

**Sustainable Management of Resources in the Lower Mekong Basin Project (SMRP)**  
**Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Dak Lak**  
**DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT METHODS FOR FLA IN DAK LAK**

**Report on**  
**Findings from Field Visits to Forest Land Allocation**  
**Locations in Cu Jut and Krong Bong Districts,**  
**Dak Lak Province.**

**Report No 1**

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## Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION .....	4
2. THE STUDY PURPOSES AND APPROACHES .....	4
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY LOCATIONS.....	5
3.1 <i>Cluster 478 in Ea po commune, Cu jut district</i> .....	5
3.1.1 Brief information about Ea po commune .....	5
3.1.2 Cluster 478.....	6
3.2 <i>Cham B village in Cu Dram commune, Krong Bong district</i> .....	8
3.2.1 Brief information about Cu Dram commune .....	8
3.2.2 Cham B village .....	9
3.3 <i>Sample household economic profiles and production strategies</i> .....	13
4 MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD TRIPS.....	15
4.1 <i>Un-controlled immigration and land use situation in Cluster 478</i> .....	15
4.2 <i>Subsistence crop production vs. cash crop production</i> .....	16
4.3 <i>The organization of FLA implementation process</i> .....	17
5 CONCLUSIONS .....	19
ANNEX 1: WORK ITINERARY .....	21
ANNEX 2: FOREST CHANGES IN FOREST BLOCK NO 478 .....	22
ANNEX 3: ALLOCATED FOREST LAND IN CHAM B VILLAGE .....	23
ANNEX 4: SOME PICTURES FROM THE FIELD TRIPS .....	24
REFERENCES .....	25

## List of Abbreviations

BMT	Buon Me Thuat city of Dak Lak province
DPC	District People's Committee
FCS	Fixed Cultivation and Sedenterization Program
FLA	Forest Land Allocation
FPU	Forest Protection Unit
GOV	Government of Vietnam
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Co-operation
HH	Household
LAO	Land Administration Organization
NAT	National Advisor Team of the Research Program "Development of Assessment Methods for FLA in Dak Lak"
PC	People's Committee
PPC	Province People's Committee
RBC	Red Book Certificate
ARDO	Agriculture and Rural Development Office
SFE	State Forest Enterprise
SMRP	Sustainable Management of Resources in the Lower Mekong Basin Project
SST	Scientific Support Team of the research program
UFAIE 1	Dak Lak Union of Forest, Agricultural, and Industrial Enterprises Number I
VND	Vietnamese Dong

## **1. Introduction**

Land allocation is among main concerns of policy makers in Vietnam, yet it is not a new topic. The first land allocation dated back to as early as 1953 when the Vietnamese National Assembly passed the law on land reform. Since then, land allocation has been going through different stages with different types of allocation. However, it must be until 1998 that the idea of allocating natural forest land to individuals and group of households with land use title (also known as Red Book Certificate) be realized. The first place where this type of forest land allocation (FLA) was initiated and experimented is Daklak, a province in the Central Highland of Vietnam.

Since it is the first time that natural forest is allocated to households with Red Book Certificate (RBC), there are insufficient experiences and legal guidelines for the implementation. The FLA process in Dak Lak is, therefore, a learning from doing process (Tran 2000; Dang 2001). It is expected that by experimenting this FLA program, Dak Lak can be in the position to advice the Government of Vietnam (GOV) on how to proceed with future FLA in the other provinces. Therefore, the on-going FLA process in Dak Lak is important and influential to Vietnam's land reform policy.

In order that the Dak Lak People's Committee have adequate base to propose to the GOV concerning the FLA policy in the future, a sound monitoring and evaluation system for the FLA implementation process as well as for its impacts on local people's lives needs to be in place. With the help of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) through the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Project (SMRP), a research program with an aim to develop methods for monitoring and evaluation of the impacts from FLA on the local people's livelihood has been launched. The intended research program will be for three years, of which the field work will be completed by the end of the second year (Helmrich 2000).

During the first two months of the research program, a researcher spent three weeks, of which one week with a research support team, in 2 places in Dak Lak where FLA has been carried out to get a picture of the socio-economic situation and the FLA. Though the research program is based on FLA, the first field trip is not FLA oriented. In other words, the researcher and the research support team do not just look only into the FLA issues. The purpose of this first field trip is to get the first knowledge of the socio-economic situation and to familiarize the research team with the FLA situation in the research area.

As a consequence, this report is not analytical about FLA in Dak Lak. In stead, this report is descriptive about the socio-economic and FLA situation in the studied locations (i.e. in the two places where the research team visited). After this introduction chapter, the study purposes and approaches are presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 gives a description about the two studied locations. In Chapter 4, the main findings are discussed. Finally in Chapter 5 are the conclusions based on the findings discussed in Chapter 4.

## **2. The study purposes and approaches**

As mentioned in the introduction, this report is based on the first field trips to the research area. Due to the limit of time, only two places were visited. The main purpose of the trips is to gain first-hand knowledge about the situation in the studied areas. In more details, the purposes of this study can be stated as:

1. to gain the first hand knowledge about the physical, socio-economic and cultural conditions and production by the local people, and

2. to familiarize the research team with the FLA and land use situation in the research areas.

In terms of study approaches, when in the field the following tools were applied:

- in-depth interviews to individuals and groups of farmers
- direct observation.

Besides interviewing the local households, the research team also conducted a number of interviews to key informants from commune people's committees and local state forest enterprises. In addition, secondary sources of information like reports or working papers were also studied.

### **3. Description of the study locations**

For the sake of this study, two places, Cluster (*Cum*)<sup>1</sup> 478 in Ea po commune of Cu jut district and Cham B village in Cu Dram commune of Krong Bong district, were selected. They represent the allocation of natural forest to households (as in Cluster 478) and to groups of households (as in Cham B). The two selected places also represent two different types of population settlements. Cluster 478 represents the settlement type by Northern migrants and Cham B village by local Ede ethnic group. Given the differences in settlement types and FLA, it was expected that findings with regard to forest situation and forest resource management practices in the two different locations would be somewhat different. Resource management in Cham B is expected to be more traditional while the practices in Cluster 478 are to reflect the exploration of resources by new migrants.

#### **3.1 Cluster 478 in Ea po commune, Cu jut district**

##### *3.1.1 Brief information about Ea po commune*

Officially, Ea po commune was set up in 1989, one year before Cu Jut district was founded. However, original people (the Ede), who later moved out of the area in a state resettlement program, had stayed in the area for many years before the commune was set up. As for Northern migrants, though it is not exactly known when the first migrants came to the area, it is observed that some families were already in the area by 1989.

The total land size of the commune is 52,000ha. Of which, agricultural land is 5,900ha. Agriculture is a main source of income for local people. However, agricultural land makes up only 11.3% of the total land size; the rest is forest land. However, general observation is that the agricultural land takes up more land than the reported figure. Land size under paddy rice is 360ha, of which 60ha are for spring crop and 300ha for autumn crop. Annual crops like beans and cotton are the major source of cash income. Perennial crops like coffee, cashew and pepper are minor.

At present, Ea po commune has 23 villages and 6 population clusters. There are 9 different ethnic groups living in the commune; of which the most populous groups are the Kinh, Thai, Muong, Tay and Nung. Immigrants make up 95% of the local population. Most of them came to the commune during 1992-1994. There are still flows of uncontrolled immigration coming to the commune. This subsequently makes the land use situation in the commune a hot topic.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Cluster', or '*Cum*' in Vietnamese, may sound unfamiliar. It is not a village. It refers to a settlement area for a group of households, which may be as big as a village. The difference between a 'village' and a 'cluster' in this context is that there are no recognized organizational bodies in the latter.

### 3.1.2 Cluster 478

Cluster 478 is named after the forest block 478, where local people are living. The Cluster is 35km Northwest of Buon Me Thuat (BMT) city, 15km from the center of Cu jut district and 4km from Ea po commune center. Roads from BMT to Ea po commune center are good all year around. However, road from Ea po to Cluster 478 is muddy after a rain and Cluster 478 becomes difficult to access during rainy season.

Cluster 478 shares border with Buon Don district in the North, with Forest Blocks 479 and 480 in the South, with Ea po commune center in the East and with Forest Block 476 in the West. The total physical land size in the area is 1,139ha; of which 799ha are natural (young and poor) forest (see Annex 2: Forest changes in Forest Block No 478 on page 22). Agricultural land size is reportedly 242ha and bare land 98ha (Cu Jut SFE 2001). Soil in the area is mainly grey feralite type developed from granite rock. Basaltic soil is not popular and is only found along Ea Pal and Ea Roman streams. Under the top soil layer is the thick layer of laterite (Cu Jut SFE 2001). Rocks and stones are common in the top layer.

The ethnic composition of local population is heterogeneous and complex. Most, if not all, of the local inhabitants are uncontrolled migrants from the North. Main groups are Thai from Thanh Hoa (who make up the majority of the local population), Kinh from Nam dinh, Nghe an and Ninh binh, and Muong, Dao and Nung from other provinces. People living in Cluster 478 can be divided into two major groups. One group consists of people who have registered permanent residency in a village in Ea po commune but live and cultivate in Cluster 478. The other includes uncontrolled migrants who followed friends or relatives into the area. They do not have official residential record in the commune. Besides these two main groups, there are some other people who have their fields in the area but do not actually live there. They have house either within the same commune or elsewhere around the Cluster 478. Original ethnic people, the Ede, once lived in the area but have mostly moved out to a new place under a government's fixed cultivation and sedenterization (FCS) program.

Though the population problems are complex, no recognized village organizations exist in Cluster 478. Absence of village organizations in the area makes the administration of residential records a difficult task. Since the first settlers came to the area by the end of 80s there have been hundreds of households coming to the area. However, almost half of them are not registered. In addition, absence of village organizations partially makes the land use conflicts more problematic. Existing agricultural land is 21.3% of the total land as reported by the local SFE (Cu Jut SFE 2001) but this number is increasing rapidly with the increase in needs for more land by migrating and also by existing people. According to farmers' opinion, the area under upland field has increased quite a few for the last two years. Since the total land size is fixed, the increase in upland area is at the loss of bare land and/ or young and poor forest. It is, thus, clear that the need for forest resources by the local people is not very much on the forest itself but on the land.

In term of income sources, like many other rural areas in Vietnam, agriculture is a major source of income for the local people. While perennial plants are either too young to give product or only found with the early settlers, cropping pattern of mainly annual crops is commonly found in all local households. The most widely cultivated crops in the area are paddy rice, maize, soy and mung beans, and cotton. With a limited access to single crop paddy field, paddy rice is only for home consumption. Beans are most preferred on the upland in the first crop due to their suitability with soil conditions and their short production cycle. With the start of the cropping season in March-April, early crop can be

harvested by June. By July, bean growers can already prepare land for the second crop, which starts shortly after that. While soy bean is often planted singly in the upland, mung bean is sometimes inter-cropped with hybrid maize. However, if a farmer wants to plant a second crop on the field, he may plant only bean in the first crop. In the second crop, which starts from July-August, local farmers often cultivate cotton as the most preferred crop. Some people also cultivate beans in the second crop but on a smaller scale. Table 1 below presents the average yields of most popular annual crops:

**Table 1: Yields and farm-gate prices of major annual crops**

Crops	Yield (ton/ha)		Farm-gate price (VND/kg)
	First crop	Second crop	
Mung bean	1.5 - 2.0	1.0 - 1.5	3,000 - 5,000
Soy bean	1.5 - 2.0	--	2,500 - 3,500
Hybrid maize (VN10)	5.0 - 7.0	--	1,000 - 1,200
Cotton	--	1.5 - 2.0	4,000 - 5,000
Paddy rice	5.0	--	n/a

Note: -- crop not cultivated; n/a: information not available.

Perennial cash crops like cashew, pepper and fruit trees are also planted in the area but in a small scale and mostly by early settlers. One explanation for the poor development of perennial crops is that migrating people often have priority for annual crops to meet their immediate needs before they can invest for the future. Another explanation is with land use security. Since farmers do not have legal basis on the land yet, they often feel insecure to invest in the perennial crops, particularly in an area outside of their home garden. During informal interviews, many farmers express their wish to invest in plantation of cashew and fruit trees once they have land use title.

Also the same to other perennial crops, very few people grow coffee. However, the reasons are not only with land use security or budget constraint but also with low market price of coffee bean and unsuitable soil quality for coffee growing. As earlier stated, stones and rocks are common on the top soil layer in the area, cultivation of coffee is therefore a difficult task. When the market price for coffee bean was high, 20,000VND/kg or higher, the return from coffee is worth the investment in the coffee plantation. Since the price went down (about 3,000VND/kg at present), people have lost interest in maintaining the existing coffee plantations. At the moment, existing coffee plantations in the area are of very poor quality (see Annex 4: Some pictures from the field trips on page 24).

In terms of husbandry, livestock raising is very minor in the local farm economy. Though no estimation of the existing stock is available, team observation is that there are very few big livestock like cow and buffalo, which are mainly raised for traction. There is almost no family with pig but most families have chicken. Fish ponds are also found in the area but fish is only for home consumption. Share of household income from livestock is almost nil.

Off-farm income is not a major source of income for local people. There are, however, from time to time opportunities for non-agricultural income from hunting, non-timber forest products, and some minor trading within the area. Some people also receive money from the state for their previous service (as army man or civil servant). However, there is no statistics available.

As for the wealth classes within Cluster 478, the differences in property holdings like location of house, cultivated land, animals, and furniture like TV decide the difference in wealth ranking of households in the area. Normally, a so-called rich household often owns a permanent house with tiled roof, a TV and/or a cassette player, a cattle or buffalo, some perennial crops like cashew, pepper or fruit trees, and easier access to commune center. Rich households often have access to both upland and paddy fields. On the other hand, a poor household has a small house with thatched roof, no animal, no TV, and no perennial crops. A poor household generally has only upland field and their homestead is often further from the commune center. Though there are many contributing factors, the most prominent characteristic that differentiates rich and poor households in the area is the settlement period. In some cases, the family's capita/laborer ratio also counts. While richer families are often the ones that came before 1997, poorer households are mostly among the recent settlers (i.e. who came within the last three years) or newly wed couples.

Concerning electricity, Cluster 478 is not accessible to the power grid yet and there is no plan for national electricity network to reach the area in the close future though the commune center (4km from Cluster 478) already has 24-hour access to electricity. However, some households living nearby a stream make use of the water to run home-size generators for lighting.

In terms of health care, there is usually a person taking care of family planning, sanitation, and health related issues in a village in Ea po commune. However, since Cluster 478 is not yet a village, there is no such a position in the area. Local people have to seek help from the commune health center if there is any problem. In a serious case, patient may be taken to Cu Jut district center or Buon Me Thuat for treatment.

With regard to education, there is no school or kindergarten in Cluster 478. Children have to go to the commune center for schooling. However, the illiteracy rate is estimatedly low among the local population. This fact can be explained by the nature of migrating people, who often possess certain level of education to dare leaving their original place for a new area. In term of language, since there is a mixture of different ethnic groups, Vietnamese (*tiếng Kinh*) is widely used in the area. However, languages like Thai, Nung and Tay are also spoken within respective ethnic families.

Culturally, local people are from different places and different ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds. However, since they live together, the prevalent culture in the area is a melting one, i.e. of different groups. In other words, no single group's typical culture dominates in the public places. People from different groups may practice their own custom at home but often celebrate national festivals with other households.

In brief, people living in Cluster 478 are from different places with different cultural background. The main reason that they left their original place for Cluster 478 is an economic one. With the good fertility of the local soil, it is expected that they may thrive on the local land. However, since immigration is not under control of the local authorities, the land use situation becomes a hot issue.

### **3.2 Cham B village in Cu Dram commune, Krong Bong district**

#### *3.2.1 Brief information about Cu Dram commune*

Unlike Ea po commune, which was newly set up in 1989, Cu Dram has been in Krong Bong district before the end of American War. Cu Dram commune center is located 30km away from Krong Bong district center. Road access from district to the commune is good during dry season but is problematic during heavy rainy months (i.e. June to August).

Total physical area of the commune is 15,300ha, of which ~1,000ha (6.5% of the total land) is agricultural land. Only 2% of the agricultural land (20ha) is under paddy rice. Agriculture is the major source of income for local people. Major cash crops are coffee, maize and beans. In 1994, cotton plant was introduced in the commune but failed to survive due to high precipitation in the area. National power network is not yet present in the whole commune, including the commune center. Plan is to provide the commune center with access to power line in the near future.

There are 7 villages in the commune. Total population is 3,807 people living in 729 households. Major ethnic groups are H'mong, Ede, Kinh, Muong and Tay. There are 1,622 people from 276 households from original ethnic groups (mainly the Ede). The others are migrating people from Northern provinces; of which the majority is H'mong people from Lao Cai. The number of H'mong migrants has increased rapidly in the recent years. In 1997, there were only 192 households but at present there are already 292 households. A resettlement project for the migrating people has been approved but the target group covers only 142 households. Except for the place where H'mong people are immigrating in, which is about 20km away from Cu dram commune center, there is no problem with uncontrolled migrants elsewhere in the commune.

### 3.2.2 *Cham B village*

Cham B village of Cu Dram commune is located 85km East-Southeast of Buon Me Thuat, 31km from Krong Bong district center, and 1.5km from Cu Dram commune center. Road system through the village was upgraded in 1997-98. At present, during the dry season the village can be reached by heavy-weight (about 10-12 ton) trucks. During the high rainy months (June to August), however, access to the village is limited to light-weight truck because a suspension bridge from commune center to the village can only tolerate vehicle up to 1.5 ton. In addition, road access from district to commune center is also poor during these heavily rainy months.

Before 1988, people in Cham B and Cham A villages used to live together in Cham village located on the West side of Krong Bong river, near the commune center. In 1988, under a state resettlement program, some households in Cham village moved to the East side of Krong Bong river and set up a new village called Cham B. At the same time, Cham village was renamed Cham A. In other words, in 1988 the original Cham village was divided into Cham A, which remains in the original place, and Cham B, which is located just on the other side of Krong Bong river, about 1km from the original Cham village. Both Cham A and Cham B villages have their own village set-up, which includes village leader, vice leader, youth union, women union, etc..

The ethnic composition of the population in the village is rather homogeneous. There are 41 out of the total 43 households in the village from Ede ethnic group. The remaining two households are the Kinh who came to the village in mid-90s. A question arisen is why there are not so many migrants living in the village though there are a lot of migration going on in the commune.

Total population in the village is 287 people but there are only 68 main agricultural laborers, about ~24% of the total population. This number reflects a high proportion of population outside the working ages. In other words, there are a large number of children and old people among the total population. On average, there are 1-2 main laborers out of 6-7 capita per household. Other grownups in the village are either sick or employed by the state (e.g. for the commune or local school) and are not counted as agricultural laborers.

Agriculture is not the only source of income of the local people. About one fourth of the households in the village receive allowance from the government for having contributed to the success of the Vietnamese revolution. Some people receive retirement pension for their previous service for the state. Some other people get salaries for the jobs they are doing. Altogether, there are about one half of the households in the village with a monthly income from the state, ranging from tens to hundreds of thousand VND.

Soil in the area is mainly grey feralite and sediments with medium texture. Soil quality is medium to poor. There are 86ha of upland field and 28ha of coffee plantation. Paddy fields are also found in the village but only possible for one crop per year. Agricultural production is mainly rainfed. Irrigation is very poorly developed. Only some coffee growers are able to manage water pump for their coffee plantations. However, the use of such pumps has been recently too expensive due to the fall of coffee price at the market.

The main annual crops in the village are beans, maize and rice. Traditionally, Ede farmers mainly cultivated upland rice and cassava. Recently, hybrid maize and beans have been introduced into the area and soon become important cash crops for the local people. However, in comparison to Cluster 478, yield of these crops is often at least 0.5ton/ha less in Cham B while the farm gate price is often lower (see Table 1) due to long distance to the major market places. In contrast to maize and beans, rice is cultivated purely as a subsistence crop. However, supply of rice from the local fields is often insufficient and people have to buy rice from rice supplier in the commune center. In the recent years, rice production area has even gone down due to the expansion of more profitable cash crops and the availability of rice supply at the local market.

Perennial crops in Cham B village include coffee, cashew and fruit trees like avocado, jack-fruit and mango. Coffee and cashew, which were introduced in the village by the end of 80s, are the two major perennial crops in the village. They are now grown in a large part of the village land. Up to now, cashew has been a reliable source of income for the local families thanks to stable market price. However, cashew production is not very high due to low or no re-investment into the existing cashew plantation. In contrast, coffee price and re-investment of farmers into the coffee plantation have been highly unstable. Re-investment from farmers into coffee is dependent on the market price of coffee bean. When the market price went up in mid 90s, farmers took very good care of the coffee plantation. However, since 1999 when the price went down, most of the coffee plantations have been left unattended; many of which have already been cleared for maize and bean cultivation (see Annex 4: Some pictures from the field trips on page 24).

With regard to livestock raising, the animal stock in the village is of medium size. There are 3 buffaloes and 36 cows in the village. Almost every household raises pig and chicken. No fishpond is found in the village but fishing in the nearby Krong Bong river is common. Animal raising is mainly for traction (as for cow and buffalo), for social and cultural rituals and for home consumption. Similarly to Cluster 478, cash income from livestock is almost nil in Cham B village.

Forest resources in the area are abundant. The total forest land under the management of the villagers is 569.2ha, of which 377.7ha are natural forest, including rich, medium and poor timber forest and bamboo forest. However, extraction of timber from local forest by Cham B villagers for house making and other uses is not common. Recently, for example, two new houses were built in the village but their owners paid a lumpsum of money to the builders to build the house instead of collecting wood and building the house themselves. Farmers, however, mainly rely on forest as the source of fuel wood. They collect fuel wood from forest every a couple of days. Conversion of existing forest land into

agricultural land is not popular. With the total of 68 main laborers and 86ha of upland available in the village, the need for more agricultural land is not urgent. Instead, some households even rent out their land to people from other villages for cultivation.

Cham B is a poor village in Cu Dram commune. Although there have been quite a few progresses in the economic situation in the village since the liberation, more than half (22 out of 43) of the households in the village have to get poverty support from the government. In comparison to a Kinh village (Thon 6) nearby, wealth ranking class of households in Cham B is often one level less. That is, a so-called rich household in Cham B is as rich as a medium household in Thon 6 is.

In terms of wealth classes, the differences in a rich and a poor household in the village is characterized by the holding of house, furniture, animals, and coffee land (Tran and Pham 2001). A rich farm household in Cham B often owns a permanent household with tiled or metal roof, a couple of cattle and buffalo a TV, about 1ha or more of coffee, and in some cases, a tractor or a milling machine. Rich families in Cham B have access to both agricultural and non agricultural incomes sources. On the other hand, a poorer household has a temporary house with thatched roof, no TV, no or very few pig and/ or cattle, no buffalo, no or small coffee land. Income of poor households is mainly from agriculture. Their non-agricultural income is often in terms of poverty support from the state. Unlike in Cluster 478 where the time of settlement is influential to the wealth of a household, the differences between rich and poor households in Cham B are basically characterized by the cultural rituals (some households become poor because of the cultural offerings for a passed away family member), large family size, family health status, and settlement period (for newly wed couples).

For health care, family planning, sanitation and related issues, there is only one person in charge of all this tasks in the village. However, due to absence of medical tools and medicine in the village, in case of illness people often seek help from the commune health center or buy medicine from the commune drug store for self-treatment. For serious case, patients are taken to district hospital. The village health worker mainly does the family planning and sanitation work.

With regard to education, there is one school located in the village, which accommodates schooling for children up to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and a nursery for pre-school children. In the commune center, 1.5km from the village, there is a commune school for children up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. About 12km away from the village, in Hoa Phong, there is schooling facility for children to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. For high school education, children have to go to the district center. Most of the children in Cham B go to school but often leave school in or before 5<sup>th</sup> grade. As a matter of fact, many drop-outs become illiterate again after a couple of years. In term of language, local (Ede) language is commonly used in daily life among people in the village. Vietnamese is only spoken to outsiders or at the presence of an outsider.

In terms of culture, since there is homogeneity of ethnic composition in the village the Ede cultural activities are popular. Ede tradition of matrilineal inheritance is practiced. Children bear the family name from mother. Daughters stay with parents after married while sons move to live with their wives' families.

In short, Cham B has a rather homogenous group of Ede people who still maintain and practice their own culture. There is no problem with migrating people in the village, though in the commune as a whole H'mong migrants are of the main concern of the local authority. After many years of settlement, land use situation is stable within the village.

As a summary of the discussion in this section and previous section, it is worthwhile to present a set of major socio-economic characteristics of the two study locations in the following table:

**Table 2 : Summary of socio-economic characteristics of the two study locations**

Characteristics	Cluster 478	Cham B
Land and forest resources:		
• HH major acquisition of land:	from buying	from inheritance
• Forest resources:	degraded	various
• Use of forest resources:	almost open	traditional
• Pressure on forest land:	high	not common
Land and forest allocation:		
• Start and end dates of FLA:	6/99 - on going	3/00 - 6/01
• Type of recipient of FLA:	individual households	groups of households
• Farmers' main interest in FLA:	legal access to cultivated land	reservation of forest resources
• Land use title:	not available for any land types	for agricultural and residential land
• Land transfer/ lease (informal)	common	sometimes
Demography and settlement:		
• Demographic structure:	various groups of Kinh, Thai, Muong, Tay, and others.	homogenous group of Ede (>95% of total households)
• Time of settlement in the area:	various, from late 80s to last several months	since 1988 (from Cham village)
• Migration to the area in recent years	common	rare
Household income sources:		
• From agriculture:	important	important
• From non-agriculture (incl. salary, allowance, pension, etc. from state):	minor	common
Cropping and livestock husbandry:		
• Major annual crops:	beans, cotton, rice	beans, maize, rice
• Major perennial crops:	cashew and some fruit trees	coffee, cashew, fruit trees
• Main animals:	chicken	cattle, pig, chicken
Major constraints to production:	land insecurity, lack of capital	labor shortage, poor access to market
Culture, health care and education:		
• Culture:	various	Ede
• Health care:	no health worker available	one paid health worker
• Education:	no school	school up to 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade
Infrastructure, access to market:		
• Road to the location from district:	above average	average
• Distance to commune center:	4km	1.5km
• Distance to district center:	15km	31km
• Distance to provincial center:	35km	85km

### 3.3 Sample household economic profiles and production strategies

In this section, I will describe production strategies and economic profiles of two households, one in each study area. Though these two profiles are by far the representatives of all households in the study areas, it is expected that they give readers a clearer view of intra-household relationships and production strategies. It is desired that some more profiles from other households in the study areas be presented; however, due to the limit of the study, detailed information about such households was not collected.

*Mr. Think* is a retired army man. He is now 54 and is a black Thai. He moved with his family from Thuong Xuan district of Thanh hoa province into Cluster 478 in 1996. Mr. Think and his wife have 7 children, three of whom are married and live in their own houses also in Cluster 478. There are totally 9 people now in his family: he and his wife, his mother, four children, his brother, and a niece. Except for the old woman and the last two children who are outside the working ages, the rest are all main labor. Mr. Think's brother and niece are, however, only seasonal workers, who join Mr. Think's family during the cropping and harvesting season only.

The reason for Mr. Think's family to leave their homeland and migrate into Cluster 478 is an economic one. According to Mr. Think, he traveled a lot in the central highland when he served in the army and, thus, came to know the area (not exactly where he lives now but the region in general) quite well. In early 1990s, as his children grew up, there was an increasing need for more cultivation land to meet the family's demand for food and cash income. However, the available land in his original place was limited. His first two children made the first visit to Cu Jut in 1994-95 together with other people in his village. Upon inquiring sufficient information about the life in the new area, Mr. Think decided to move the whole family into the new area at the beginning of 1996. During the first months, the family stayed in Ea po communal central area. Later, he bought a piece of land in the place where his house is now located in Cluster 478 and spent time to collect timber around the area for the new house. It took him one year to collect a sufficient amount of timber for a traditional Thai timber house and in 1997 he built a new house.

As for livelihood, agriculture is the most important source. When he moved in Cluster 478, the savings that he brought from Thanh hoa allowed him to acquire about a hectare of land in the new place. Leaving some land for the house, he used the rest for bean cropping. His next acquisition of land was a plot 3km from the homestead, on which he has cultivated bean and cotton since then. By the end of 2000, he was able to buy about a hectare of paddy land and started with paddy cultivation. By now, he has about 3ha of dryland, including the land around the homestead, and 1ha of paddy land. So far, his agricultural income has been mainly from bean and cotton crops. As any other farmers in the area, he cultivates soy and mung beans during the first crop and cotton and mung bean in the second crop on the dryland. In 2000, he decided to make a long term investment on his land by installing 80 pepper poles in his home garden. He plans to plant more pepper and fruit trees in the future when he has land use title for his land.

During the labor peak period, Mr. Think has support from his three older sons and their wives, whose houses are close by. There is often no wage paid for such work but three meals per day are offered. In return, his sons can get help from him for their fields when needed.

There is a light distinction between work by men and by women in Mr. Think's family. Most of the work is shared between men and women. The men in the family also do the housewife work when the women are in the field. However, the harder job like plowing

the land is likely to be done by the men. Production decisions are often made by Mr. Think after open discussion in the whole family.

Although income from agricultural production plays an important role in the household economy, Mr. Think's family also has other sources of income. Being as retired army man, he is entitled to receive a monthly pension from the government. Addition income from honey and hunting becomes less important over time with the depletion of forest resources. In general, with the current assets and low capita/ laborer, Mr. Think's family is among the well-being farms in the area.

*Ama Khoi* is the head of Cham B village. He is 41 years of age and is an Ede man. He lives with his wife and four children, the oldest of whom is 16 years old and the youngest 3. Since he takes a job as a village head, he is only a part time agricultural labor in his family. Consequently, there is only his wife as the main laborer. Ama Khoi has been living in the area since the he got married to his wife. As any other Ede man, he joined his wife's family after the wedding. His home village is about 12km from his current homestead.

Ama Khoi's total land is about more than 2ha, including land area around the house where he planted coffee and some fruit trees, and the upland area with annual crops. Ama Khoi also has access to some cashew trees in the community land in the village, from which a small cash amount can be collected. However, as he quoted out, the cash income from these cashew trees is minor and is only for the kids to buy sweets and cookies.

As for crop production, Ama Khoi has a combination of both perennial and annual crops. Coffee, as the most dominant perennial crop, was an important source of cash income for the family when the market price of coffee bean was high and thus received proper care around the year. Since the fall of coffee price, Ama Khoi cannot afford inputs for coffee plantation and has to leave it unattended. As a consequence, harvest has been low over the last two years. As an alternative, he takes more care of the upland where he plants a combination of beans (mung and white beans) and maize. Pineapples are also planted around the plot boundaries to protect the field and to earn extra income. Since last year, he has spent some effort to convert a piece of dry land at the foot of a hill into one crop rice field. Though the first harvest was not abundant, he plans to irrigate this field with water from the nearby Krong Bong river for the second crop of rice in the year with the hope that improved irrigation give him a better harvest.

As for livestock raising, Ama Khoi's family had quite a few number of livestock heads. In 1999 when his mother-in-law died, most of the animals were slaughtered for the funeral and the subsequent rituals. By now, he has only one cow and a number of pigs and chicken. Income from livestock is minor in his household economy. Most of the animals are raised for home consumption and for traditional rituals.

In terms of labor distribution, there is a clearer distinction between man and woman work inside Ama Khoi's family comparing to Mr. Think's family (in Cluster 478). The housewife work is mostly, if not always, done by the woman. Woman's work also includes collection of fuel wood (though sometimes the children also can help), and taking care of the small children. Man's work includes preparation of land (plowing) for cultivation, and participation in village/ community meetings and activities. However, decision making concerning farm production is often based on the discussion between Ama Khoi and his wife.

Beside agricultural income, Ama Khoi also has monthly income from his job as a village head. Though it is not a significant amount of money and the job takes him a lot of time,

Ama Khoi is happy being the village head as it implies his creditability from his villagers. As for wealth class, Ama Khoi used to be among the well-off farmers. However, the death of his mother-in-law has temporarily turned the family down into an economically medium family. Ama Khoi is positive that his family be better-off again in a couple of years.

## **4 Major findings from the field trips**

The visits to two study locations provided good opportunities to understand the local conditions, resource use and forest land allocation. In this chapter, I will discuss the most important findings from the trips. In section 4.1, I will revisit the issue of immigration in Cluster 478. After that, in section 4.2, cropping patterns in the two study areas are discussed. Finally, in section 4.3 I, will present major findings related to the on-going land allocation process in the two study locations.

### **4.1 Un-controlled immigration and land use situation in Cluster 478**

Uncontrolled immigration in Cluster 478 is a complicated, yet interesting issue. People living in this area are from different places with different culture, traditions, understanding and behavior toward forest resources. Since more people still come, particularly since the start of FLA process (Cu Jut DPC 2001), the existing problems about land use and administration of residential records become more complicated. However, there is also a positive side of having a heterogeneous group of people in the same place. As people with different backgrounds and knowledge are living in one place, they are enabled to learn new things from each other. For example, a Kinh household may learn to farm the upland field from ethnic households. At the same time an ethnic household may want to adopt a certain paddy farming techniques of the Kinh families. Consequently, the local know-how is enriched and the face of local economy diversified.

Nevertheless, continuous inflows of migrating people to Cluster 478, particularly since the beginning of the FLA process, have some negative effects on the land and forest resource use. Based on figure from Table 1, a hectare of upland field can give an average cash return of around 12-15 million VND per year, which is attractive enough for people to get a piece of land in the area. According to Cu Jut SFE, there are about 242ha of upland field (Cu Jut SFE 2001). If this number is divided to 102HHs at the beginning of FLA, an average household will have more than 2ha of upland. However, as the number of households increases to more than 200 at present (Cu Jut DPC 2001), there is an urgent need of upland field for the new comers. The new upland fields are, nevertheless, not cleared by the new comers but mostly by earlier settlers. Very often, new comers have to purchase or rent land from earlier settlers. The latter are then open a new patch of land for cultivation. As a consequence, the expansion of upland is at the loss of forested area. Additionally, as more people come, the need for timber and other forest resources for house construction and for other uses increases. The pressure on the forest resources is, therefore, on the rise.

It is also worthwhile to discuss about the migration pattern of these migrants. By nature, the Kinh, Thai and Muong (the major groups of migrants in Cluster 478) are not well known for their migrating behavior. Actually, they are rather known for their sedentary settlement (and farming). Through informal interviews with the local farmers, it is observed that they do not migrate alone. Normally, a group of several households went together. Group members may have family relationship, such as brothers or sisters, or close friendship. There are some rare cases where individual families moved on their own

to the area without friends or relatives. However, most of them later moved out again to the other district/ province where they have friends or relatives. The early groups of migrants were often guided by a state program, i.e. their travel, departure and arrival were arranged by the state. In addition, they were provided food subsidy for the first 6 months after arrival. By contrast, the later groups (those who moved in after 1994-95) had to organize themselves and did not have support from the state to get started. Nevertheless, absence of state support does not hinder flows of migrants into the area.

But what makes Cluster 478 so attractive that there are so many people coming. As stated early, since the first settlers came by the end of 80s, there have been continuous inflows of migrating people to the area. According to Cu Jut DPC, the number of households in Cluster 478 has increased from 56 to 102 at the beginning of FLA process (1999) to more than 200 households at present (Cu Jut DPC 2001). According to Ea po's leaders, there are two main reasons for people to come. Firstly, soil fertility in the area is very good and the return from cultivation is high. Secondly, as discussed above, migrating people rarely go alone. If a family come to the area and find a good reason to stay, they may also want to bring their friends and relatives. That is why there are groups of households in the same family lineage settled down in the Cluster 478.

However, these explanations are not sufficient to explain the influx of migrants since the start of FLA. One additional explanation is that the numbers of households at the beginning of FLA as quoted by Cu Jut DPC might not be complete. The 56 and then 102 households as quoted by Cu Jut DPC are only the number of households attending the FLA first meetings. There were other households living in the area by that time but did not hear of or could not attend the meetings. These households were not counted and consequently excluded from the number of households living in Cluster 478(?) More discussion about this will be found in Section 4.3 where The organization of FLA implementation process is discussed. Another reason is that when people see the benefits from FLA, they want to bring more relatives and friends to the area in the hope that everyone may get legal ownership for the allocated land and forest.

## **4.2 Subsistence crop production vs. cash crop production**

In the two study areas, the production patterns include both subsistence and cash crops. However, the share of land under each type of crops is different between Cluster 478 and Cham B village. Though in both areas, land under cash crops (beans and maize, and cotton as in Cluster 478) is more than land under subsistence crop (rice), the tendency toward subsistence food production is more clearly observed in Cham B village than in Cluster 478. One evidence is that in Cluster 478 many people can go for only beans and cotton for several years, like Mr. Think-a settler from 1996, without any food crop. Their supply of rice is from the market.

Access to market plays an important role in defining the crop pattern. One of the reasons that people in Cluster 478 plant more cash crops than subsistence crop compared to people in Cham B do is that the former have much better access to market than the latter. Since Cluster 478 is only about 35km from BMT and Cu jut district is located on the road from BMT to Ho Chi Minh city, Cluster 478 can be easily reached by local traders, who buy agricultural products from and/ or sell food and consumer products to local farmers. Access to market by people in Cham B is, on the other hand, comparatively difficult. With 30km of earth road from Cu Dram to Krong Bong, which is prone to flood in peak rainy months (June-August), and access to only light truck under 1.8 ton in rainy season, marketing of farm products for people in Cham B is less favorable. In addition, long

distance to main market (district and province centers and other provinces) makes transport cost a more unfavorable condition to marketing of farm products in Cu Dram in general and in Cham B in particular comparing to Cluster 478 and Ea po commune.

Another condition that affects farmers' preference to cash crop or subsistence crop cultivation is farmers' likelihood to actively participate in marketing of farm products. While most of the inhabitants in Cluster 478 may bring their own harvest to local market for sale, farmers in Cham B village are less actively involved in marketing of their products. Most of the marketing of farm products in Cham B occurs within the village boundary. In other words, farmers in Cham B wait for traders to come rather than bring their products to the market. Consequently, prices that farmers in Cham B get are offer prices rather than negotiated ones. Cham B villagers only bring to market easily perishable products like ripen fruits. Most of their activities in local market are more buying than selling.

Last but not least is the diversification of cash crops. The example of coffee plant during the last two years is persuasive enough to make coffee growers understand that monoculture of one crop is as risky as putting all eggs in one basket. At the moment, many farmers plan to replace their coffee plantation by cashew because price of cashew nut has been quite stable in the recent years. However, if cashew is planted on a large scale in the area, there is no guarantee that cashew price will not fall in the coming years. As a consequence, if farmers only go after the most favored crop, they may end up in a vicious cycle.

### **4.3 The organization of FLA implementation process**

Allocation of natural forest was first experimented in Ea H'leo district of Dak Lak province in 1998. At the beginning of 1998, Ea H'leo State Forest Enterprise (SFE) received a work plan from Dak Lak People's Committee (PPC) and a budget plan from Dak Lak Department of Planning and Investment (DPI) to allocate 1,000ha of natural forest currently managed by the SFE to local households (Tran 2000; Dang 2001). In the fiscal years 1999-2000 the program extended its plan to allocate 7,000ha in 5 new districts: Cu Jut, Krong Bong, Dak R'lap, Ea Kar and Lak (Dang 2001). By the end of 2000, the FLA program basically completed the field work in 8,241.7ha in 6 districts (Dang 2001).

Not only in the two studied locations but also in all other districts where FLA has been carried out, the FLA implementation task lies with the local (district) SFE. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss about the roles of the SFEs which carry out the FLA in Cu Jut and Krong Bong districts. Both of Krong Bong and Cu Jut SFEs are originated from the Dak Lak Union of Forest, Agricultural, and Industrial Enterprises Number I (UFAIE 1). Before FLA, they managed all forest land in the respective districts. At the time Cu Jut and Krong Bong SFEs were under UFAIE 1, their main activities were 1) to protect and manage forest resources, and 2) to design forest exploitation plans, which would be carried out by other units under UFAIE 1. However, under the current time, SFEs mainly focus on work related to the protection and management of forest resources. With the Prime Minister's decision on organizational reform of SFEs (Decision 187/1999/QD-TTg dated 16/09/99), these enterprises become more service oriented.

FLA in Cu Jut started one year earlier than in Krong Bong district. In March 1999, Cu Jut SFE got a plan from the province to allocate Forest Block No 478 (1,137ha) to local people. In the following months in 1999, Cu Jut SFE carried out forest inventory, field survey and mapping and organized meetings with local people. In 01/2000, FLA plan was

approved and a month later, Cu Jut SFE announced the approved plan to Ea po communal authority. In 8/2000, PPC decision to reclaim forest from Cu Jut SFE was ready and in the last quarter of 2000, field allocation of forest land to groups was completed (though farmers' wish is to receive forest individually, FLA went only as far as allocating to groups. It is planned that division of allocated forest among group members will be done later). By the beginning of June when the research team visited Cluster 478, Cu Jut SFE has already signed protection contract to 102 households living in Cluster 478. This contract is an agreement between Cu Jut district and FLA recipient and serves as the base for issuing of land use certificate. However, due to problem with FLA in cluster 478, which will be discussed later in this section, it is not known when RBC is ready to be given to farmer.

FLA in Krong Bong started at the beginning of 2000 when Krong Bong SFE got a plan from Dak Lak PPC to allocate 2000ha of forest under its management to local people. Since no experiences were available in Krong Bong SFE before, they only experiment allocating 1,174ha of forest from Forest Block 1337 to farmers in Cham B and Thon 6 villages of Cu Dram commune. By 2/2001, field allocation of land to groups was completed. In May 2001, an interdisciplinary team from the district went checking the allocated forest. End of June 2001, Red Book Certificates (RBC) for the allocated forest were handed over to recipient groups<sup>2</sup> (see Annex 3: Allocated Forest Land in Cham B village, on page 23).

It is also interesting to understand farmers' perspective about FLA and their dynamics to receive forest. While the purpose of the state in FLA does not significantly change from one to another location, there is quite a difference in farmers' motive to receive forest. In Cluster 478, land use problem is a hot topic, thus, people applied for forest land because they know that they would be entitled to use up to 2ha of land for agriculture. However, since agricultural land is not a problem in Cham B village, farmers are interested in receiving forest because they may use the forest resources in the future. In other words, among the benefits offered by FLA, which include access to agricultural land use and benefits from timber and non-timer products, farmers in different places are interested in different component depending on their existing problems and situation. Though the dynamics to receive forest are different in two locations, they reflect the existing situation in each place.

From the commune point of view, there are different attitudes observed. While the communal leaders in Cu Dram generally express their contentment about FLA and its implementation process, communal leaders in Ea po seem to be indifferent to the implementation of FLA and skeptical about its outcomes. The main reasons for their skepticism are the little involvement of the commune in the process and the slow and stagnant implementation of FLA in the area, which will be discussed in more detail later in this section. Nevertheless, in both communes local authorities are happy with the ideas of FLA and hope that the transfer of forested land from the SFEs to local authorities would lead to better conservation of forest resources and increase household economy.

Generally, four major issues were observed with respect to FLA in two study areas. Firstly, the organization of FLA process does not sufficiently involve the participation of local authorities and functional bodies. In both districts, the main task in the whole FLA

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<sup>2</sup> At the beginning, farmers in Cham B proposed to receive forest in groups and Thon 6 villagers proposed to receive individually. However, later people in Thon 6 changed their mind and request that forest land allocated to them in groups. Their argument is that by receiving forest in group, they can increase their power and save time to go patrolling the allocated forests.

process lies with the local SFEs because they are the strongest forest institution in the area and also because they manage the to-be allocated forest land. The whole process does not give sufficient consideration to the important role of the local (district and particularly commune) authorities and of the other technical institutions in the district. While commune PC is in charge of the local people and their livelihoods and would be responsible for the allocated land in the future, it is not an active participant in the whole FLA process. Instead, commune PC only functions as an invited guest and does not consider the FLA their task. Secondly, farmers' participation in the FLA is limited. This leads to farmers' poor understanding about their rights and benefits from receiving forest. In both locations, local people have the tendency to listen more than to talk and to accept whatever offered from the FLA team rather than to work them out with the FLA team. The root of this problem lies with the approach that the FLA team applied when dealing with local people. Again, an active participation of commune in the FLA process would, to a certain extent, lessen the barrier between FLA team and local farmers and improve farmers' participation. Thirdly, actual FLA process in both study areas overlooks the land use planning. In other words, land use planning was not done before the forest land was actually allocated. This poses a potential problem of land use conflict for the future with not only local land use but also with district and provincial economic development strategy. Fourthly is equity between recipient and non-recipient households in FLA. Though no significant problem is observed at the moment, there is a potential resource use conflict in the future between households receiving forest and households not receiving forest. As in Cluster 478, only 102 out of about 200 households are subject to receive forest while no reserve forest land is left in Forest Block 478. How can the future FLA meet the need of local households who do not have forest yet? There are two options: 1) these households either share allocated land with other households or 2) they have to wait for FLA in other forest block to apply for forest. In both cases, the disadvantages are with the households without forest land.

Although FLA has been carried out in Cluster 478 of Ea po commune for about two years, its outcome is still questionable. In May 2001, Cu Jut DPC proposed to Dak Lak PPC to stop the FLA in Ea Po commune despite of the fact that Cu Jut SFE has already signed forest protection contract to 102 local households. This proposal is based on the examination results of an interdisciplinary evaluation team organized by the DPC. The main reason quoted is that the number of uncontrolled migrants going into the area keeps increasing since the beginning of the FLA, which worsens the land use situation in the area (Cu Jut DPC 2001). There will not be an official answer from the PPC to the proposal until the province has a full description of the FLA process and its problems in Forest Block 478. However, this experience in Ea po serves as a good lesson for the future FLA in other locations.

## **5 Conclusions**

Field trips to the two FLA locations during May and June 2001 were fruitful. Though findings do not give a complete picture of the socio-economic and land use situation in the study locations nor do they describe the whole FLA process and its problems, it is believed that readers can get a brief understanding about the existing situation and problems in the two study areas.

Looking back at the objectives of this preparatory study, which are 1) to gain the first hand knowledge about the physical, socio-economic and cultural conditions and production by the local people, and 2) to familiarize the research team with the FLA and land use situation in the research areas, the field trips serve well to meet the set objectives.

The research team now has a better understanding about the local conditions, about life and production of the local people as well as their perceptions about FLA. The team also gained good understanding about the organization and implementation of FLA. In addition, team members had a good chance to get to know the others, which builds a good ground for future collaboration.

With regard to Cluster 478, the complex situation of uncontrolled immigration is the main reason for the Cu Jut PC to propose for a stop of FLA (Cu Jut DPC 2001). In case Dak Lak PC decides not to do FLA in areas with similar situation, it may not be worthwhile for the research program to "Develop assessment methods for forest land allocation in Dak Lak province" to start with Cluster 478 of Ea po commune. This conclusion is based on the representativeness of Cluster 478 for the FLA areas. If no other FLA areas are similar to Cluster 478, it should not be a starting point for the research area. Instead, it may be included by the end of the research program to enhance the developed methods.

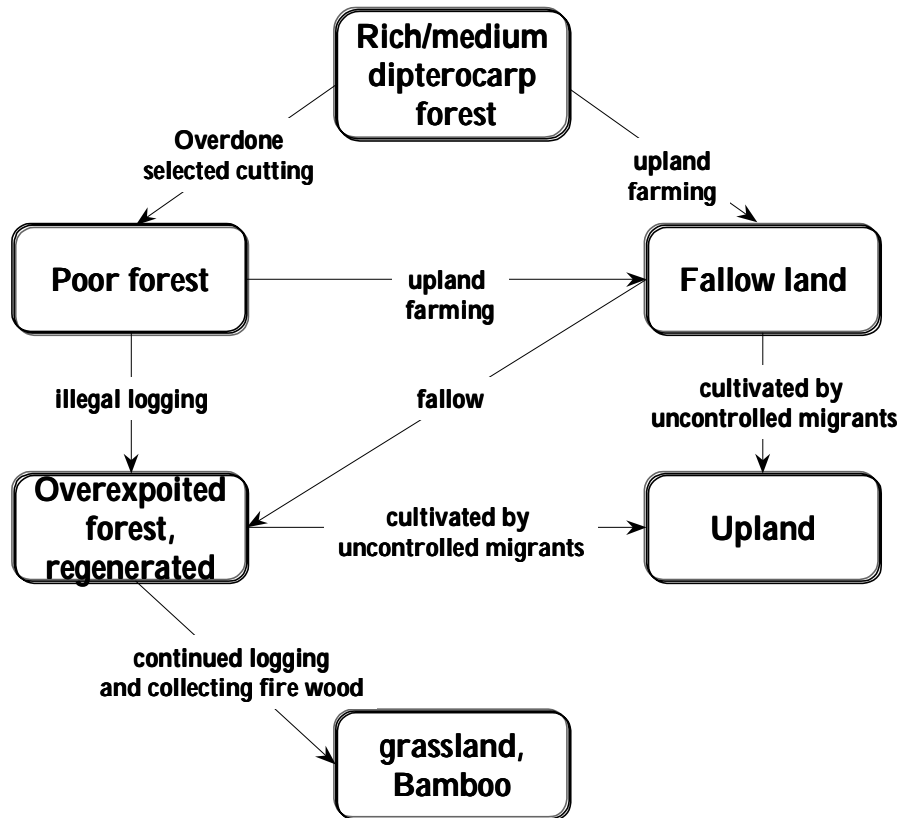
## Annex 1: Work itinerary

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Time	Contents
01 - 08/05/01	Collect information from offices in and around Hanoi, read documents
09/05/01	Travel from Hanoi to Buon Me Thuat
10 - 11/5/01	Prepare in Buon Me Thuat office
12 - 18/05/01	Visit to Cluster 478 in Ea po commune, Cu Jut district
21/5/01	Prepare in Buon Me Thuat office
22 - 27/5/01	Visit to Cham B village, Cu Dram commune, Krong Bong district
28/05/01 - 01/06/01	Prepare preliminary report (in Vietnamese) for the Scientific Support Team (SST)
04/06/01	Work in BMT office, prepare for PRA in village and meet the SST
5 - 6/06/01	Visit to Cluster 478 in Ea po commune, Cu Jut district with SST and MR. Thanh, the fellow researcher. The visit includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Meeting with Cu Jut SFE staff responsible for FLA</li><li>▪ Meeting with Ea po commune authority</li><li>▪ PRA in Cluster 478</li></ul>
07 - 08/06/01	Visit to Cham B village in Cu Dram commune, Krong Bong district with SST and Mr. Thanh. The visit includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Meeting with Krong Bong SFE staff responsible for FLA</li><li>▪ Meeting with Cu Dram commune authority</li><li>▪ PRA in Cham B village</li></ul>
09/06/01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Discuss with SST about the results of the field trip</li><li>▪ Return to Hanoi</li></ul>
11 - 20/06/01	Prepare papers (in Vietnamese) for meeting with SST and NAT
AM 21/06/01	Meet the NAT and SST to present the results of field visits
22 - 25/06/01	Prepare minutes of meeting on June 21 (English and Vietnamese)
26/06/01 - 04/7/01	Write final report (in English)
09/01	Finalize and submit final report

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## Annex 2: Forest changes in Forest Block No 478



Adopted from Bao Huy, 2001

### Annex 3: Allocated Forest Land in Cham B village

<i>Group</i>	<i>No of HHs</i>	<i>Total Area (ha)</i>	<i>Forested Area (ha)</i>	<i>Bare Land (ha)</i>
Group 1	10	149.3	101.6	47.7
Group 2	9	117.5	62.4	55.1
Group 3	7	93	61.9	29.4
Group 4	6	108	79.6	28.4
Group 5	6	101.4	72.2	29.2
<b><i>Total:</i></b>	<b><i>38</i></b>	<b><i>569.2</i></b>	<b><i>377.7</i></b>	<b><i>189.8</i></b>

## Annex 4: Some pictures from the field trips

From Cluster 478 – Ea po commune

From Cham B village – Cu Dram commune



One of the local coffee plantations



There used to exist a coffee plantation here



Once upon a time, there was forest here



Forest resources are still abundant



A tractor working in the field

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