

COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS AREAS AND CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

(Synthesis report of 7 case studies for district level agencies)

Under the directive of the National Working Group (NWG) on Community Forest Management (CFM), seven case studies on "Community Forest Management" were conducted in the northern mountainous areas and Central Highlands. The objective of the case studies was to gain better knowledge on the status of forest management, impacts of factors and the participatory role of communities in forest resource management. The studies are also aimed at providing necessary information on the opportunities and challenges for CFM, in order to make recommendations to the State for improving the legal framework and policies related to the development of community-based forest management in the whole country.

The study sites include: 1) Phuc Sen commune, Quang Hoa district, Cao Bang province (Nung An ethnic), 2) Muong Lum commune, Yen Chau district, Son La province (Thai and Mong ethnic groups), 3) Hien Luong commune, Da Bac district, Hoa Binh province (Muong ethnic), 4) Nam Lanh commune, Van Chan district, Yen Bai province (Dao ethnic), 5) Dak Nue commune, Lak district, Dak Lak province (M'Nong ethnic), 6) Cu Jiang commune, Ea Kar district, Dak Lak province (Ede ethnic), 7) Dak Tover commune, Chu Pah district, Gia Lai province (Jarai ethnic).

1 Research Findings

The case studies focused on the most pressing issues related to CFM, including: land use rights, forms of forest management, sharing of benefits from the forest, community organization and external influences to CFM.

1.1 Forestland use rights

There are 5 existing forestland use rights at the study sites:

- Forestland allocated to individuals households (red books issued)
- Forestland traditionally used by local community or households ("redbooks" not yet issued)
- Forestland used by government organizations
- Forestland of which forest owner is not yet clarified
- Grazing land

Main constraints related to implementing forestland use rights of local people:

- Forestland has not been formally allocated to households, "red books" have not been issued.
- Forestland allocated to SFEs can exceed their capacities to manage it, while at the same time the local farmers suffer from insufficient access to forestland (Gia Lai, Dak Lak)
- The Law on Land (1993) did not regulate the allocation of land to communities.
- Several cases of land encroachment happened in all the seven case study sites.

1.2 Current forest management forms

- Forest managed by individual households, called as forest gardens
- Community forest management at village level
- Forest contracted to communities by state agencies for protection and management
- Forest managed by state agencies

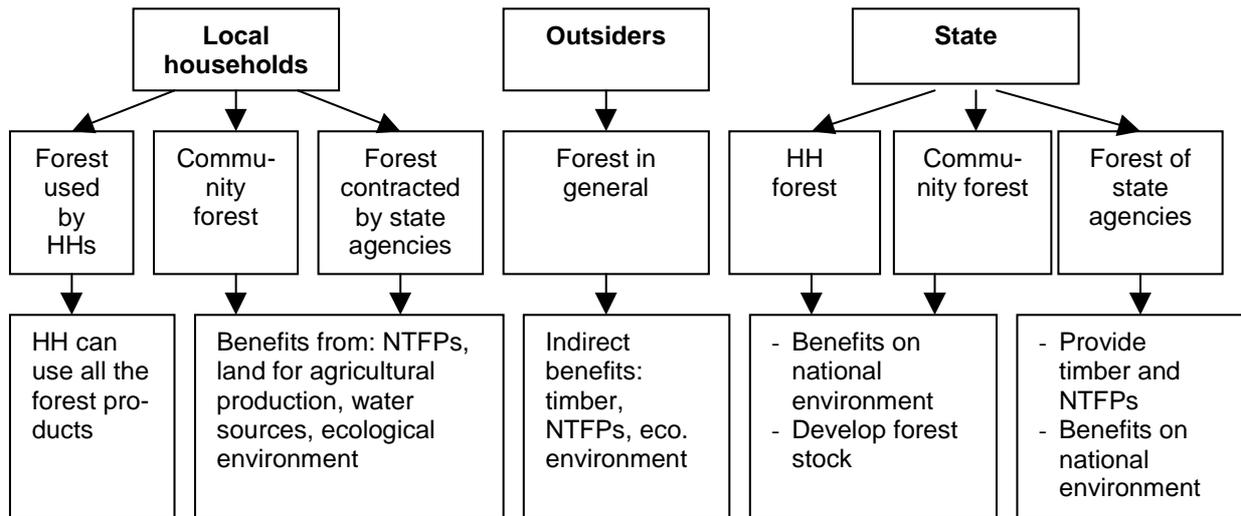
- Forest that does not have official owner and is managed by commune authorities within the administrative boundaries

1.3 Sharing benefits from the forest

Local communities, especially hungry and poor households, rely on the forest for additional income during difficult periods. The forest provides non-timber forest products, land for cultivation, water sources and balances the environment.

For the State, forest contributes to reducing natural calamities, balancing ecological environment and ensuring the national benefits.

Chart 1. Sharing the benefits from the forest

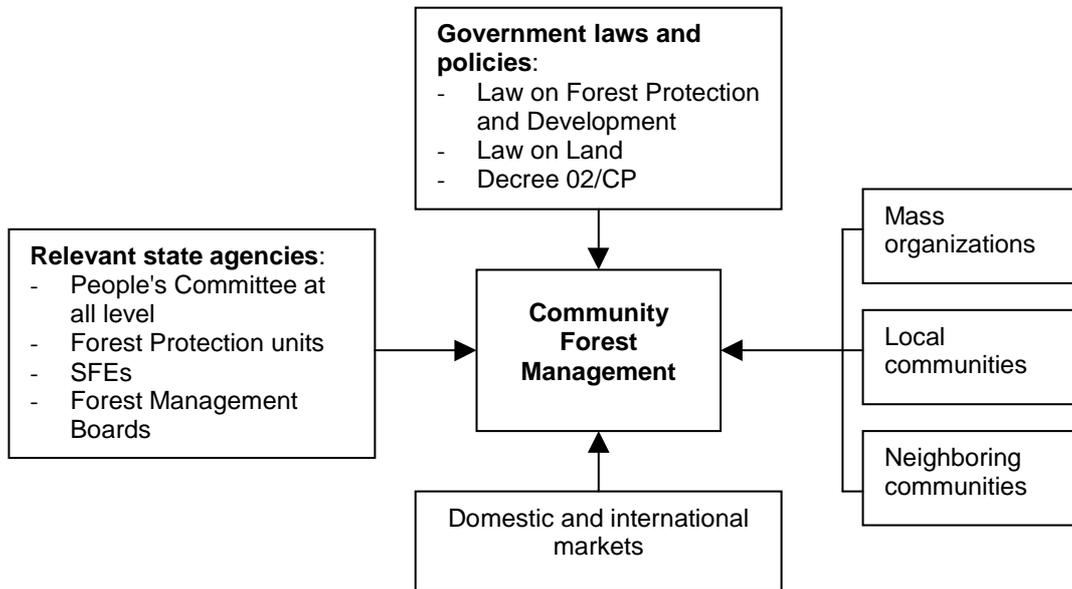


1.4 Community organization and management capacities

The ethnic communities at study sites all have close organization in accordance with their traditional customs. However, community organization is losing its power due to the changes in state administrative structure, changes in production systems and changes in community organization itself. The cultural and education level of commune and village officials is still very low. Local farmers don't have chance to take initiative in forest management.

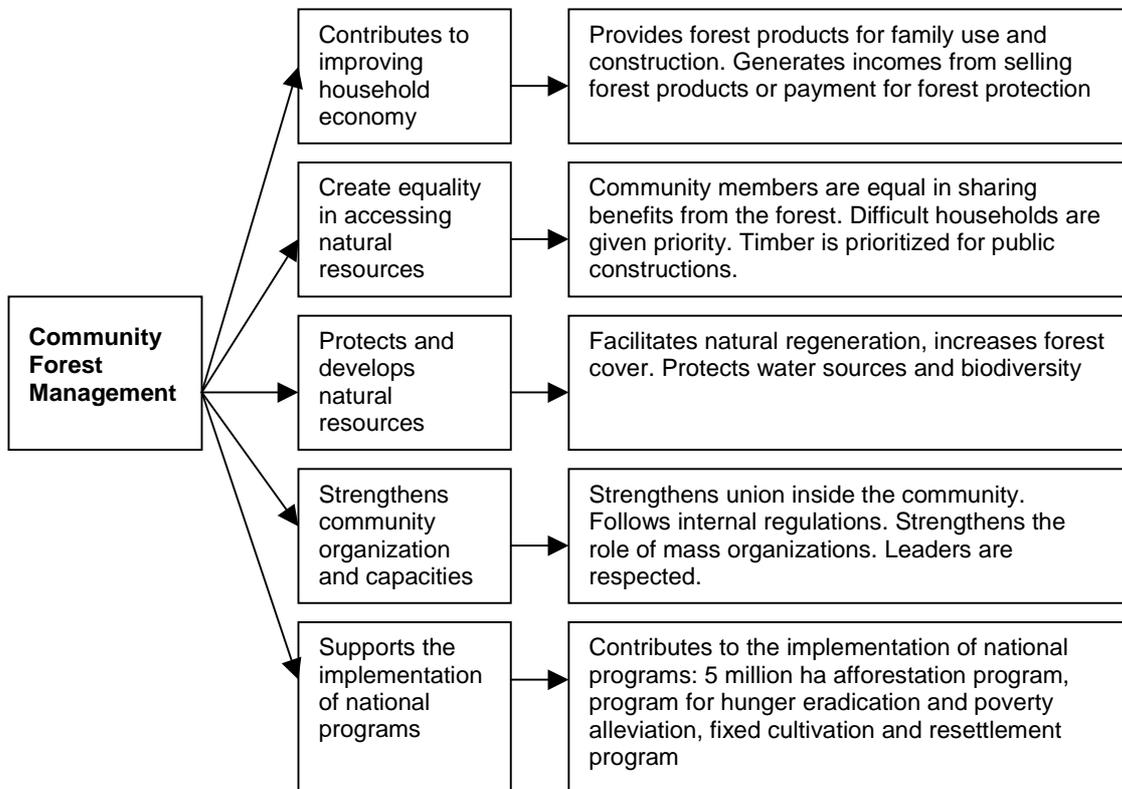
1.5 Influence from outside

Chart 2. External influence to community forest management at village level



2 Analysis of the impacts of community-based forest management

Chart 3. Analysis of CFM impacts



3 Recommendations

First, to conduct surveys to review and analyze the results and impacts of CFM, to establish CFM models in different areas on nation-wide scale.

Second, to define a legal framework for village communities to participate in forest management. The legal framework should cover the following major issues:

- Allocate forestland to communities for usage and management, issue land use certificates to communities; or sign long-term contracts with clear provisions on rights and responsibilities of communities.
- Clarify the responsibilities of local communities and their benefits from the forest. Set up a framework of benefit sharing between local communities and the State.
- Improve the legality of community internal regulations on management, usage and protection of local forest; ensure support to local authorities during implementation of such regulations.

Third, to integrate CFM into state programs, such as the “5 million Hectare Afforestation Program”, Program on resettlement and fixed cultivation, Program for hunger eradication and poverty alleviation.

Fourth, to strengthen supports from international organizations through programs/projects for community forestry development implemented in Vietnam.

Chart 4. Proposed implementation of CFM expansion to other locations

