as village population. Currently, there are different concepts of "community forest management", which can be generalized as following:

Firstly, "community forest management" is that forest being managed by the community. The community is the management body or manages the forest and shares benefits from the forest. In other words, "community forest management" is that the community participates in protecting, developing and utilizing the forest regardless the forest is owned by the community or not. This kind of opinion considers community forest management the same as community-based forest management.

Secondly, "community forest management" is that the community manages the forest that belongs to them or they have rights to utilize the forest as a common property.

Thirdly, community forest management is identical with community forestry. It means a series of activities that link people with trees and products and sharing benefits from the forest.

Even though, the concept of community forest management differ one opinion from another, most of the ideas agree:

The term "community" used in "community forest management" is bounded with a concentration of individuals in a village who closely link together through production activities, living and social and cultural livelihoods.

Two forms of community forest management include (i) the community directly manage forests and forest land that belongs to them; (ii) the

community takes part in protection and plantation of forests that belong to the state organizations. This paper contributes to clarify current situations, potentials, trends and issues of the community forest management process to help law and policy makers to grasp a better understanding of current forest management.

## II. Overview of community forest management status in Vietnam

According to inventory results, total areas with forests in the whole country at beginning of 2000 were 10,915,592 ha.

In which, the area that being allocated by the government to the owners for legal use was 7,956,592 ha. Thus, total unallocated or uncontracted area remains 2,958,671 ha (excluding bare land which has been planned for forest plantation). According to local reports (see table 1), until June, 2001, the communities of 1203 communes, 146 districts of 24 provinces have been managing 2,348,295 ha of forests, accounting for 15.5% of total national forestry land (forest and forestry land).

### 1. Origins of community forest

Forest and forest land currently being managed by communities are formed from different origins and can be classified as three types as following:

#### 1) Forest and forest land traditionally managed by communities for many generations.

Until June, 2001, total forestry area claimed

and traditionally managed by the communities was 214,006 ha including 86,701 ha with forests and 127,304 ha of bare land. These comprise of sacred, commentary and watershed forests, and the forests that provide traditional products (hunting, bamboo harvesting and medicinal plants etc.). Clear boundaries of forests between villages are traditionally defined by the villagers. In some regions, plantation forests and natural forests of former cooperatives are transferred to communes or villages for management. This has been popular among the communities of ethnic minorities in remote areas where village regulations and community relations strongly exist.

#### 2) Forests and forest land allocated to communities by local authorities.

Regarding to allocation of forests and forest land, due to local characteristics, 18 provinces have piloted allocation of forests and forest land to communities for long term management with total area of 1,197,961 ha, including 669,750 ha of forests and 528,211 ha of bare land. Even though local authorities allocated forestry land to the communities, until now very few communities have received land use certificates (red books). Currently several provinces such as Son La, Lai Chau, Cao Bang, Bac Can etc. are still piloting allocation of forests and forest land to communities for management.

#### 3) Forests and forest land contracted to communities for protection, zoning for natural regeneration and new plantation

with total area of 936,327 ha, including 494,242 ha of protection forests; 39,289 ha of special forests; 402,795 ha of production forests.

Contracting to communities is carried out ac-

According to the Decision No 01/CP of the Government. The organisations who make contract with the communities mainly consist of state enterprises, management boards of protection and special forests, management boards of 327 and 661 projects, and other projects, and forest protection units. After the communities get contracted with the organisations, they will organise themselves to carry out the conditions stipulated in the contract.

## 2. Current forest distributions according to geographical areas

The North West region has the community forest area of 1,057,585 ha, accounted for 45.04% total area nation-wide. In which, 732,676.6 ha has been allocated to communities.

- The North East region has the community forest area of 472,376 ha, accounting for 20.12% total area nation-wide. In which, 299,987 ha has been allocated to communities.
- The Central Highland region has the community forest area of 495,797 ha accounting 21.11% total area nation-wide. In which, 131,634.9 ha has been allocated to communities.
- The Northern Central region has the community forest area of 188,144.4 ha accounting 8.01% total area nation-wide. In which, 39,663.6 ha has been allocated to communities.
- Other regions, forest land allocated to communities accounts for a small percentage

These figures prove that communities involved in forest management are mainly from mountainous and remote areas where production is mainly for self-subsistence; ethnic minorities are predom-

inant, and traditional customs exist. Members of the communities are still living closely together, who are not affected by market oriented mechanism. Village head and patriarch still play essential roles in organisation and implementation of community activities.

## 3. Different forms of community forest management

There are diverse forms of community forest management depending on specific conditions of communities and locals. These can be generalised as following:

### 1) Forest management by clan, ethnic groups

The forests are managed by clan or ethnic groups. Where the forest area is small, the community themselves claim the forest or inherit from previous generations. These forests are often located close to residential areas bearing different names such as sacred forest (worship gods), cemetery forest (area to bury the dead) and watershed forest (area to protect water supply for community).

Forest protection closely links with traditional customs and ideology of communities, in which the role of village patriarch is essentially important. The community assigns clear tasks for its members in forest protection, and the members are active carrying out the tasks.

### 2) Forest management by village or hamlet

This type of community forest management is now mainly put in practice. This type of management is based on geographic conditions and residential areas. Most villages now develop community forest management regulations, form

full-time forest protection guards or assign rotation of households for monitoring. The village head coordinates general community activities relating to forest management and protection.

### 3) Forest management by mass organisations (commune / village level)

Nowadays, in some areas, mass organisations including Farmer's Association, Veteran's Association, Women's Association, Youth's Association etc. involve in forest protection and management. The forest area is allocated or contracted to these organisations for protection and management from state organisations such as state enterprises, management boards of protection and special forests, projects and forest protection units.

## 4. Assessment of efficiency of community forest management

There has not been formal assessment at national level on the efficiency of community forest management. However, based on the results of initial research and reports from different locals, some assessments can be drawn as follows:

- Many communities have managed well their forests. There have been no encroachment or deforestation of forests which are being managed by the communities, thus the forests develop well.
- Forests have contributed to improvement of livelihood of farmers, poverty reduction and fulfillment of timber requirements for public construction.
- The government or forest owners have made payments to the communities who are contracting forests for protection. This also contributes to solve some problems of these communities.

- For forests and forest land allocated to communities, the communities have also taken opportunities to interplant crops under the forests when trees are small. Different projects also support funds for this activity, which brings benefits for farmers.
- For forests traditionally managed by communities, the communities have absolute rights to make use of forest resources. This greatly responds to the needs of public construction such as community houses.
- The government has saved great amount of money. Currently many communities are managing well their forests without any financial support or subsidy from the government.
- Community forest management contributes to restore traditional customs and culture of communities. Through forest management with support and guidance of the government, members in the community are brought closer together, which facilitates the community to better develop and implement forest protection and management regulations, and better implementation of grass-root democracy policy.

## III. Potentials, trends and emerging issues in community forest

### 1. Potentials, trends in community forest

Community forests are existing as an objective tendency and playing more important roles in forest resources management system in Vietnam. Until 6/2001, total forestry land area managed by communities was 2,348,390 ha, accounted for 15.5% of total national forestry land area. In which 1,211,000 ha (approximately 51.2% total forestry land area

being managed by the communities) has been allocated to communities by the government for long term management (decisions from the People's Committee at different levels). There are 1,203 communes of 146 districts (24 provinces) involved in forest protection and development, although these data have not been completed.

The tendency is that provinces in all over the country continue to allocate part of their forestry land to communities for long term management and utilization. According to the data from Land Office (now the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment), until the year 2000, Vietnam had 1.7 million ha classified as "forested land" and around 5 million ha as bare land, which have not been allocated. In the next few years, the provinces such as Son la, Lai Chau, Daklak, Cao Bang, Bac Can will continue to allocate part of the above area to communities (village, mass organisations) for long term use and management with forestry purposes.

Most of the protection forests have not been allocated. Communes and forest protection units have responsibilities to protect and manage these forests (mostly administrative management). Provinces assign the state forest enterprises, in Project 661, to use the state budget to contract part of the above forest area to households, communities (villages) and mass organisations (Farmer's association, Veteran's association etc.) for protection.

Community based forest management is a forest management model which is socio-economically feasible, economically sustainable and cost-effective. In reality, the government has invested very little money on community forests. The communities have to protect forests and extract benefits from the forests to cover expenses related to forest protection. Because the tradi-

tional regulations exist, and people are discipline and aware of forest protection, community forests still exist and develop.

## 2. Emerging issues in community forest management

- Currently, millions ha of forests are being managed by communities; the question is whether these forests are still existed if the government does not recognise the communities as legal forest owners? Who will replace communities as the owners of such forests? In some locals, community-based forest management had been previously very effective, but currently has been gradually less effective, meanwhile centralized forest management through state organisations such as state forest enterprises and management boards of protection forests, has not responded to expectations nor fulfilled the needs of communities, the forest management has not been effective neither.
- As communities are not recognised as a legal body to be allocated with forest and forest land, they are not aware of benefits and responsibilities, thus they are not active in forest protection and management. In addition, when someone breaks the forest regulations, the communities are facing difficulties in settling the case. Who will be, on behalf of the community, to deal with benefits and responsibilities towards forests and forest land or to solve a conflict when a dispute occurs?
- Community involved in forest management is a new forest management practice in Vietnam, and to some extent in the contrary with

rapid changes in agricultural management where individual household is considered as a nuclear body. The homogeneity of the concept “community” and the concept “collective”, and the collapse of the old-fashioned cooperatives have, to a certain degree, slowed down the development of community forest management practice.

## IV. Conclusions and discussion

### 1. *Legal situation of villages should be clarified*

It is recommended to add in the Civil Law that village community is a legal body. A community is a social organization which comprehensively consists of territory, people, society and culture. However village community is a self management body that operates under the principles of local customs or habits of which the most important and basic principle is that community is a whole. Therefore it is not necessary to have administrative procedures on establishment and disbanding of the village community like other economic, political and social organizations. However, it is needed to identify which certain category a village community belongs to?

### 2. *Rights of the communities to access to forests and forest land should be clarified*

The nature of this is to clarify ownership and rights to use forests and forest land for village community.

It is recommended to add in the Civil Law, and Forest Protection and Development Law that village community is one target group for forests

allocation, including protection forests, production forests and special use forests. The situation of forests at the point of allocation to village community for management should be clarified.

### 3. *Benefits of village community in forest management should be defined*

- It is recommended to recognize village community as a body to get loans for investment and get concessionary for forest protection and development.

- It is recommended to add in domestic Investment Incentive Laws that village community is a target group to get concessionary for investment in forestry activities as much as other organizations.

- Benefits sharing for village community who is allocated or contracted with forests and forest land should be defined.

### 4. *In the immediate future, following activities should be discussed:*

It is recommended that the State should issue a guideline on structure of a community, internal regulations for communities, type of communities (village communities, group of households, mass organizations); benefits and responsibilities of the community leaders; strengthening responsibilities of village heads in organizing production activities in their villages; development of human resource and self management ability for communities.

Instruct to develop village regulations in line with laws. Restore and enhance the legalization of internal regulations of the village community on forest protection and utilisation, ensure the support from local authorities during the im-

plementation of these regulations.

Provide financial support to a certain time (5-7 years) for communities to plant, tend and protect forests on their allocated land (with the decision paper of concerned authorities, not necessary the red book) because within these years there is almost no income from the forests.

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