OPTIONS AND APPROACHES FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF WATERSHED/FOREST RESOURCES IN DAK LAK PROVINCE

Consultancy Report

by

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On Behalf of:
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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is a contribution to the efforts of the MRC-GTZ Project to address the challenges being faced in developing approaches for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Particular attention is given to activities in the field sites in Dak Lak Province that relate to the potential for community involvement in forest management. More general comments are also offered on strategies and approaches that may be relevant to the evolving regional focus of the Project’s activities.

The work in-country was only possible because of the assistance offered by many people. Achim Steiner’s vision provided the starting point for the consultancy and his guidance in the early days was invaluable. Michael Glueck was guide and mentor throughout, and made sure I did not stray too far from reality. Tran Ngoc Thanh, the Field Coordinator in Dak Lak handled all of the arrangements during the visit to the Province including visits to the field sites. Particular thanks are due to Pham Phuong Hoa, the Project Coordinator, whose unfailing assistance and good humour helped make the time in Vietnam both productive and pleasant. Her skills as translator at workshops and meetings helped greatly with the task of obtaining information that was accurate and relevant. To all of them many thanks.

GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED TERMS IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agro-forestry</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative management</td>
<td>A process in which stakeholder groups form a partnership to plan, share responsibility for, and divide benefits from their joint implementation of a strategy to rehabilitate, conserve and sustainably utilise rural lands and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common property management regime</td>
<td>Natural resources for which specified people have specified rights, irrespective of the legal ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community forestry</td>
<td>The control and management of common forest resources by the rural people who use them for their domestic and other purposes. Community forestry is generally implemented as part of a government strategy to accomplish national forest and biodiversity conservation objectives as well as to satisfy local development needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest management system</td>
<td>A system of silvicultural and technical practices pertaining to forest use and management (however simple) and the social arrangements made for the organisation and implementation of these practices and for the distribution of forest products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous management system</td>
<td>An organisation or social activity that has been set up primarily as a result of local initiative (used in opposition to &quot;sponsored&quot; as defined below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest group</td>
<td>A group of people who have similar sets of interests in respect of a particular situation. For example, people who own large numbers of livestock that are grazed on a patch of common land have different interests from people who have only a few stall fed animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open access resource</td>
<td>Natural resources which are open to everyone, i.e. no rules apply irrespective of the legal ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored management system</td>
<td>An organisation or social activity that has been set up primarily as a result of an initiative from outside a community (used in opposition to &quot;indigenous&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>Parties who share an interest or &quot;stake&quot; in the management of common property</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy and institutional setting

The institutional setting for forest management in Dak Lak (and indeed throughout the country) is confusing. There are many Government agencies with a mandate for involvement in forests. State Owned Forest Enterprises, the Forest Protection Department, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Forest Development Department are often major players, but many others can become involved. Frequently the lines of responsibility and authority are blurred and can vary from place to place and time to time.

Forest management needs to be seen within the context of overall rural development. The upland areas where most forests occur are also the traditional homes of ethnic communities that have a long association with forests. Forest areas provide land for shifting cultivation as well as a source of timber and non-timber products for subsistence purposes and (increasingly) for market use. In the past, Government agencies with a mandate for forest exploitation have carried out that mandate without any dialogue with local communities and without their involvement in anything other than occasional employment as casual labour. This resulted in alienation of local communities from any sense of responsibility for conserving forests. In spite of official Government “control” over all forest land, destruction of forests is proceeding at an alarming rate. The reasons for this are many and varied, and there will be no simple “models” to redress the degradation that has occurred. The solutions will all be site-specific.

Government agencies have little capacity to exercise direct control and management over forests except in those areas where commercial quality forests remain and can generate sufficient income to cover the costs of management. State Forest Enterprises are under increasing pressure to show a profit or close down. In many areas the Government will need to seek alternative management options for implementing a land use policy which has forest conservation and sustainable use as central planks in its platform. There seems to be an increasing openness in the policy arena and people are actively seeking new and innovative policy options that have a chance of being effective. The vision that seems to be emerging is one where there will be multiple participants in forest management: households, community groups, government agencies, and others. In those parts of the country where local communities still have a heavy dependence on forests to support their farming system, one of the few options available is to develop some form of collaboration between local communities and the Government. This will involve the devolution of some responsibility and authority for forest management to community groups so that Government policy can be achieved and community development needs can be satisfied.

Community involvement in forest management is a relatively new concept in Vietnam and, to some extent, goes against the strong move to devolve responsibility for agricultural production to individual households. The economic benefits of this move to household responsibility have been proven during the past decade and fit well with mainstream Kinh views. However, most of the upland parts of the country are under the de facto control of ethnic minority groups. While many of these groups have major allegiances to household and family, they often have strong traditional allegiances to clan and wider community groups. There are many examples emerging of indigenous approaches to the management of natural resources, and these could be the building blocks for community management regimes.
The Project in Dak Lak

The Project has placed considerable emphasis on the importance of building a strong institutional base for its activities in the Province. There is an on-going dialogue with the major stakeholders in the area and considerable energy is devoted to keeping everyone informed about the Project's interests and activities. The Project has consciously tried to bridge the institutional divide between the various agencies, and between agencies and villagers (eg. early in the life of the Project a forest survey covering 3500 ha was carried out with villagers). As a result, the Project is well accepted and enjoys strong support. This will become even more important as more complex tasks are carried out.

A major entry point into the village communities is through the land use planning and land allocation exercise. This is of vital interest to the villagers because “red book” certificates of land title are issued once the exercise is finalised. The exercise provides an opportunity for discussions about all the natural resources in the village area. The emphasis to date has been on the agricultural land in order to resolve food security problems as much as possible. The next step is to begin discussions about the management of forest land. This will need to be done slowly and cautiously, as there are no precedents for this type of work and there is understandable caution from many of the institutional partners. Some generic guidelines have been suggested in this report to help guide the interventions. This work by the Project is very important, not only in Dak Lak but also throughout the country, as there are very few working examples of collaborative management arrangements that can be used to inform the policy debate. However, the promotion of “models” needs to be guarded against because of contextual differences from place to place (institutional arrangements, indigenous and traditional diversity, historical influences, dependence on forests, etc.). Approaches that may work in one place may be inappropriate in another. Emphasis needs to be given to developing a process to guide intervention. One important issue to be addressed relates to the legal status of community groups if they become collaborating partners with the Government for forest management. Can a community group be a legal entity?

The experiences gained by the Project to date could be useful building blocks for the rural development project planned to take over activities at the end of 1999. A goal for the new project of restoration and sustainable management of upland watersheds would provide a useful focus for well thought out rural development activities.

The Regional MRC Project

The insights gained from the detailed field experiences in Dak Lak will stand the Project in good stead as it moves away from direct field involvement and focuses more on policy initiatives. However, a conscious effort to keep in close contact with key field projects that are working on leading edge issues of policy and practice will be essential to maintain a reality check. The Regional Project has an opportunity to perform two separate but connected sets of activities:

- build a coalition of interests at the national level in each of the four countries in the region by developing strategic alliances with key partners;
- facilitate the flow of information, ideas and experience between the four countries in as strategic a manner as possible, by targeting those institutions which can be most influential in catalysing both short and long term change.

1. CONDUCT OF THE CONSULTANCY

The Terms of Reference for the consultancy are given in Appendix I. The consultancy was conducted in two periods, from 12th to 26th April and from 12th to 18th May 1998. Most of the time was taken up with meetings with Government staff and staff working with projects in Hanoi and in Dak Lak Province. Support was provided to a one day workshop on Participatory Land Allocation in Buon Ma Thuot and a brief visit was made to one of the project field sites in Dak Phoi Commune in Lak District. A detailed itinerary and a list of the people consulted is given in Appendices II and III.

2. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN WATERSHED/FOREST MANAGEMENT
2.1 A history of state-upland community relationships

Until the end of World War II life in the remote upland watersheds of Vietnam followed the cultural traditions of the ethnic minority inhabitants. During the colonial period, while most of Vietnam’s upland forest areas were legally claimed by the state, the French colonial government had little operational control over these forest resources, except in upland areas selected for commercial enterprises. Village and land use boundaries were well defined by these communities, with some lands available for cultivation and others for preservation as forests.

Prior to 1954, most of the upland regions of Vietnam were sparsely inhabited, with over 50 ethnic minority groups practicing traditional forms of land use. As populations grew, these groups came into closer contact. Tribal governance structures and customary laws predominated as methods for managing resources and arbitrating conflicts. After independence in 1954, industrial timber production was placed under the authority of public corporations (State Forest Enterprises - SFEs), and with other public forest lands administered by provincial, district, and commune-level government offices. Traditional forest management systems received limited recognition under new laws in both the northern and southern parts of the country.

Between 1958 and 1962, the Government began nationalising upland forests in the north and north western parts of the country. This process was extended to the south after the unification of the country in 1975. According to national policies of the period, upland areas were perceived by planners to be "wasteland" or "wilderness". Recently the terms "barren land" or "land not yet in use" have become more common. Ethnic minorities continue to be viewed as "backward and superstitious" people who need to be integrated with the national socialist orientation and the dominant lowland Kinh majority.

A number of resettlement policies and operational strategies were implemented, often similar in concept to the transmigration programmes of neighbouring Indonesia. The thrust of the strategies involved moving Kinh people from densely populated lowlands into the uplands. This achieved the dual objectives of bringing in a labour force to exploit the natural resources of the area and to facilitate national integration by exposing upland cultures to those from the lowland delta areas. Under the New Economic Development Zone policy of the 1960s and 1970s, approximately four million people were resettled, mostly into the Da River area and, after 1975, the Central Highlands. The nationalised forest land was placed under the management of SFEs.

The construction of roads into the uplands regions facilitated the flow of people from the lowlands. Traditional institutions of ethnic minorities, considered backward by cadres from lowland Kinh groups, were replaced with new social organisations like the Farmer’s Associations, Women's Unions and Youth Brigades.

In 1968, the Department of Fixed Cultivation and Sedentarisation was established with the objective of resettling the upland ethnic minorities in areas where they could be brought under the formal governance systems of the state. The policy also intended to eliminate rotational agriculture systems (swidden or "slash and burn") which were viewed as destructive to forests and low in productivity.

By the 1980s, of Vietnam’s 33 million ha of total land area, 19 million ha had been legally classified as state forest land. Publicly managed companies (SFEs) held over 4 million ha, and conducted logging operations on 150,000 ha each year, rapidly exploiting them for commercial timber production.

By the mid-1980s, the failure of SFE and resettlement programmes to sustain productive forests and protect watersheds created growing concern among policy makers. There was an emerging consensus among Vietnamese political leaders that the forestry sector, like other economic arenas, needed greater household involvement. Many SFEs were continually running at a loss, while cooperatives were collapsing. Since the late 1980s, SFEs have been de-emphasised and are being replaced by policies supporting privatisation, especially at the household level. In many situations, private household management of woodlots has led to improved productivity.

The decision to allow households to play a greater role in rural development was part of the fundamental change in policy that began in the early 1980s and gained momentum under the banner of the "Doi Moi" (Renovation) programme. Change manifested itself in governmental decisions to begin to scale down state enterprises and collectives, while gradually allowing the private sector a greater control of industry, and household management of much of the agricultural economy. The government, nonetheless, continues to see a prominent role for the state in guiding the economy. At the same time, state enterprise managers with powerful patrons are also reluctant to lose control during this economic transition. While state enterprises were told to release 95 percent of their employees and facilitate their transition into the private sector, managers of public companies continue to control the growing flow of investments. It is estimated that 95 percent of the foreign investments entering Vietnam are channelled through state enterprises. In fact, state
enterprises now account for almost 45 percent of Vietnam's GDP, up from 32 percent in 1991, and 25 percent in the late 1980s.

2.2 Adapting national policies for upland contexts

The government increasingly recognises the fragility of the upland environment. Concern over the continuing loss of natural forests resulted in a 1991 ban on the export of unprocessed logs. The increase in "barren" land from 3 million ha in 1943 to about 12 million ha in 1995 or nearly 40 percent of the nation's land area has led to a host of environmental restoration programmes. These include new forest laws on resource protection and the formulation of a multi-sector government programme with a cost of VND9,000 billion (US$820 million) during the coming five year plan (the 5 million ha programme). Planners are increasingly aware of the importance of the hydrological functions of upland forested watersheds and of how upland forest loss threatens the economic development of the lowland deltas and coastal plains.

Resettlement programmes have exacerbated tensions in some areas by intensifying competition for limited fertile land. Kinh migrants, and prominent ethnic minorities living in district towns and commune centres, are better positioned to benefit from land allocation programmes in contrast to the poorer ethnic communities living in more remote watersheds. Yet scattered, forest dependent villagers are best positioned to protect the fragile uplands and rely most upon them for their survival. Clarifying resource use rights may help reduce tensions and allow for capital and labour investments leading to more intensive management. The process of clarifying forest management responsibilities must consider the historical usufruct rights of local communities.

While sedentarisation and resettlement programmes are still given considerable attention by planners, forest management policies have increasingly emphasised privatisation in the uplands as an alternative to state control. In 1991, a policy was passed to allow the Forest Protection Service, which functions under the People's Committee at the Provincial and District offices, to contract households to manage forest lands providing them a fee of VND55,000 (US$5) per ha. With nearly 20 million ha of forest land, a protection budget of $100 million annually would be required to fund management of the entire public forest estate. However, this programme ceased in 1998 and will presumably be subsumed within the planned 5 million ha programme.

2.3 Recent policy reforms

New plans and policies have emerged. In 1991, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, the Forest Resources Protection and Development Act, and the first National Forest Policy all marked a shift away from State Forestry. Households were to increasingly take the place of State Forest Enterprises as basic management units for forest and forest land. Under Household Forestry, households received long-term use rights for forest land, technical extension support by reformed state enterprises, and credit by newly established rural banking system. Forest policy thus took a radical turn from a focus on securing national interests through the exclusion of local interests on forest land to enlisting rural households for national goals.

The allocation of forest land to households for management and protection has been the centrepiece of recent reforms. Land allocation takes two forms depending on the state of the forest land. For barren land and land with planted forest, the government is transferring long-term use rights to rural households. Since 1993, the transfer of long-term use rights has happened under the framework of the new Land Law and accompanying decrees. The law restricts the power of the state to the specification of the land use category and the right to recover land under narrowly defined circumstances. Households or individuals receiving land are given the rights to exchange, transfer, lease, mortgage, and pass on the land for inheritance. According to Decree 02/CP (January 15, 1994), land with standing forest is allocated to households for a period of 50 years, while barren land can be allocated for a longer period. Decree 202 (May 1994) further mandated that priority in forest land allocation should be given to local people, particularly pioneering swiddeners. By August 1992, about 800,000 households had obtained land use rights for parcels of forest land.

Remaining natural forests are expected to stay under the authority of SFEs or other state entities, which contract former employees and farmers living in surrounding villages for their management and protection. According to Decree 01/CP (January 1995), households receive regular payments by the state unit for the management of the forest. The forest is allotted to households for 50 years or the duration of the production cycle of the concerned species. If the forest is managed for production purposes only, households have to compensate the land-allotting unit for the value of the existing forest and sell forest products to the unit. By
shifting control over production decisions to households, reforms are redefining state control over forest land. Forest land has been divided into land for production, protection, and special purposes, such as wildlife preservation. The MOF (later MARD) issued specific regulations for the management and use of each type of forest land. Authority over protection and special-use forest land is being transferred to newly created management boards. To enforce forest regulations, the government is strengthening the Forest Protection Department at the central, provincial, and district levels. At the provincial level, forest protection departments have become independent from agricultural and forestry departments and have moved directly under the People’s Committees. They also draw upon an independent organisational structure through forest protection units at the district and village levels.

The central government is shifting the financing of forestry operations from periodic budgetary allocations to project-based funding. In 1992, Decrees 264/CT and 327/CT initiated two central government programmes that support efforts at reforestation and barren land development. Projects funded under the two programmes received a large share of central government transfer payments to provinces and districts.

The drastic change in policy from State Forestry to Household Forestry has yet to be fully implemented. Land allocation, state enterprise reform, and the development of new support organisations (with an orientation towards service organisations) will continue during the coming years. However, experience from the implementation of the new policy indicates discrepancies between intended policy outcomes and its actual impact. Issues of land allocation, rural banking, the Decree 327 programme, institutional uncertainties, lack of resources, leakage of funds through multiple hierarchies and illegal wood exploitation and trade have received the most attention.

The land allocation process itself has progressed at different paces. In general, the implementation of land allocation for forest land has been slow, much slower than for agricultural land. At the current rate, forest land allocation will occupy government agencies for several more decades. By the end of 1992, less than one percent of the forest land allocations were recorded in formal land use rights certificates. The financial requirements of land inventory and mapping far exceed the financial capacity of the central government. Particularly in remote areas, for which local authorities lack infrastructure and detailed maps, land titling is prohibitively expensive. Some authorities therefore issued preliminary certificates. There also seems to be some resistance among many government officials to moving ahead with allocation of forest land in the uplands.

While the allocation of forest land to households may be decreasing conflicts between rural people and state enterprises in some areas, in other regions these policies appear to intensify conflict. In many highland areas land allocation may erode traditional community control over forest resources by imposing rigid government-defined guidelines that reduce management freedom held for generations on a de facto basis. Land allocation in those areas may accelerate deforestation as it pushes people to open up new areas for the cultivation of food crops and leads to the short term exploitation of forest land before allocation. Community interests in forest preservation to protect local watersheds may conflict with individual interests in forest exploitation. Interests in the establishment of tree plantations for sale may conflict with other interests in multipurpose use of forest land. Forest land is becoming a base of capital accumulation for households which command more resources and have access to political power and social networks. Such households tend to get larger forest land holdings and have easier access to credit and other support services. Less well-off households still rely on the forest as a source of subsistence, but increasingly lose access to the forest as it is being allocated, mostly to the better-off. These conflicts over competing uses of the forest by local people may intensify with government land allocation programmes and national resource management policies. It is worth noting that most of the conflicts are probably not related to land allocation per se, but rather to the rigid application of defined uses.

Forest policy reforms are creating opportunities for government intervention that does not attempt to exclude, but incorporates the socioeconomic forces that shape forest use. The trend towards giving access to, and control over, forest resources and land by households and other groups is expanding the possibility for flexible forest policy that responds to locally specific forest use problems. However, while policy is creating opportunities for community involvement in forest management, there is an ambivalence about the question, probably based on both ethical and practical considerations. This results in policies seemingly moving ahead at one time and drawing back at another. This to-ing and fro-ing will no doubt continue until there is clear evidence from field experience of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of community management regimes in Vietnam’s context.

3. PERCEPTIONS OF KEY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
Discussions with key government officials in Hanoi and Dak Lak indicated that there is a significant reforming process moving through all of public administration. This process is being supported by several bilateral and multilateral projects and MARD is one of the pilot ministries. A summary of the changes taking place in Government thinking regarding forest policy can be characterised by the following shifts:

- from destroying forests to protecting forests;
- from top-down planning and control to decentralisation;
- from centrally planned economy to market economy.

While this is a rather simplistic summary of a complex process, it does indicate the general directions of change. The lengthy discussion in the previous section also illustrates how these three threads run through many of the policy changes of the past decade.

The decentralisation thread is strongly expressed with the focus generally being on the household as the entity to be empowered to take a more direct role in resource (including forest) management. This focus on individual households is in keeping with mainstream Kinh views, and also reflects the negative experiences of agricultural collectives during the 1960s and 1970s. Many people were ambivalent about whether community groups, (clans or groups of households) could be effective resource managers. Some officials, particularly at the District level, expressed the strong view that forests should not be allocated to community groups, as they would not have the ability to be effective managers.

Underlying many of the discussions was an acceptance that the Government could not manage most forests directly and there was a search for alternative approaches. There was certainly an openness to discuss a wide range of possibilities and often an expressed willingness to experiment. This openness creates the institutional "space" to try out new and innovative approaches as long as it is done in full consultation with all of the key stakeholders. The reality is that there are few alternatives to seeking some form of collaboration between resident community groups and the Government for the management of large areas of upland watersheds. The communities living in the uplands are the ones in daily contact with the forests, and it is their decisions that ultimately determine the fate of the forests. What is still eluding policy makers and field implementers is how to reach a convergence between local (especially ethnic minority) and government interests.

4. CURRENT PROJECT DIRECTIONS AND FOCUS

4.1 Context

The Central Highlands possess the nation's best and most extensive forests: 42 percent of Vietnam's total forest cover, and its most valuable timber reserves. While population densities are still relatively low, migrant and industrial pressures (in particular, the rapid expansion of industrial crops such as coffee) have driven rapid deforestation in this region. Scores of State Forest Enterprises and resettlement programmes were initiated in the 1970s, accelerating timber extraction and land clearing as millions of lowland Kinh moved into the region, competing with indigenous populations for access to resources. As recently as the 1960s, up to 90 percent of the Central Highlands possessed natural forest cover. However, the forests had receded by 57 percent by 1995, with much of the cleared land classified as barren.

4.2 Activities planned for 1998/99

4.2.1 Project strategy

The Project document for the 1998/99 period and the associated workplan represent a very thorough analysis of the situation in Dak Lak and the approach to moving ahead. There is little of substance that can be added, but a few thoughts may be useful.

There is an underlying strategy developing in the Project that underpins the way it goes about its business. The main elements that characterise this strategy can be summed up as: reflective, evaluative, adaptive, and concern for equity. This essentially defines the "culture" of the Project, and this modus operandi has been reinforced by the process monitoring work introduced by Thomas Schwedersky (Schwedersky 1997 a,b). It would be helpful if this strategy became a more explicit part of the Project modalities and appeared in the
workplan, although item 12.6 does mention on-going monitoring. Organisations that embrace such a strategy (learning organisations) can be powerful change agents.

4.2.2 On relevance, scaling-up and speeding-up

The Project is concentrating its energies on developing and testing appropriate approaches to participatory land use planning, land allocation, collaborative forest management, etc. This bottom-up approach is, by definition, slow and difficult work and should not be rushed. At the same time the Government is promoting large-scale, top-down programmes such as official migration, the Decree 327 programme and the 5 million ha programme. There is an inevitable clash when the top-down meets the bottom-up, as there are major institutional incompatibilities. There is a real danger that the Project's efforts could become irrelevant in the face of more powerful influences. There is a need to seek the middle ground, and the Project is well positioned to do this, as long as it maintains its emphasis on being a learning organisation so that it constantly reviews its position and activities in the broader context, and then seeks to influence that context. In theory, the provincial and district organisations can perform a mediating role, at least while the Project maintains its pro-stakeholder approach. In practice, the vested interests of these organisations may create stumbling blocks to progress.

The question of scaling-up is mentioned in more detail elsewhere in this report and will not be dwelt on here, except to reiterate that the excellent work of the Project must be institutionalised into mainstream practice and scaled up if it is to have any real impact. One of the things that will be needed in this process is the development of rapid but robust methods for carrying out many of the technical tasks that currently are very time consuming. Such tasks as boundary demarcation, forest assessment and silvicultural practices will all need to be carried out by villagers with the assistance of government (or other) extension agents if large scale changes are to take place in the foreseeable future. The provision of Decree 327 funds for Project activities has helped and they (and their successor programmes) can provide the financial base for relevant activities.

5. INDIVIDUAL LAND TITLING AND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT — CONFLICT OR COMPATIBILITY?

The current programme of land titling focuses largely on the household as the unit to receive the land title, although other groups and organisations are not precluded. There was certainly a feeling among many government officials of uncertainty about whether community groups had the ability (or interest) to cooperate for the collective good in something like forest management. However, the study of traditional natural resources management (Luu Hung and Vorphal, 1997) describes how M’ong communities have traditionally respected the forest for its ability to provide fertile land for shifting cultivation and as a source of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) for both subsistence and market use. Both traditional and modern village headmen have important responsibilities regarding forest and cultivated land and for the resolution of conflicts in this domain. Also described was an indigenous system whereby villagers used to "foster" or "breed" patches of trees for future use as timber for construction purposes. Each such patch of forest, generally within the fields being cultivated, had an owner or keeper and this was the family owning the cultivated land where the trees were growing. It seems that trees and NTFPs outside these patches were treated as open access resources and were available to anyone to use. While this was a system that applied in the past, indications were seen during the present consultancy that similar indigenous forest management systems may still be in place (See Box 1).

Box 1. A communal forest in Buon Dung Hamlet, Dak Phoi Commune

A small patch of forest associated with the hamlet is located on a steep hillside about 1 km from the hamlet. The forest is "owned" by the hamlet that is made up of seven clans. All the M’ong People in the hamlet can use the forest for cutting trees for house building and after cutting a tree must inform the hamlet headman. People from other hamlets are not allowed to use this forest and that exclusion is respected. People in other hamlets have their own forest areas for their own use. If anyone damages the forest they can have their tools confiscated and be levied a fine (but it seems that this has not happened recently). The headman would be the person to take such a decision.

Informant: Mr. Y Tap, Buon Dung Hamlet
Discussions with project staff (particularly Mr. Y Wel Ksor) suggested that about 20% of the land claimed by villagers in the project area as their territory is not used for shifting cultivation, but is kept as forest. This includes steep valley bottoms, rocky hill slopes, spirit areas and land set aside for watershed and stream protection. While the institutional arrangements by which these systems function (decision-making, benefit sharing, sanctions, in-group, out-group, etc.) are not clear, what is clear is that there is a tradition of communal decision making about forests. The forests are treated as common property management regimes rather than as open access resources, at least for certain purposes. The conclusion from this discussion is that communal forest management is probably not an alien concept but rather one that has its roots in the past and is still practiced at present. However, there are powerful influences from outside the village which undermine the authority of the villagers and constrain their ability to manage the forests more effectively.

The economic unit for farming activities was and is the household, and it is logical for the household to be the primary unit for allocation of agricultural land. Under traditional practices, land for shifting cultivation fields is allocated by the village headmen to families on an annual basis. However, there is a certain amount of borrowing or sharing of land particularly between families of the same lineage or clan. Land can also be "sold". Much of the land adjacent to the hamlets would fall into the category of "forest" land that would be treated in this way. It is obviously in the interests of everyone to expedite the process of land allocation so that ambiguities about land "ownership" can be discussed openly and conflicts resolved. This is particularly important as more and more pressure is being placed on villagers to become sedentary and forsake their "ancestral" lands which are some distance from their current village sites.

While agricultural land is the critical resource needed by all families for survival, the forest has always provided NTFPs for both market and subsistence goods. Harvesting of NTFPs is particularly important in the months before the rice harvest takes place. Intact "rich" forest is now a considerable distance from the villages and NTFPs are becoming scarce and more difficult to collect. Economically marginalised families (who have the greatest need to use NTFPs) are becoming even more disadvantaged. Even if land allocation proceeds effectively and if functional agro-forestry systems can be established and sustained (two big ifs), it is likely that access to forests for NTFP collection will still be required. Sources of construction timber may also be required, but if the agro-forestry systems develop well, in the long term, they could provide sufficient timber for household use and for small-scale industrial purposes (see Box 2).

### Box 2. Small scale forest based enterprises and the market economy – an example from Nepal

During the decade of the 1980s the number of small scale industries using forest products in a district east of the Kathmandu Valley increased from almost zero to more than 100. Most are located near major commercial centres and road sides, and draw forest products from a considerable distance. The industries use a range of products including wood, bark, fruit and cane. In 1990 it was estimated that they accounted for about 500 people in both seasonal and full time direct employment, as well as many more in harvesting and transporting of forest products. The social benefits of this local employment are considerable as it enables many families to remain on their farms rather than drift to urban centres in search of casual work. Many of the harvesting activities take place in the winter months during the slack season for agriculture, so they can easily be integrated into the farming calendar. There are many reasons for the rapid increase in these industries, but without doubt the major reasons are availability of forest products from private land and a changing policy environment.

During the past 20 years there has been a steady increase in the area and density of communal forests and trees on private land as farmers have responded to changing economic and social circumstances. Interestingly, this trend was in the opposite direction to that argued by the Government and many outsiders at the time. Government policy was shifting from one which focussed on controlling farmers and preventing them from cutting trees on their private and communal land to one which steadily removed the impediments from allowing farmers to become actively involved in tree and forest management.

Tree production for both subsistence and market purposes is now being integrated into many of the farming systems more effectively than was the case in the past.

Source: Malla (1992)
It seems that many if not most upland communities will be dependant on a range of forest goods and services to support their livelihood well into the medium term. Most of these goods and services are best derived from reasonably large areas of forest managed under a conservative harvesting regime—the sort of regime that is well suited to community forestry. Government interests, as expressed in policy statements, are focused on both conservation and commercial outcomes. On the one hand there is concern for the conservation of upland watersheds for both on-site and downstream benefits. On the other hand there is strong interest on more aggressive commercialisation of the forests and making them more productive. If communities are to be effectively involved in the management of forests, the agendas of the Government and the communities need to be brought together. There seems no reason why the government’s conservation agenda could not be compatible with the community agenda of extensive collection of non-timber forest products. It is less clear how large scale commercialisation of forests in the uplands would proceed under private or communal ownership, particularly in the short term. There will also be major equity questions to be resolved in both cases.

Box 3. Commercialisation of community forestry – examples from Lao PDR and Nepal

Community forestry has been most successful where the forests have primarily yielded subsistence products (firewood, fodder and local construction material). One of the challenges for community forestry is to move from management for subsistence goods to management for marketable goods. This is because once forests are seen to have a major commercial value, powerful interests outside the village invariably try to expropriate some or all of the benefits. However, there are several examples emerging where the management of community forests for commercial purposes is being trialed.

The most ambitious of these trials is in Lao PDR under the umbrella of the Forest Management and Conservation Programme (FOMOCOP) run by the Department of Forestry. In Lao, agriculture and forest land within village boundaries is being allocated to villagers (households and communal groups) for management. In the south of the country FOMOCOP is working with villagers in areas where there are still considerable areas of commercially valuable tropical forest – both mixed deciduous and dry dipterocarp. Villagers have been trained to carry out delineation of village boundaries, forest inventory and management planning. Activities are being carried out in 61 villages (early 1998): 145,000 ha have been mapped and inventory has been completed on 23,000 ha. Fifteen village organisations are ready to commence timber harvesting in 1998/99, following a village-formulated, state-approved plan. If this works as expected, it will be a major milestone in bringing community forestry into the market economy, with economic benefits going directly to village communities as well as to the government (through royalties) and the wood using industries.

In Nepal, the debate over commercialising community forests is not yet resolved. Nonetheless there are several examples where trials have been carried out. At Chaubas, northeast of the Kathmandu Valley, a forest user group built a small sawmill to process timber from pine plantations that they established in the late 1970s and 1980, and protected. By-products from the plantations (branches and leaves) more than satisfied local needs for fuelwood and leaf litter, so commercial harvesting became an attractive option. Villagers were trained in harvesting techniques and sawmill operations and have demonstrated a capacity to do these tasks effectively. However, for the reasons outlined in the first paragraph in this box the Government has imposed rules that make it difficult for villagers in the forest user group (a legal entity) to legally saw the timber from their community forest and sell it in the Kathmandu market.


The extent to which communities will be interested in establishing and managing plantation forests for major commercial use is not clear. At this stage it is unlikely that most communities could project their thinking forward to conceive that they could manage such an undertaking. However, this is beginning to occur in some countries in Asia where communities first became involved in community forestry activities to ensure their access to subsistence goods, primarily firewood and fodder (see Box 3). In some situations they subsequently became interested in commercial possibilities once they had confidence that their efforts would be rewarded. At this stage of development it is probably useful to think of a zoning approach for the various “uses” for forest land.

It appears that no one model of land allocation will provide the solution to all community development needs. At the moment the basic necessity is land and resources for food security. However, once that is met, higher level development needs will become important, and the communes in the project area will be drawn
 inexorably into the market economy. If they are to have a chance to compete in that economy and not be just pawns, they will need access to resources. Forest resources are one of the few options available - forests managed by both households and communities for personal and communal development (see Box 4).

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**Box 4. Evolution of forestry in Switzerland**

During most of the 19th Century the forests of Switzerland were in a parlous state. Deforestation was rampant as a result of heavy use for subsistence farming purposes (firewood, construction timber and tree leaves for fodder) as energy sources for the growing cities and, from the middle of the century, for industry. The Alps were severely degraded and were swept with avalanches and mud flows. Foresters, trained in Germany, tried to repair the damage by enforcing tree planting on local farmers. The early attempts failed because the foresters failed to recognise the long established use rights to forest and pasture enjoyed by the farmers. The situation was very similar to that which currently occurs in many developing countries. Later attempts proved more successful as foresters learned to adapt their technical solutions and the government’s policy agenda to farmers’ interests and usufruct rights.

Forests in Switzerland are now among the best managed in Europe and are much more extensive than in the 19th Century. They occur on all classes of land, private, commune, canton and federal, and all are subject to strict management controls.

Source: Kuchli (1997).

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At the moment discussions on land use planning and allocation are focusing on agricultural areas, particularly those adjacent to the hamlets, with the objective of having the allocation completed by the end of May 1998. This will also include the "reassignment" of some land previously viewed by the Government as forest land to use by the villagers for cultivation. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) exercises, which created the forum for these land use discussions, also involved discussion about the allocation of land for agro-forestry and forestry purposes. Villagers view all or most of the land in their village area as contributing to their overall livelihood, and it is appropriate for forest related issues to be included in general discussions on land use in the entire village area. This helps to build a picture of the major natural resources in the village area, and guard against the introduction of artificial sectoral divisions. It also helps to identify the potential entry points for more detailed discussions leading to collaboration in forest management, by enabling the villagers to discuss those forest issues that are of most importance to them for their present and future well being.

One of the issues that has come from the PRA mapping exercises is that the area regarded by the villagers as being within the village boundary is not coincident with the boundary of the Commune. The sum of the village areas is much smaller than the area of the Commune. For example, in Dak Phoi Commune, the approximate areas of land identified for allocation (i.e. the total area of land claimed as village land) is:

- agricultural land—1,500 ha (including 750 ha of "reassigned" forest land);
- agro-forestry and forestry land—3,500 ha (the forestry land includes both production and protection forest).

The total area of land due for allocation is 5,000 ha, but the area of the Commune is about (14000 ha). A similar situation applies in Krong No Commune (22000ha). All of the forest land in the Communes is under the control of the Lak District Forest Enterprise, although there seem to be no remaining areas of commercial forest. The Forest Enterprise is looking for a new mandate to justify its continued existence. There may be an opportunity to explore the possibility for collaboration on forest management between the villagers and the Forest Enterprise (assuming the Lak District Forest Enterprise survives the current Government shake-up of unprofitable State Owned Enterprises). The first priority would be the forest land already earmarked for allocation to the village, but at the same time discussions could commence about the future management options for the forest land within the Commune boundary but outside that claimed as village land.

One point that is still unclear relates to the use to be made of the forest land that will be allocated in the near future. Much of the regenerating forest is on land that is part of the fallow cycle for shifting cultivation. How much of this is required by the villagers to satisfy their need for land for shifting cultivation and how much can be available for private or communal forest uses? This is a difficult question to ask in villages because of the
desire of the government to discourage shifting cultivation and encourage villagers to adopt more sedentary farming practices. There are dangers of the villagers and Government staff “talking past” each other, with each partner having a different view of the use to be made of forest land. There is considerable confusion over whether this type of land should be allocated as “forest land” (under Government control) or upland agricultural land (with individual rights). As noted by Fisher and Makarabhirom (1997), “To talk about community forest management on land used for upland agriculture weakens the basis for acknowledging its agricultural role in land allocation. It also obscures the differences between the types of intervention appropriate to agriculture and forests.” The agro-forestry option that is frequently discussed is still far from proving that it can generate adequate income to replace that obtained from shifting cultivation. There seem few alternatives to shifting cultivation in the short term. It would be helpful if this could be discussed openly during negotiations about land use planning so that realistic outcomes are achieved.

6. BASIC CONCEPTS UNDERLYING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN WATERSHED/FOREST MANAGEMENT

"In addressing international concerns about the state of the world’s environment, a variety of models have emerged for involving local people in resource management and conservation. These models differ from each other in major respects, but they tend to have been inspired by a number of common issues, including sustainable development, biodiversity, people’s rights (especially indigenous rights), decentralised planning and public participation.” (Fisher, 1995). Underlying all of these approaches are some common concepts, and this section identifies and describes the most important ones.

6.1 Community

The notion of "community" is a basic concept used in discussing the involvement of people in forest-related activities, but it is often used very loosely. The primary connotation is a vague notion that community forestry means something like "people’s forestry". This acknowledges that activities are aimed at providing direct benefits to rural people and that "the people" should have a substantial role in decision making. At this level, that is, as a statement about the philosophy behind community forestry, there is nothing wrong with the term. However, "community" is often used as if it was a sociological term which adequately defines the recipients.

"Community" has a number of connotations; it suggests a group of people who share a set of common interests (residence, kinship, religious affiliation, etc.). It is implied that members of a community may act jointly in respect of these common interests. Individuals may be in a number of communities, depending on which set of interests are relevant in a given situation. Thus, a community of residence does not, necessarily, share common interests in terms of forest use-rights. Further, a community of residence is unlikely to be homogeneous in terms of wealth, land ownership, occupation and religion. The interests of poor and wealthy people are likely to be divergent. Men and women form different interest groups; there are also different interest groups among women in a community of residence. Often ethnic group membership is a further differentiating factor. In other words, the word "community" can obscure a variety of group affiliations.

Beyond the rather vague use of the word as a loose synonym for a group of people, the word "community is of little use in implementing forest activities which have a community orientation. It does not help us to think of the heterogeneous nature of the social groupings we are dealing with. There is a need for a concept that clearly acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of many rural societies and which can deal with this heterogeneity. The notion of an "interest group" is far more helpful. The concept refers to a group of people who have similar sets of interests in respect of a particular situation. For example, people who own large numbers of livestock that are grazed on a patch of common land have different interests from people who have only a few stall-fed animals. A proposal to establish a plantation on common grazing land will affect each group differently.

Identification of various interest groups is fundamental to any project activity. The number of separate interest groups will differ according to different situations. A minimum list of interest would include women, the poor, separate ethnic groups (where applicable) and any groups of people specialising in distinct economic activities. Examples of the latter category would include: livestock owners dependent on common grazing land; blacksmiths dependent on forests for production of charcoal; shop owners with heavy demands for fuel wood. This is no more than an indicative list. Other interest groups will be relevant in particular situations. It is also crucial to remember that broad categories such as "women" and "the poor" are not always (in fact, not often) groups with homogeneous interests. There are rich and poor women and there are different types of
poor people. The interests of totally landless poor, and poor people with at least some land may be different.

The concept of interest groups is a tool that assists in the identification of relevant social groups within a heterogeneous society. It can also act as the basis of a checklist that ensures that all interest groups are involved in negotiations.

6.2 User group/use-rights

On one level, the notion of use-rights refers to legally defined rights to use specified forest products. However, in many cases a separate set of use-rights may exist. These are locally recognised rights to use specified forest products. Such use-rights are supra-legal; they do not necessarily coincide with legal ownership as defined by the legal system and they may often relate to technically illegal use of forest products.

Locally recognised use-rights are referred to as "indigenous use-rights" and defined as "claims to rights to use specified forest resources that are regarded as legitimate by people (in the same area)". An important aspect of this view of use-rights is that they are not fixed for all time, but rather, represent a process of making claims and recognising other people's claims. They are also referred to as usufruct. The concept of a user group is derived from the concept of use-rights. It refers to a specified group of people who share mutually recognised claims to specified use-rights.

6.3 The nature of participation and cooperation

Contemporary development literature and practices make extensive use of terms like participation, collaboration, cooperation and consultation. These words represent a set of related concepts which are important for both ethical and practical reasons. Participation is not just a luxury or a fad: without some significant level of participation, conservation and development goals simply will not be achieved. Implementation requires local cooperation, regardless of who generates the policies. Unfortunately, repeated and token use of the terminology has devalued it; participation has come to mean so many things that it sometimes means nothing.

Arnstein (1969) illustrates the various forms of participation in the form of a ladder (see Box 5) beginning with manipulation and progressing to "citizen control". The level of participation moves from non-participation through degrees of tokenism to full involvement. To date, participation in most development projects has occurred at the lower levels. It can be argued that a meaningful level of control over decision-making - essentially a form of power - is necessary to enhance effective involvement. Although participants do not necessarily require full control, they are much more likely to follow resource management practices when they have had some meaningful input into the process. While this may be less than full control, it must, at the minimum, involve actual power-sharing.

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<th>Box 5. Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation</th>
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<td>8 Citizen control</td>
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<td>7 Delegated power</td>
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7. OPTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN WATERSHED/FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE PROJECT AREA

There is a range of possibilities for community based forest management in the project area. Among them are:

- management of existing plantations established under the decree 327 programme, particularly if government budgets for protection are cut;
- establishment and management of new plantations;
- management of existing “rich” forests within village boundaries;
- management of degraded regrowth forests;
- management of parts of Nam Ka and Chu Yang Sin Nature Reserves.

There may be other possibilities that will come up during discussions with villagers. The most important point is that the option chosen must be one that is of genuine interest to the villagers. They cannot be expected to be committed to an option which is not of immediate importance to them, particularly if they will need to commit scarce resources (labour or capital) to the venture. They may well accept an imposed suggestion in a formal village meeting, because of the presence of important or influential outsiders, but they are unlikely to demonstrate serious commitment to it when the time comes for implementation. For this reason committed dialogue with the villagers is an essential part of the process of planning and implementation.

Among the questions that need to be addressed as the options are being considered are:

- what land is available?
- what are the conflicts (actual or potential) regarding use of the land for forest management purposes?
- what is the interest of villagers in forests and how do forests fit into their household/village economy?
- what technical and other support is necessary and available?
- what is the potential for natural regeneration?

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BASED WATERSHED/FOREST MANAGEMENT

The previous section discussed some of the management options that may be suitable for collaboration between government and communities. The management objectives and outcomes for each of these options would probably be quite different, and would depend on the site-specific context. However, the overall approach to developing management agreements will be much the same. In somewhat simplified terms the steps that need to be taken include the following:

8.1 Carry out participatory land use planning in the villages and communes

This step should ideally be done at the one time so that a holistic view of the future land use can be obtained, and villagers have a chance of discussing the balance between land for agriculture, grazing, plantations, natural production forest, protection forest, etc. This is also in accordance with the experiences and recommendations from the Song Da Project in north west Vietnam (Anon., 1996). This discussion will bring into the open the issue of shifting cultivation. Up to now this contentious topic seems to be avoided (at least in its totality) as discussion has concentrated largely on agricultural development on the flat land in the present village sites and on the degraded and denuded hillsides immediately adjacent to the villages.

Unless the future of the large areas of land presently being used for shifting cultivation can be discussed openly, there is little likelihood that decisions taken can be translated into later commitment. This is also the time when discussions can take place about the balance between household and community managed resources. The PRA mapping exercises that have been carried out by the Project help community members to express their interests and to decide among themselves how they want their village to look and develop in the future. Attention should also be paid to exploring whether there are any existing institutional arrangements in the village (past or present) for the management of natural resources. It is generally more effective (and
more acceptable to villagers) to build on to existing indigenous systems with which people are comfortable, than to sponsor new institutions (Fisher, 1991). Villagers often have more than enough meetings to attend to satisfy their own internal needs as well as essential outside needs without adding more. New institutions sponsored from outside the village often fail to be sustained unless they meet the needs of the villagers.

8.2 Develop a management agreement between government and the villagers

A management agreement does not need to be overly detailed and complicated in the first instance. It may become more detailed as time goes on, as the confidence of both parties grows, and as the ability of the villagers to manage forests effectively and for their own benefit develops. A management agreement would generally contain the following information:

- description of the forest;
- identification of the user group;
- specification of the authority and responsibility of the government agencies and the user group;
- specification of the rules to apply for such things as:
  - enrichment planting
  - protection
  - harvesting of products
  - distribution of products
  - sanctions
- specification of decision making mechanisms, e.g.:
  - user group meetings
  - committee
  - village headman

PRA and RRA techniques are quite adequate for most of this information and the simple forms developed by the Song Da Project provide a good basis for beginning the process. One of the difficult things to balance is the felt need of technically trained government staff to have detailed technical information such as precise area measurements, inventory, growth and projected yield data before any management plan could be approved. The practical reality is that it would be impossible to obtain such information at the scale that is necessary. In addition this information is not really needed in the early stages of setting up community management agreements - indeed, it may never be needed. What communities need are simple, robust procedures that they can understand and apply themselves with minimum input from outsiders. In practice, these procedures can be quite conservative so that any harvesting that takes place will not prove to be a threat to the sustainability of the forest. They should, of course, be based on sound silvicultural practices. Experience in other countries (for example in India, Nepal and Laos) has shown that such practices can be applied successfully by villagers.

8.3 Implement the agreement and monitor the outcome

The management agreement is implemented by the user group. When substantial new procedures are being introduced in harvesting practices, such as coppicing systems or thinning regimes, government staff may need to assist with training and initial supervision. Assistance may also be needed if user groups decide to establish a nursery and carry out plantation operations.

As experience is gained by both partners (users and government) confidence is also gained. Experience in other countries indicates that, over time, users often wish to take on new and more complex forest
management tasks. There needs to be a regular review of progress and performance followed by revision of the management agreement where necessary.

The process needed to carry out the steps outlined above in a participatory fashion is essentially social in nature. It can be helpful to think of the process as involving a number of stages - not discrete, but overlapping. Appendix IV gives a suggested set of guidelines which may prove helpful to project staff as they think through the activities they need to undertake to move forward in developing community forestry agreements. It should be stressed that these guidelines should not be taken as any sort of "blueprint" for how-to-do-it, but rather as a catalyst for developing approaches which fit the site-specific conditions of the project area. The stages outlined in Appendix IV can also be helpful in discussing with staff the progress being made with the various stages, and for putting in place a monitoring procedure that can place emphasis on the social process rather than the achievement of physical targets. The people facilitating this from the government (and project) side need to have well developed social skills as well as empathy for the villagers and a respect for their culture. This has major implications as it involves a rethinking of the traditional roles of government staff. Essentially, there needs to be a shift from a culture that emphasises control and policing, to one that involves working with villagers in a collaborative partnership. Staff will need to be assisted in making this radical transition with well thought out training programmes to provide them with the skills and understanding needed for their new roles as advisers and extensionists. Project staff have already had training which is useful in this regard, and a future challenge is to think through what this means in terms of institutionalising such changes in a large bureaucracy. Organisations such as the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) in Bangkok could have a major role to play because of their regional experience in such activities. There is also material from other countries in the region that have been implementing community forestry for almost 20 years.

9. THE 5 MILLION HA PROGRAMME IN DAK LAK PROVINCE

The Government has recently announced the launching of an ambitious programme, scheduled to commence in mid 1998, to afforest 5 million ha of land through a variety of means by 2010. This is essentially a follow-on from the Decree 327 Programme "Re-greening the Barren Hills". However, there appears to be little difference between the new 5 million ha programme and Programme 327. The latter will essentially be subsumed into the former. The new programme is more orientated towards production and revenue generation than 327. However, it remains exposed to many of the institutional, technical, social and economic issues that plagued 327. There is a real danger that the outcome will be much the same as that for 327 - good on paper but generally bad in practice. Households are still seen as a key production unit but there is room for increased involvement by other organisations. Programme implementation remains heavily top-down. Project approval, financing and monitoring processes are unchanged. Programme funds will probably continue to act as a lifeline for failing SFEs. There seems to have been little effort to analyse the field experiences of relevant field projects and use the results of that analysis to influence the overall approach.

This new programme will pose significant challenges in most provinces but also create many opportunities. In the context of Dak Lak there are many issues to be addressed. At present, substantial deforestation is taking place, driven, in part, by in-migration (part official and part unofficial). If migration continues, and there are few signs of it abating, some forest land will be lost to accommodate the continuing demand for more agricultural land. Thus both deforestation and afforestation may well be joint objectives of the government in Dak Lak - implicitly if not explicitly. This will require some careful thinking through to arrive at clear and sensible policies. Discussions need to take place on a Provincial level to arrive at decisions on what forests (LANDS) are to be earmarked for long term use as production and protection forests, and what are to be converted to agricultural lands. The land allocation process provides a mechanism for doing this on a village basis, but there needs to be an overlay on top of village-level land use planning which shows Provincial and National land use priorities.

There is doubtless much forest land in Dak Lak, both tree covered and barren, that could be improved in terms of its productive potential and its watershed protection function. At the moment much of it is under the de jure control of State Forest Enterprises but the de facto control of local villagers. The SFEs do not have the capacity to exercise effective control and the villagers are operating extra-legally. There seems to be an excellent opportunity to explore the potential for developing collaborative management arrangements between the Government and local villagers so that the major interests of both partners could be met. In fact, there are few other alternatives that are feasible. This would provide a useful focus for the rural development project scheduled to take over the existing Project activities at the end of 1999.

The scale of the 5 million ha programme is daunting, particularly in light of the limited experience with large scale afforestation on land already being used by villagers. One lesson which has been learnt from countries
where community-based natural resource management has been implemented, is that the process (which is essentially a social one) is very slow, particularly in the early stages. Government staff have to adopt new roles, for which they are not trained or conditioned; villagers have to learn to trust the Government (after decades of mistrust); partnerships have to be forged based on mutual trust and respect; technical solutions have to be developed suitable for implementation by villagers. All of these roles need to be defined and the various actors trained.

A major question to be addressed relates to incentives. What are the incentives for villagers to become involved in a Government sponsored afforestation programme, particularly if it is to be carried out on land that they already consider theirs? This is a question that can only be resolved by discussion and negotiation between Government staff and villagers. This question is particularly relevant where the programme is focused primarily on restoration of forests for protection purposes such as maintaining hydrological functions for irrigation. Is it feasible to think of transfer payments from the downstream beneficiaries (or the Nation) to the resource managers in the uplands?

Normal Government sponsored plantation establishment is a prohibitively expensive option for large scale afforestation, and it should be possible to develop lower cost alternatives. Many of Vietnam’s forests are robust and will regenerate naturally if protection is applied. To date very little attention has been paid to natural regeneration but there is a Government Committee investigating this option with a report due by mid-1998. Natural regeneration would fit in well with village level forestry interests, as there are few direct financial costs but a major emphasis on communal decision making about protection and communal action to implement the decisions.

10. ROLE OF THE PROJECT A MODEL TESTER AND FACILITATOR

The Project is starting to carry out good work in two communes. However, several questions can be raised regarding the future, particularly in view of the fact that activities will be absorbed into a bilateral development project in late 1999. The activities carried out to date are the beginning of a process that will be far from complete by the end of 1999. It is important that the expectations that have been raised by both villagers and Government staff are met. This will create some real challenges in managing the transition from the present project to the new structure.

To date the Project has been largely involved in developing and testing approaches that are specific to the conditions in the target communes. A fundamental challenge has been to design interventions that lead to more sustainable land use, including forest conservation, while at the same time increasing rural livelihoods. It is one of the many Integrated Conservation Development Projects (ICDPs). Such projects are designed on the (often implicit) assumption that the twin objectives of conservation and development are linked, although this assumption has yet to be fully tested. There are generally three threads running through the argument linking conservation and development. These are that:

- alleviating poverty increases the interest and capacity for resource conservation (economic development approach);
- making alternative products or livelihoods available reduces the impact on natural resources (alternative livelihood approach);
- involving local people in the planning and management of natural resources and in the sharing of benefits increases the likelihood that these people will implement sustainable use and conservation initiatives (participatory planning approach).

The strategy developed by the Project to guide its operations (participatory, adaptive, evaluative) puts it in a good position to test these assumptions and contribute to the debate on the topic. The Project is essentially a developer and tester of approaches and can only be expected to have a limited direct impact on the target group of villagers and possibly those government officials working as collaborators. It is not a large-scale implementer. However, because it is small it has the opportunity to explore in detail the impact of its intervention (both positive and negative aspects). This should lead to a good understanding of the process of development in the target areas and the way in which intervention strategies affect both biophysical and socio-economic outcomes. Most projects focus on the former and often neglect or simplify the latter. Questions of power relationships, equity and gender issues can be addressed in a small pilot project whereas large scale projects or mainstream programmes can rarely justify the time and effort needed for such fine grained activities. Negative impacts and unintended consequences of project actions are rarely identified, but they can be very revealing in evaluating project impacts and informing project management so that project design and implementation practice can be modified. This information can also be useful for influencing policy
discussions and strategic thinking.

One of the important facilitating roles of the Project has been its ability to bridge the gap between villagers and the various agents of the Government (Forest Enterprise, Forest Protection Department, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, etc.). The staff in the Project team is drawn from these key stakeholder organisations which assists the process of integrating project activities into mainstream Government thinking. Another role relates to ensuring complementarity and cooperation between the approach and activities of the MRC-GTZ Project and other similar projects such as the Danida Project.

A small project working in two communes has the opportunity to "get-it-right" partly because of the special attributes that characterise such a project. These include good quality motivated staff, adequate resources of manpower and money and clear objectives. Quite often these attributes are partly or totally lacking in mainstream Government programmes. A common conundrum in development is the question of scaling-up or moving from project to programme. There are many examples round the world where highly successful projects remain just that, and often collapse after external support is withdrawn. Even though many activities are designed so that they are part of on-going Government programmes, it could be useful for the Project team to give some thought during the coming year to this challenge of scaling-up. This is particularly relevant given the institutional changes that will occur at the end of 1999. Among the questions that need to be addressed are:

- what are the processes that have led to successful outcomes?
- can these be codified to make them suitable for incorporation into normal government practice? i.e. how can the process be institutionalised?
- how can the experiences of the project be scaled-up to become effective mainstream programmes?
- how can negative consequences (particularly those related to equity) be identified and minimised at the scale that government has to operate?
- what are the consequences of the first two points in terms of training intervention agents--government, NGOs and local communities?

11. TOWARDS A FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE PROJECT

The discussion in the previous sections focused on the Dak Lak component of the much larger Regional Project. This section will focus on some strategic aspects of the Regional Project itself, particularly as the Project team prepares to disengage from the Dak Lak component by the end of 1999 and redirect resources to regional initiatives. One of the advantages of the involvement in Dak Lak is that the Project team became acutely aware of the realities of operating at the village level. The perceptions, expectations and abilities of villagers are well understood. Likewise, the perceptions of Provincial and District Government staff are also well understood because of the day-to-day working relationships. Perhaps more importantly, the interaction between these two key interest groups can be assessed objectively in terms of compatibility and conflict as Government policy met village reality. This ability to develop such insights first hand is a luxury that few regionally based policy-type projects enjoy.

If the MRC-GTZ Regional Project is to have a significant impact it is important that it build and retain close working relations with groups in each of the four Lower Mekong countries which are working closely with field realities. Particular attention should be given to those that are not only implementing good rural development activities, but are also doing good policy-relevant analytical work. The Regional Project will be in a good position to synthesise these experiences and ensure that they are widely disseminated. The expression "feet in the dirt and head in the clouds" is appropriate here. Too many policy projects become lost in their own rhetoric and drift from maintaining an empathy with villagers and an understanding of the field realities as Government staff attempt to implement policy. The Regional Project should attempt to avoid falling into this trap by staying close to those who are working thoughtfully where policy hits the ground.

An analysis of the relevant projects and programmes in the region (both Government and non-government) would be a good starting point to identify those that meet the criteria outlined above. A final selection could be made based on the interest of those identified to become involved as working partners with the Regional Project. The objective should be to develop a strategic alliance in the region that can become a force for change by creating leverage at the policy level. One advantage for the collaborating partners is that they would have a forum for wider dissemination of the key findings of their own work.

This approach could function at various levels, with workshops and meetings to share experiences and build bridges at national, provincial and district levels in each of the four countries, as well as regionally. A strategic
focus is essential so that those institutions and people that can influence change are targeted. The important role of educational institutions should not be forgotten as they are the key to influencing the thinking of the next generation of resource managers. The Project could ensure that the most relevant experiences from field projects are packaged and provided to educational institutions to inform both curriculum development and teaching practice. Internships could be offered to teaching staff to enable them to work with field and policy projects to develop up-to-date teaching modules.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The field project in Dak Lak

12.1.1 Security of tenure (or at the very least, security of access and management rights) is a necessary precondition for any discussion on community involvement in forest management. The Project’s current emphasis on participatory land use planning and land allocation should be continued. Project staff could then facilitate a dialogue between Government agencies and villagers leading to agreement about the balance between private and communal forest, and the rights and responsibilities of the various parties to manage the forests within the village boundaries. Interdepartmental working groups on topics such as Land Use Planning and Land Allocation could be effective vehicles for keeping the debate active.

12.1.2 Project staff should continue the excellent work they have commenced in bridging the gap between villagers and Government agencies and between the agencies themselves. At the same time they should give thought to mechanisms for institutionalising the approaches they have developed. The question should also be asked about who will take over this bridging role once the Project leaves.

12.1.3 Associated with 12.1.2 is the need to begin thinking about the task of scaling-up so that Project activities can have a wider impact. This requires a consideration of the changing roles of Government staff as they move from being concerned primarily with policing and licensing, to working with communities in a facilitative fashion with an emphasis on extension. The skills needed for the new roles are different from those needed for the old roles. This shift has major consequences for training (both in-service and at educational institutions) and opens up possibilities for a strategic focus for the regional aspects of the Project’s work. Training for villagers as they take on more complex resource management roles will also become a growing need.

12.1.4 The Project should build on its good working relations with Government partners to obtain the institutional “space” needed to trial collaborative management arrangements for selected areas of forest in the field sites.

12.1.5 If community management arrangements for forests become a reality there will be a need to develop a range of simple but robust techniques that can be easily learnt and applied by villagers with guidance from extensionists. Among these are: rapid methods for mapping forest areas and describing forest types and condition and simple, low cost silvicultural prescriptions for a range of forest types. While these techniques will not be required immediately it would be useful to begin a process, perhaps in partnership with others, to establish trials, collect relevant experiences from the region and inject the ideas into the debate.

12.1.6 In order to capitalise on the experience and knowledge gained by the project to date, it would be useful if the rural development project that will absorb the current activities after 1999, also focuses its attention on the sustainable management of the upland watersheds. It could emphasise the importance of maintaining stable watershed functions to sustain both local and downstream livelihoods. This would also provide a clear focus for the rural development activities of the new project.

12.1.7 The project should ensure that experiences from the field are used to inform the dialogue on resource management at the provincial and national levels. This is particularly important in the context of the 5 million ha planting programme due to commence in mid-1998.

12.2 Regional Perspectives
12.2.1 In defining its regional strategy, the Project should attempt to build a coalition of interests at the national level in each of the four countries and identify the key pressure points that are part of the critical path in creating change. This will help to focus on "what", "why" and "how" and reduce the temptation to become involved in a wide range of activities that may not be the most relevant.

12.2.2 At the regional level a strategic alliance could be built among key institutions and individuals to act as a platform for sharing information and ideas and lobbying for change. This should attempt to bridge the gap between "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches to implementation. Neither approach by itself is adequate in the modern world of economic rationalism, structural adjustment and decentralisation. What is needed is the institutional "space" for community action in the management of national (and global) natural resources.

12.2.3 One focus could be on those educational institutions that are training the next generation of resource managers. There are several possible inputs that could be very influential, such as:

- provision of relevant up-to-date information from field projects packaged in a user-friendly manner;
- support for internships to allow key academic staff to prepare up-to-date teaching material by working in close association with cutting edge projects;
- involvement in curriculum development;
- facilitating seminars at key institutions to expose teaching staff and students to the latest thinking in field practice and policy.

Support for in-service training will become increasingly important as the roles of government staff shift from emphasising policing and licensing to emphasising extension.

REFERENCES


Anon. (1998). Village forestry in Lao PDR: Towards sustainable forest management. FOMOCOP, Department of Forestry, Lao PDR.


Options and Approaches for Community Participation in Management of Watershed/Forest Resources

MRC-GTZ SMR project plans to review options and approaches for strengthening the involvement of communities in management of natural resources – in particular forest resources – in the context of its work in Dak Lak Province. For this purpose it is planned to obtain the support of a short-term consultant for a period of up to 18 days. The consultant’s assignment provides an opportunity for the MRC-GTZ project to respond to the request of MARD for comments and advice to the Government of Vietnam on proposed “5 Million Hectare Programme” and its implications for involving local communities in managing forest resources.

The key issue to be addressed by Dr. Gilmour primarily in the context of Dak Lak and the MRC-GTZ programme, will include:

- review of available assessment and evaluations of current legal and policy framework and their implications in terms of options and constraints for communities to be involved in management of forest lands and resources
- review of current MRC-GTZ/DARD programme directions and approaches to promoting sustainable resource management in the communes of Dak Phoi and Krong No/Lak District
- development of options for introducing new models for ‘co-management/collaborative management’ of forest resources in pilot areas in Lak District involving local communities, Government departments, Lak Forestry Enterprise etc. Recommendations should address policy requirements, legal frameworks, institutional arrangements etc.
- Assess implications of current framework of individualised land titles for ‘community based resource management’ and develop potential options for introducing a legal framework for ‘management of common property’ resource areas
- Review implications of proposed national "5 Million hectare" programme in terms of an implementation strategy for Lak District/Dak Lak province (plantation, natural regeneration etc)
- Present findings on above issues to Provincial authorities and project team as well as to relevant decision makers at national level in the context of a roundtable discussion
- Provide the project with recommendations on how it could best deploy its available resources to contribute to the current policy review process on forest resources management in Vietnam based on the work in Dak Lak and consultations in Hanoi

The consultant will be requested to provide the MRC-GTZ SMR project with report summarising findings and recommendations. The report should include general observations, analysis of specific issues and a set of recommendations to the project and its partners.
### Appendix II Itinerary

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<tr>
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<td>PM Visit Dak Phoi commune</td>
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<td>Reading and report outline preparation</td>
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<td>22-04-98</td>
<td>AM Debrief of workshop. Round table with Project staff. PM Meeting with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vice chairman Provincial P.C.</td>
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<td>26-04-98</td>
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## Appendix III People met during consultancy

### In Hanoi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achim Steiner</td>
<td>Martin Geiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA (to May 1998), MRC-GTZ Project</td>
<td>Forestry Advisor, REFAS Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Helmrich</td>
<td>Lutz Herrmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA (from June 1998), MRC-GTZ Project</td>
<td>Senior Management Advisor &amp; CTA, REFAS Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Glück</td>
<td>Gunter Meyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
<td>CTA, ADB Forest Sector Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pham Phuong Hoa</td>
<td>Andrew Mittleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Coordinator, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
<td>TA, ADB Forest Sector Project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To Dinh Mai</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Expert, Dept of Policy MARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Hong Quan</td>
<td>Project Director, MRC-GTZ Project &amp; Deputy Director, Forest Development Dept MARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul van der Poel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team Leader, SFDP Song Da MARD - GTZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Friederich</td>
<td>Country Representative, IUCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bardolf Paul</td>
<td>CTA, Social Forestry Support Programme, SDC-MARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubertus Kraienhorst</td>
<td>Chief Project Advisor, MARD - KfW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markus Vorpahl</td>
<td>Cultural Anthropologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl – Georg Arendt</td>
<td>CTA, MARD – KfW – GFA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olivier Chave</td>
<td>First Secretary, Development &amp; Cooperation, SDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan Nachuk</td>
<td>Program Coordinator, OXFAM</td>
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In Dak Lak

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<tr>
<th>Project Staff</th>
<th>Field Coordinator, MRC-GTZ Project</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tran Ngoc Thanh</td>
<td>Field Coordinator, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Wel Ksor</td>
<td>Agro-forestry Coordinator, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran Huu Nghi</td>
<td>Wood stoves and NTFP Coordinator, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dang Thanh Liem</td>
<td>Forestry Coordinator, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ute Bartels</td>
<td>Management Consultant, MRC-GTZ Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phan Muu Binh</td>
<td>Director, DARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Van Lang</td>
<td>Vice Chairman, Provincial People’s Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phan Qua</td>
<td>Deputy Project Director, DANIDA Project DARD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nguyen Cong Ba</td>
<td>Chief of Garden Association (Farmer’s Union)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le Thanh Thinh</td>
<td>Director, Forest Protection Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vo Van Tam</td>
<td>Vice Director, DARD (Dept of Sedentary Cultivation &amp; Settlement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do The Nhu</td>
<td>Director, Planning &amp; Investment Dept of Dak Lak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do Duc Duc</td>
<td>Director, Land Management Dept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tra Quang Minh</td>
<td>Chairman, District PC, Lak District</td>
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<td>Y Tap</td>
<td>Headman, Buon Dung Hamlet, Dak Phoi Commune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Bay</td>
<td>Director, State Forest Enterprise Lak District</td>
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Appendix IV Guidelines for implementing community management agreements in the project area

These guidelines should be seen as indicating what needs to be done rather than "how-to-do-it". Refinement will come once implementation experience is gained and the final outcomes will depend on the site-specific social and ecological conditions.

The objective is to move towards developing a partnership between the government and local people with the responsibility and authority of each of the partners negotiated and formally agreed.

The process is one where government staff will generally take a lead in working with local communities to:

- identify a forest area suitable for community management;
- identify the user group for the forest;
- negotiate an agreement to formalise the transfer of management authority and responsibility (this would include simple silvicultural arrangements for managing the forest);
- assist members of the forest user group to implement the agreement.

It is convenient to think of the process in four phases, although they are not discrete but rather overlap
considerably.

**Investigation Phase:** includes establishing rapport with villagers and gathering social and technical information about the use of the forest, and the identification of the users and the community forest area.

**Negotiation Phase** includes formation, discussion and resolution of forest management issues within the Forest User Group, the preparation and approval of a simple Management Plan and the handing over of the management responsibility for the forest to the Forest User Group.

**Implementation Phase** includes carrying out approved forest management activities by the Forest User Group with monitoring and the provision of requested advice, inputs and strengthening by the extension staff.

**Review Phase** includes appraisal, revision and renegotiation of the Management Plan with the Forest User Group either at the request of the users or upon the expiry of the plan.