The Potential for Trickle Up: How Local Actors' Experiments Influence National Forest Policy Planning

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in International Environmental Policy

at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
June 2006

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Abstract

The loss of forests in Vietnam encouraged central government policy makers to consider new ways to manage forest resources. A major forest policy shift -- moving away from state-led management -- began in earnest in pilot provinces in 1998, with the handing over of forest land and management responsibility to communities. The initial outcomes of this switch and the policy learning that took place as a result of experimentation with community forestry are examined.

I show that learning from and sharing these experiences contributed to policy-oriented learning and influenced the formulation of new policy. I review how lessons learned from the field (e.g. local experimentation, project learning and bottom-up planning) can redefine national forest policy priorities. I present preliminary lessons from adaptation of methods of forest land allocation, forest protection regulations and community forest management planning. I share experiences from pilot provinces where, with the involvement of policy innovators (local and external), the results led to the development of an enabling legal framework for community forestry, in the new Land Law and Forest Law.

This dissertation suggests how learning from experiments can lead to better policy options in developing countries. I explore the critical roles that development of methodologies (combined with networking and training) play in advancing the lessons learned from the district and province levels in two directions – first, sideways, with study tours between provinces and second, upwards, to the national level. I find that local communities are an essential part of the policy process, but it is critical to keep the government (the People's Committee at different levels) and technical agencies abreast of and thoroughly involved in the policy learning and reform effort. In addition to access to community forest resources, I identify how a different type of ownership, that is generated by a sense of pride in the design of the work and creating the means for such ownership in the process -- is critical to this approach. I show how both mistakes and as well as successful examples are important learning tools.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Jill Blockhus has experience in policy analysis, project management, and research in the following areas:

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She is currently a Natural Resources Management Specialist at the World Bank, where she has worked in various roles over the past 5 and a half years. Her assignments range from working on forest policy reform and analysis, providing technical assistance, supporting the development of Biodiversity Global Environmental Facility projects in Vietnam and Mongolia and coordinating the activities of the Program on Forests (PROFOR).

She spent seven years working at IUCN – The World Conservation Union – where she was responsible for developing and managing three field projects on sustainable use of non-timber forest products in the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam. Jill has extensive field work experience in participatory forest management projects and policy design from Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Jill graduated from Luther College in 1988 with a B.A. in Economics and French. She received a Master of International Economics and Business from the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen, Norway in 1990. In 1996, she received a Master of Public Administration from the Kennedy School at Harvard University. She received her Ph.D. in International Environmental Policy from MIT in 2006. She has valuable teaching experience from Harvard University (in Environmental Economics) and MIT (in Public Policy Disputes and Consensus Building).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This dissertation is the product of many years of great admiration and respect for country bursting with incredibly committed and hard-working people. Vietnam holds a special place in my heart, dating back to my first taste of Vietnamese food as a young child and my first visit in 1992.

I am extremely grateful to my Ph.D. committee for their ideas and support during the multiple stages of my time at MIT: my studies, preparation for my general exams, field work and final writing up. I wish to especially thank Larry Susskind, who was an insightful, generous and kind mentor during the lengthy pause between my field work to end product stage, due to my work schedule and family commitments. Kadi Warner was perpetually full of fantastic ideas and encouragement. Balakrishnan Rajagopal contributed solid and thoughtful comments.

I was blessed with an enormous amount of support and love from many family members and friends during my PhD journey. This effort is dedicated to my parents. I wish to thank the Kilimanjaro crowd for providing a combination of encouragement and distractions. I am particularly grateful to Kristin Little, Jag Bhalla, Patrik Johansson, and Sumila Gulyani for their artful prodding, feeding and coaching over the final six months.

Thanks to a number of people in Vietnam, for supporting my field research and final analysis. I am indebted to Ulrich Apel, Elke Forester, Martin Geiger, Bjoen Wode, Joerg Balsiger, Nguyen Quang Tan, Nguyen Hai Nam, Professor Lung, Dr. Mai and the numerous forest agency staff members and villagers in Son La and Thua Thien Hue provinces.

THE POTENTIAL FOR TRICKLE UP: HOW LOCAL ACTORS' EXPERIMENTS INFLUENCE NATIONAL FOREST POLICY PLANNING

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GUIDE TO FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

5MHRP	Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFN	Asia Forest Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBFM	Community Based Forest Management
CFM	Community Forest Management
CFMP	Community Forest Management Plan
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPC	Commune People's Committee
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
DARD	Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
DFD	Department of Forest Development
DoSTE	Department of Science, Technology and Environment
DNRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
DPC	District People's Committee
EFE	Ea Hleo Forest Enterprise
ETSP	Extension and Training Support Project (SDC)
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FIPI	Forest Inventory and Planning Institute
FLA	Forest Land Allocation
FPC	Forest Protection Contracts
FPD	Forest Protection Department
FMP	Forest management plan
FPR	Forest Protection Regulation
FRA	Forest Resources Assessment
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FSSP	Forest Sector Support Program
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
ha	hectare
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
IUCN	World Conservation Union
JFM	Joint Forest Management
LUPLA	Land Use and Participatory Land Allocation
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOF	Ministry of Forestry
MRDP	Vietnam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Program
NWG-CFM	National Working Group on Community Forest Management
NGO	Non governmental organization
NTFP	Non timber forest product
NWFP	Non wood forest product
ODA	overseas development assistance
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PC	People's Committee
PFRA	Participatory Forest Resource Assessment

PLFIS	Phu Loc Forest Inspection Station
PPC	Provinical People's Committee
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning
PRA	Participatory Rural Apprasial
PROFOR	Program on Forests
RBC	Red Book Certificate
RDDL	Rural Development Dak Lak Project (GTZ)
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Center
REFAS	Reform of the Forestry Administration project (GTZ)
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SFDP	Social Forestry Development Project (GTZ)
SFE	State Forest Enterprise
SFM	sustainable forest management
SNV	Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers
SMRP	Sustainable Management of Resources Project (GTZ funded)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
USD	United States Dollar
VDP	Village Development Planning
VND	Vietnamese Dong
VSO	Volunteer Service Overseas
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCFSD	World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development
WFC	World Forestry Congress
WFP	World Food Program
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam (until the late 1990's) forest policy was determined by direct state involvement in the management, exploitation, processing and distribution of the country's forest resources. State policy often placed local users of forest resources in direct conflict with state managers. By excluding local residents from access to forests, this policy separated them from a resource that was a crucial source of marketable and subsistence goods. Forest protection staff used a strict deterrence system based on fines to punish villagers' use of the forests (Poffenberger, 1999). The state was often unable to enforce its legal restrictions and saw local people as a threat to forest protection. Further, villagers[1] were unhappy when forest protection staff denied them rights to forest resources.

It was apparent as of the late 1980's that Vietnam's forestry sector was in a crisis. The Ministry of Forestry classified ten million out of 19 million hectares (52%) of designated forestland as "barren" due to its highly degraded status. After two large national reforestation programs failed to reverse this status, the government recognized it was at a crossroads and sought advice from non-traditional policy partners, including donor agencies and NGOs.

One potential solution was to hand the forests over to communities and individual households for management. This research explores how a centralized planning country like Vietnam used experimentation with decentralized forest management models. Specifically, I look at ways in which forest policy making can be shaped or informed through a bottom-up approach to piloting and learning from experimentation.

Previous reforestation schemes in Vietnam focused on top-down and target-based approaches, without paying heed to flexible solutions or incorporating innovative lessons from field implementation. The premise for this dissertation topic is that many state-led attempts to reforest have failed where the agenda of the state was not aligned with that of local community needs. In countries where reforestation has been successful, it has been combined with community forestry, which broadly provides for local control over forest management, encourages local participation in defining needs and setting priorities for development and encourages local participation in implementing solutions (Jackson and Ingles, 1995).

This introduction begins with a discussion of policy making as traditionally carried out in Vietnam (and more broadly in many developing countries). Next, it presents policy evolution and the potential for learning from local experimentation. It closes with a brief summary of the scope of my study.

Forest Policy Making in Vietnam: past practice

In Vietnam, a very limited number of people are usually involved in the policy making process. The Prime Minister and his close advisors (top party members) decide which policies are adopted. High level central ministry staff are involved in formulating the technical aspects of certain policies. However, the Prime Minister himself and the Party elite (higher echelon of the National People's Committee), based on technical guidance from government forestry officials, maintained full control over the nature and structure of official forest policy.

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[1] On one field visit, I found that women were angry about their expulsion from a forest where they formerly gathered fuelwood. They were incensed about the current crackdown from forest protection units, yet they felt that they were incapable of waging any type of a formal complaint to a higher authority.

Previously, advocates (national or foreign) were not part of the national forest policy process. Draft legislation and policy documents were circulated within the central offices of MARD (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), which includes the Forestry Division, represented by the Forest Development Department, Forest Protection Department, Forest Inventory and Planning Institute and the Forest Policy Group. The very top officials in these agencies were responsible for technical reviews of draft policies, setting targets and establishing parameters for ten year planning processes.

THEORIES OF POLICY MAKING AND POLICY REFORM

Influential actors and policy reform

The natural resource management literature suggests that certain groups, particularly in developing countries, have a disproportionate effect on policy (important individuals, top committees with oversight for policy creation or important timber corporations) (Mayers and Bass, 1999; Schmidt, Berry and Gordon, 1999). Similarly, much of the policy making literature concentrates on the role of significant actors – such as presidents or prime ministers, prominent leaders in Congress or Parliament, influential judges or top-level bureaucrats (Neustadt, 1990; Kelman, 1987; Wilson, 1989; Allison, 1971). While these actors may be responsible for setting the policy agenda, other actors are responsible for ensuring that specific programmatic actions are adopted and implemented. Typically, policy is adopted and implemented by policy elites in bureaucracies and specialist agencies. The literature states that only important people – with a certain title or status – have the capacity to inform, shape and reform national policy.

The Center-Periphery model

One conventional view is that public policy is formed as a rational process at the central level and then sent out to the periphery. This view sharply distinguishes the development of new policy from its implementation, with inquiry into new policy seen as the primary responsibility of the central government, while implementation consists of imposing policies on a set of peripheral local agencies.

According to Schon:

> In spite of the language of experimentalism, government acts as though the process of invention and adaptation came to an end once a new policy had been legitimized (Schon, 1971:121).

This top-down or center-periphery model anticipates that policy application at the periphery is uniform. However, this idea "meets counter pressure for local participation, autonomy, and control by the users" (Schon, 1971: 188).

Figure 1 (found at the end of the introduction) illustrates how the center-periphery model of policy implementation applies to Vietnam (or other developing countries). Policy is issued by the central government, with the understanding that policy implementation will occur at the various levels – the provincial, district, commune or village level as appropriate. In some cases, mass organizations[2] are expected to implement certain elements of a particular policy directive.

[2] Mass organizations in Vietnam include the Women's Union, Farmer's Association, Youth Union and Fatherland Front, all affiliated with the state Party system.

The center-periphery model would instigate policy reform in a linear fashion. Grindle and Thomas (1991) suggest that according to this view, a proposed reform gets on the agenda for government action, a decision is made on the proposal, and the new policy or institutional arrangement is implemented, either successfully or unsuccessfully. Figure 2 (found at the end of the introduction) shows the decision tree diagram representing this model. This model strays little from the center-periphery model, where implementation consists of simply carrying out the task at hand.

An interactive model of policy reform

An alternative interactive model of policy reform recognizes that the situation may involve other actors and be more dynamic than the linear model suggests. This begins with the recognition that reform issues may be placed on the policy agenda by policy elites. Once decisions are made, certain policy reforms are presented and taken up for consideration by policy makers. The authorization process occurs after various bureaucratic institutions have been consulted. This model (depicted in Figure 3 at the end of the introduction) allows for a limited amount of public response to the proposed change. Grindle and Thomas state that the

> Characteristics of the reformist initiative have a powerful influence on whether it will be implemented as intended or whether the outcome will be slightly different. Moreover, the distribution of the costs and benefits of a policy or institutional change, its technical complexity, its administrative intensity, its short or long term impact, and the degree to which it encourages participation determine whether the reaction or response to the initiative will occur primarily in a public or bureaucratic arena (Grindle and Thomas, 1991:126).

Further, policy characteristics have an impact on the resources that policy elites (policy makers in this case) and implementers (policy managers) request for pursuing the reform objectives. This model sees outcomes as dependent upon the resources mobilized by policy makers and that managers used to sustain the reform efforts.

Policy innovation

Although the application of general stages theory[3] has been largely abandoned, the role of policy innovators, in my view, emerges as one of the most useful elements of the stages theory-based studies. Many of the implementation studies illustrate how policy innovators, typically based in local implementing agencies, use technical or local knowledge to alter the nature of policy implementation (Schon and Rein, 1994; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979). These policy innovators impact future policy formulation, by bringing to bear experiences which ground the policy in local realities and strengthen the case for local interpretation and adaptation.

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[3] In the 1950s, Lasswell introduced the influential stages theory, as a conceptual map or sequential progression through the various stages of policy making and/or the decision process. Lasswell (1956) categorized these stages as: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination and appraisal. This listing of stages was revised in the mid-1970s to become: initiation, estimation, selection, implementation, evaluation and termination (deLeon in Sabatier, 1999). Another common classification of stages includes: agenda setting, decision-making, implementation and evaluation) in the policy making process (Kingdon, 1994).

Schon (1971) speaks about diffusion of innovation as the dominant model for transforming societies, thereby evoking a climate for reform. He stipulates that what precipitates change is a disruptive event or powerful sequence of events which sets up demand for ideas in good currency. A broad diffusion of these ideas depends upon the influence of the ideas, communication of ideas, and interpersonal networks – such as advocacy coalitions. Thus, reform is initiated in response to a crisis and disruptive evidence may surface that is incompatible with accepted theory. Often times, certain actors play vanguard roles, by making the public aware of new ideas. A creation of new awareness demands the diffusion of ideas. These new ideas need to be legitimized in order to be accepted into public policy and this requires the approval of administrators or other notable persons who confer authority (Schon, 1971).

My research illustrates the critical contribution of new actors and new ideas. In Vietnam, advocates (armed with lessons from field testing), rather than the Party elite, clearly helped to reshape forest policy. My case study suggests that others besides key leaders can influence policy making. I merge the idea of policy innovators with that of policy advocates to analyze my case. This theory, and my departures from it, are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Research Approach

My primary research question is: How did local forest management change forest practice and policy in Vietnam?

In order to answer this question, I investigated community forestry[4] pilots in three provinces. My study reviews the state of affairs in forest policy as of 2005, and compares the current circumstances to a period stretching from 1992 to 1998. The new policy (as of late 2005) embraces a significant departure from the state-led, highly centralized approach to forest policy making. Further, strides to advance the social and environmental agendas with respect to forest policy have been made.

My study explores whether a trickle up process is occurring, as many of the lessons from these field sites are shared with decision makers. I show that learning from and sharing these experiences is contributing to policy-oriented learning[5] and influencing the formulation of new policy. I review how lessons learned from the field (i.e. local *experimentation*, project learning and bottom-up planning) can redefine national forest policy priorities.

My dissertation tells the story of Vietnam's attempts at reforestation, examines critically the various ways community forestry pilots emerged and explores the conditions affecting national forest policy change. I trace the learning process between the local and national levels where

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[4] According to a comparison between conventional forestry and community forestry by Jackson and Ingles (1995), community forestry: provides for local control over forest management; encourages local participation in defining the needs and setting priorities for development; encourages local participation in implementing solutions; provides directly a local source of funds for community development and strengthens local links between development and forest conservation. Conventional forestry does not guarantee any of these conditions.

[5] Following Heclo, policy-oriented learning refers to the "relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and are concerned with the attainment (or revision) of policy objectives" (1974:306).

community forestry pilots have been successful in adopting new methodologies and creating legislation to support community forestry at district and provincial levels. I look at how experimentation and sharing of project lessons led not only to the creation of new provincial policies, but also to the dissemination of these ideas to national forest policy discussions.

The purpose of my research is two-fold. One purpose is to analyze how advocates can bring lessons and experiences from local projects to influence national policy making. This research may contribute to understanding of natural resource policy making in developing countries. If national governments allow for experimentation and learn from these experiments, they contribute to systematic learning. The potential benefits of this learning could lead to the adoption of a national policy or program that appropriately reflects variations or differences within the country. Learning can also lead to institutional strengthening, whereby implementation is based on practical lessons rather than simply relying on top-down directives.

My second purpose is to show how Vietnam may provide findings and lessons on how other countries can tackle a number of difficult problems. These lessons include linking poverty reduction with forest initiatives, creating incentives for farmers to participate in restoration and tree planting on farms, and bringing lessons from the field to enable effective planning for sustainable forest management and policy reform.

Structure of the Dissertation

The next chapter (Chapter 1) tells the story of forest management in Vietnam before and after 1998. Chapter 2 traces the emergence of community forestry around the world. Chapter 3 begins with an overview of my research design and techniques. Chapter 3 also provides an analysis of policy learning in three provinces (Dak Lak, Son La and Thua Thien Hue) in terms of forest land allocation, development of forest protection regulations and benefit sharing schemes. Chapter 4 suggests a model for policy learning and looks at how province level experiments contributed to development of community forestry elements in the new Land and Forest Laws. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of what can be learned from all this about natural resource policy change.

Figure 1: Center-periphery model of Policy Implementation in Vietnam

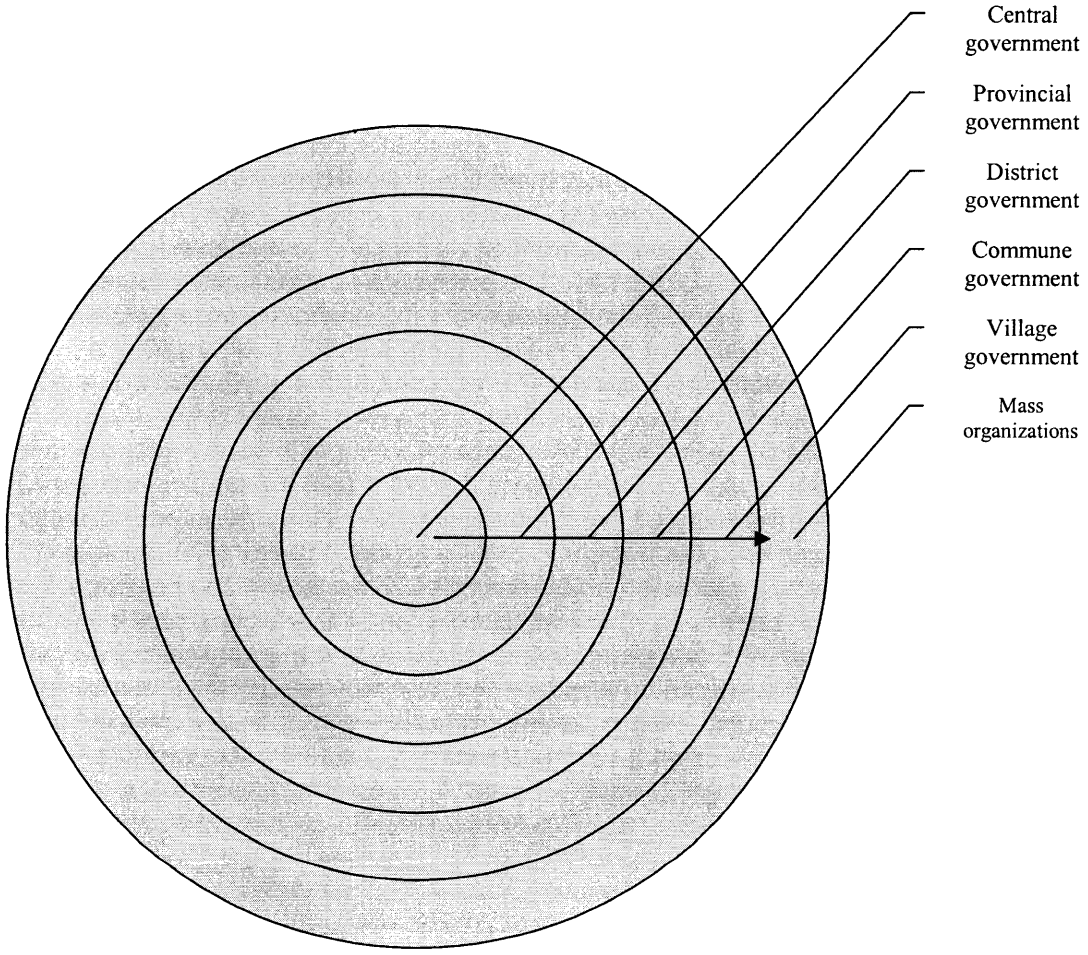
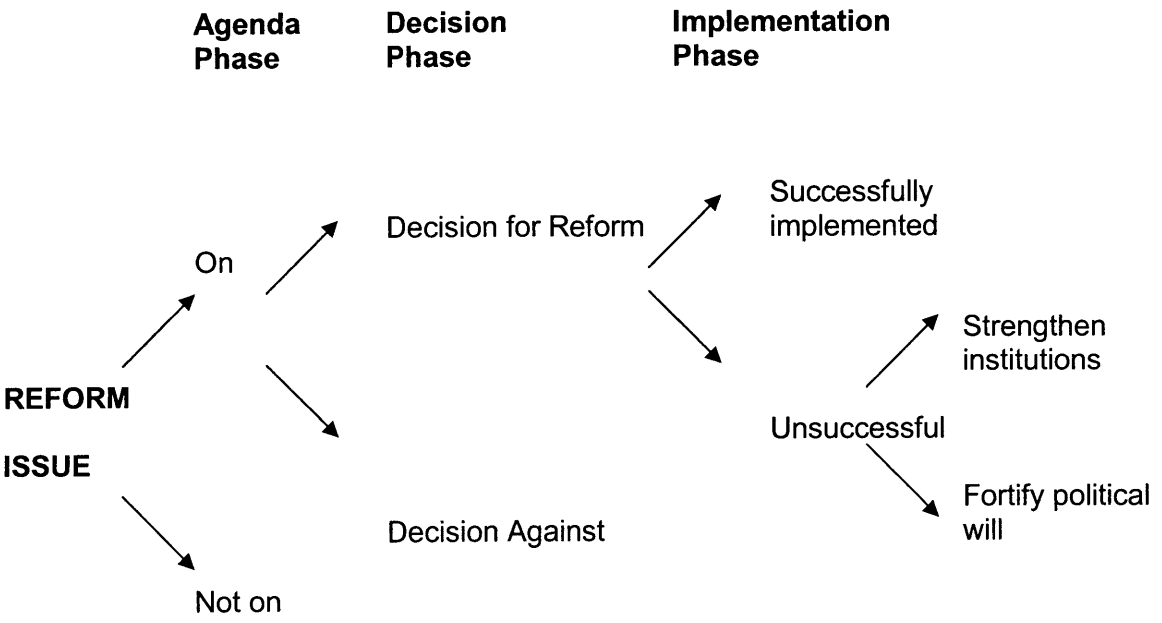
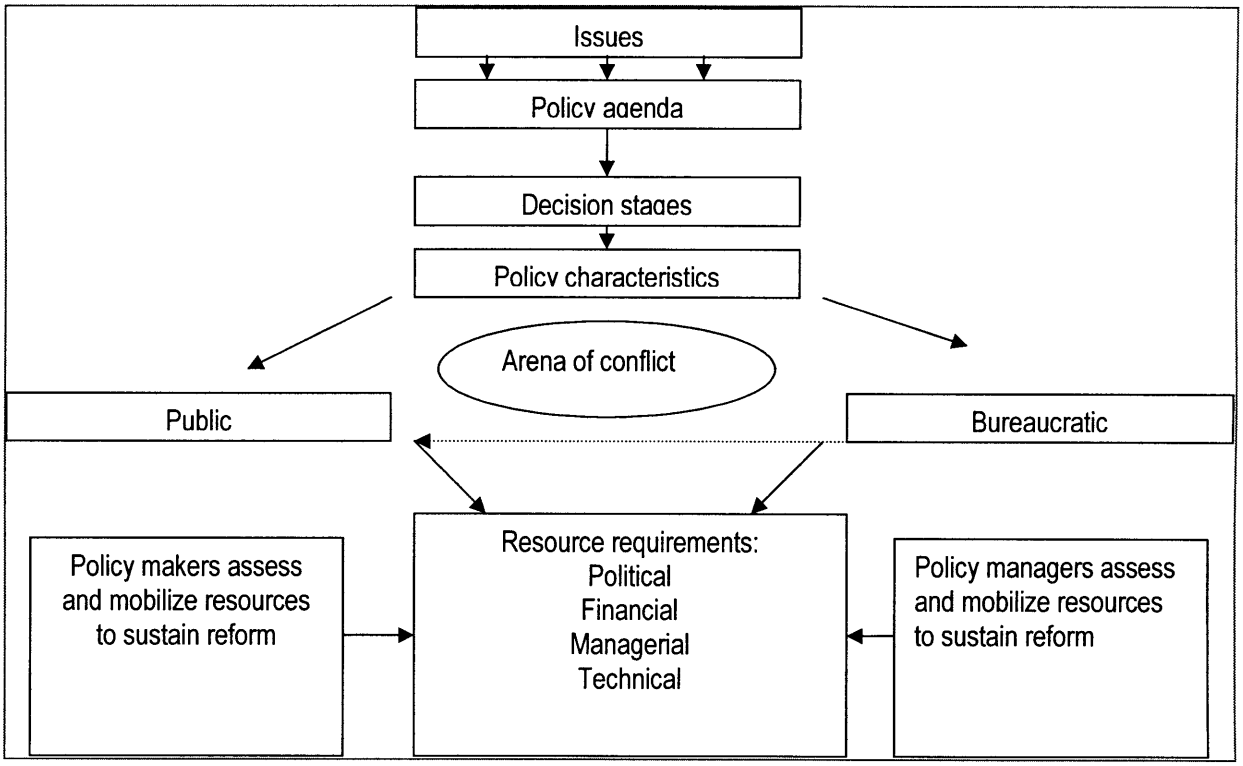


Figure 2: The Linear Model of Policy Reform



(Source: Grindle and Thomas, 1991)

Figure 3: An Interaction Model of Policy Reform
(Source: Grindle and Thomas, 1991)



CHAPTER II: HISTORY OF FOREST DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM: POLICY RESPONSES AND RESULTS

> Much of the progress of human civilization has been made possible by the conversion of some forest areas to other uses, particularly for agricultural expansion (Shivenko *et.al.*, 2005: 584).
>
> If the Vietnamese government does have the will to cope with the forest challenge, that is, the will to implement policies to support the optimal use, protection, and rehabilitation of the dwindling forest heritage, it is imperative that the government reexamine its own policies of commercial forest exploitation and, even more, those of agricultural expansion (De Koninck, 1999: 47).

These quotes reflect the two main views currently at play in Vietnam's land use decisions, given that arable land has become a limited resource.[6] Each view poses the question of how much forest should be converted for agricultural purposes and how much forest should be rehabilitated and protected. Since 1988, the allocation of land (formerly owned by state collective farms) to farmers has resulted in rapidly increasing agricultural production and unprecedented economic growth. In moving from a collectivized system to a market-based system for land resources, and given the ambitious reforestation targets set by the government in the 5 Million Hectare Reforestation Program, important implications arise for rural households in natural resource management.

Nguyen and Gilmour (1999) suggest that the recent economic reforms permitting forest land allocation to households and communities, combined with the poor results of Program 327 and a movement to decentralize forest administration activities sparked an interest in exploring new arrangements for forest management. The continuing loss of forest (described in this chapter) encouraged central government policy makers to consider ways of transferring responsibility for forest establishment, protection and management to households and other groups in society. Perhaps the most critical of these new issues tied to changing forest ownership relates to access and use rights over forests.

This chapter briefly traces the history of Vietnam's state-led forest policy, initially from the mid-1970's until 1998. It notes the significant changes occurring in the rural economy throughout the 1990's, including the hand over of agricultural land to individual households. This provides the context to discuss the major forest policy shifts --beginning in earnest in provinces in 1998 -- with the handing over of forest land and management responsibility to communities and individual households. It progresses to review the initial outcomes of this process, prior to discussing the impetus for change in the forest sector in general, and the rise of experimentation of community forestry models.

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[6] Vietnam has a land area of 33 million hectares and a population of over 80 million people. The population is concentrated in the fertile lowlands, where average densities are in excess of 1000 per km^2 in several provinces. Nearly two thirds of the country is mountainous and relatively sparsely populated, with an average of some 60 inhabitants per km^2. Estimates suggest that 24 million people live in or close to forest areas, thus depending on forests for their livelihood.

In this first section, the forest management crisis in Vietnam is described, along with possible causes of forest loss, the policy responses and their results up to 1998, including major national reforestation efforts.

From 1975 to 1985

The Department of Forestry assumed responsibility for national supervision of forest planning and production when the Act on Forest Protection passed in 1975. This Act set policy on forest exploitation, forest management, replanting and protection against diseases and fires.

The Department of Forestry, under the Ministry of Agriculture, was promoted to become the Ministry of Forestry (MOF) in 1976. The government's aim to achieve surplus cash crops in the agricultural sector spilled over into the forestry sector. The Ministry's goals were to increase forest production and support national defense. Virtually all forestry production was under state control, resulting in over-exploitation, when production quotas were set to reach state targets, rather than to take into account the productive capacity of the forests (MOF, 1991).

By the mid-1980's, Ministry of Forestry staff saw the steady decline of forest ecosystems and forest management priorities shifted to include protective and environmental features.

From 1986 to 1998

By the late 1980's, Vietnam's forestry sector was in crisis. The Ministry of Forestry classified ten million out of 19 million hectares (52%) of designated forestland as "barren" because of its degraded status or use for the cultivation of food crops and grazing of livestock. In 1991, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan rang alarm bells suggesting that the natural forest resources of Vietnam were unable to produce the timber required by the wood processing industry in a sustainable fashion, even if managed properly (MOF, 1991).

Forest cover decreased in Vietnam from 67% to 28% of total land area between 1943 (14 million hectares) and 1997 (9.1 million hectares) (Fortech, 1998). The largest loss of forests occurred from the late 1960's to the late 1980's, when forested areas fell from 181, 500 square kilometers (or 55 % of total land area) in the late 1960's to 56,680 square kilometers (or 17 % of total land area) in the late 1980's. De Koninck (1999) ranks Vietnam's loss (of two-thirds of its forest cover) as the most rapid case of deforestation among Southeast Asia countries (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Southeast Asia: area and changes in forest cover, late 1960's to late 1980's.

Area covered with forest					
Country	Total area (km^2)	Late 1960's		Late 1980's	
		(km^2)	(%)	(km^2)	(%)
Cambodia	181 000	135 750	75	113 250	63
Indonesia	913 000	1 422 909	74	1 179 140	62
Laos	237 000	165 900	70	124 600	53
Malaysia	330 000	273 047	83	200 420	61
Myanmar	677 000	440 050	65	311 850	46
Philippines	300 000	150 000	50	66 020	22

Thailand	513 000	256 500	50	149 600	24
Viet Nam	330 000	181 500	55	56 680	17
Source: De Koninck (1999) summarizing several data sources: IGA (1969); Weltforstat Atlas (1971); Whitmore (1984); Collins (1990); Collins *et. al.* (1991).					

In 2000, approximately 30 percent of the total land area of Vietnam was legally classified as forest and under the jurisdictional authority of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).[7] Ecologically, only part of this area consists of actual forest vegetation, with the total forest cover having declined steadily throughout the twentieth century and accelerating in recent decades.[8]

Causes of forest loss

Nguyen and Gilmour (1999) attributed the underlying causes of deforestation and degradation in Vietnam to rural poverty, insufficient arable land, land tenure policies and limited and inappropriate institutional capacity to protect forests. They considered immediate causes of forest loss to be due to: population expansion in forest areas,[9] fuelwood collection, poor logging practices, illegal logging, harvesting of non-timber forest products,[10] fires, damage from several wars and development activities (such as the construction of roads, dams and the provision of new lands for agriculture and human settlement).

De Konick's study on deforestation (1999) cited the impact of the wars (which devastated the country from 1945 to 1975); high rates of population growth, (which until recently was above 2% per annum); high population density, about 235 inhabitants/km^2 (among the highest in Southeast Asia, apart from Singapore); widespread inefficiency in the management of resources, linked to little coordination between different levels of governments; a prevailing national policy of economic growth at all costs; and excessive reliance on forest resources, notably for energy production.

Results of policy and implementation efforts

[7] A government estimate in 2000 was 9.8 million hectares or 30.2 percent of total land area, suggesting a large increase from the estimates given for forest cover in the late 1980's. "Estimates vary greatly about forest cover and differences are generally along the lines of whether they are used to draw attention to rapid deforestation, or conversely, whether they are being used to show that reforestation targets are being achieved" (Sunderlin and Huynh, 2005:3). According to the most frequently quoted sources, between 1943 and 1993 the proportion of the national territory covered by forests declined from at least 43% to 20% (Vo Quy 1996) or even to as low as 16% -- the various estimates differ somewhat, depending on the authors and their respective sources. "Some observers go as far as claiming that the proportion of Vietnam still covered by forests has now fallen below 10%" (De Konnick, 1999:8).

[8] Approximately 6.8 million hectares of officially classified "forest land" has no current forest cover (World Bank, 2004a). According to Government forestry officials, of the 9.1 million hectares of forest, only 1.5 million hectares are considered to be in good condition.

[9] Population expansion and increasing consumption are important factors driving forest clearing and timber utilization. Since 1921, Vietnam's population grew from 15.6 million to 75 million in 1998, and 78 million in 2000. Rates of growth have been disproportionately higher in the upland regions where much of the country's forests are located due to the combined effects of natural increase and migration.

[10] Items like bamboo, rattan, resins, nuts, fruit, bushmeat and medicinal plants which come from the forest.

The policy responses to the forest loss and devastation were threefold, curbing exports and logging; prohibiting migration into forest areas; and promoting an aggressive program of plantation establishment to compensate for the declining productivity of natural forests.

Closing natural forests to logging and an export ban

The continuous loss of natural forests resulted in 1991 in a ban on the export of unprocessed logs. Decision 18 (1992) put in place a hunting ban and Decision 77 (1996) mapped out the penalties for forest violations on protection and management regulations. The Prime Minister issued a decree banning all natural forest logging and instructed MARD to prepare a plan to "close" all natural forests as of 1997.

The plan to close the natural forests merely succeeded in reducing the annual harvested volume, as MARD recognized that Vietnam could not fund the timber imports required to replace wood from its own forests. By curbing harvests in natural forests, many jobs in logging operations and wood processing were lost. Reforms were introduced to reduce central government funding of State Forest Enterprise (SFE) operations, and thereby reduce the harvested volume.[11] However, even in 1998, SFEs were lobbying MARD to allow higher levels of commercial logging (World Bank, 1998).

Controls on spontaneous migration

In 1997, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development forbade all forms of spontaneous migration into forest areas (*Viet Nam News*, 8 June 1997). However, there was no mention of state-sponsored agricultural expansion or the policy to settle ethnic Vietnamese into traditionally ethnic minority areas, both of which were driving much of the migration. According to De Koninck:

> On the contrary, this [agricultural expansion] seems to be vigorously encouraged, as new areas are being opened -- primarily in the Central Plateaus but also in Dong Nai province and even in some coastal provinces -- for cultivation of export crops. Among these coffee and rubber predominate. In fact, both of these crops are the object of extremely ambitious programs, which in the case of rubber includes a planned expansion from some 290,000 hectares in 1996 to 750,000 hectares by 2005 (De Koninck, 1999: 47).

National Reforestation Programs

Vietnam initiated the first of a series of substantial national reforestation programs -- Program 327, known as 'Greening the Barren Hills Program' in 1992. This program (which ran until1995) aimed at replanting, reforesting cleared land, protecting the remaining natural forests and encouraging sedentarization (to reduce slash and burn farming). From 1995 to 1998, Program 556 brought only slight modifications to Program 327, by creating more protected areas and offering Forest Protection Contract (FPC) payments[12] to farmers to replant trees and protect existing forests.

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[11] In 1998, the annual harvested volume was reduced to 350,000 cubic meters, down from just over 1 million cubic meters in 1997. The plan was to reduce this volume in subsequent years to 300,000 cubic meters (World Bank, 1998).

[12] Payments were up to 50,000 Vietnamese dong (roughly 3 dollars) per hectare per year.

In 1998, the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program (also referred to Program 661) sought to increase forest cover from roughly 9 million hectares (or 28 percent forest cover) to 14.3 million hectares (or 43 percent forest cover) by 2010 (MARD, 1996). With support from the Asian Development Bank and other donor agencies, approximately 5 million hectares of land was designated for reforestation, primarily through the planting of exotic species.

However, after nearly a decade of national and international investment in reforestation efforts, these target-driven efforts provided limited positive results to report. The area of natural forest continued to decline and forest plantation survival rates remained extremely low.[13] Survival rates were low because the seedlings were of very poor quality and very little site-to-species matching occurred. De Koninck (1999) points out that despite the high profile government goal to increase forest cover, the rate of reforestation remains well below that of deforestation.[14]

And these forests were far less productive (in terms of biomass and biodiversity) than natural forests. There was great concern among foresters and ecologists that these reforestation schemes were overlooking the potential for natural regeneration (or even assisted regeneration) of degraded forests.

A review of Program 327 (Fortech, 1998) showed that extra-sectoral influences -- such as agricultural policies, land allocation policies, migration policies, environmental considerations and poverty programs -- were not adequately taken into account during implementation and therefore vital economic, social and environmental factors were not addressed.

The Program 327 Review suggested that top-down reforestation schemes were proving unsuccessful (Fortech, 1998; Nguyen and Gilmour, 1999). Reforestation efforts focused on achieving targets with a strong biophysical bias. Program designers determined the selection of tree species,[15] while little attention was given to the multiple roles of trees or the species valued by local populations. Community involvement was limited to enlisting rural households to undertake subsidized contracts to replant forests. Seedlings and inputs were provided without technical assistance from extension agents.

Program 327 was guided by restrictive conditions, mandating only afforestation activities, and not allowing harvesting for subsistence. Further, it was not recognized by policy implementers that they were promoting tree planting on areas needed for local food security (and in some cases, the sites selected encroached on existing farming lands). Farmers had insufficient

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[13] In the earlier reforestation programs, planning techniques were most extensive with very low investment, poor species-site matching and poor quality seed. This usually resulted in poor establishment (less than 50% survival), low growth rates, and high occurrence of diseases. In recent years principles have been developed to improve the matching of species with sites, and along with better attention to planting technique, this has resulted in an improvement in the survival rate to 70% (Nguyen and Gilmour, 1999).

[14] According to Vo Quy and Le Thac Can (1994), by the mid-1990's, the annual replanting rate reached 100,000 to 160,000 ha, against 200,000 ha being deforested. If this rate of deforestation were constant, the forests of Vietnam would recede by more than 200,000 ha/year. And as estimate of the proportion of the country still forested in 1997 vary between 10 and 20 percent or on the order of 3.3 million and 6.6 million ha. According to De Koninck (1999) the national annual rate of deforestation stands between 3 and 6 percent.

[15] Most replanting programs have so far relied on single-species plantings and in several cases on ill-adapted species of the eucalyptus type.

incentives to plant forests and frequently had to choose between reforesting and planting crops to feed their families (Sikor, 2001). [16]

By the late 1990's and into the early 2000's, a two track system -- with some measures of handing over responsibility to households for forest management and other measures of tightening control – prevailed. According to Apel *et. al.* "Logging bans, hunting bans, increasingly draconian fines, and expanded enforcement agencies had the goal of increasing state control over the use of forest resources" (2002: 130).

The effect of *Doi moi*[17] policies

Recently Vietnam has ranked as one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world -- with an average growth rate from 1992 to 1998 of 8.4 per cent. Through the economic restructuring program of *Doi moi*, the government undertook macroeconomic and selected structural policy reforms to accelerate a transition to a market-oriented system.

Before adopting major economic reforms in 1986, the state controlled all of the land and natural resources and virtually all production activities. The state allocated equipment and raw materials for production and organized agriculture under a collective system. The state was responsible for the distribution of agricultural products and consumer goods for personal consumption. Prices were established by the state planning agency, state-created monopolies dominated industry and jobs were guaranteed. After many years of centralized planning, severe economic and social problems erupted in the 1980's.

At the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party, *Doi moi* was adopted and steps were taken towards a market economy.[18] Major reforms began in the financial sector, state owned enterprises and the agricultural sector. Price reforms, along with a general reform of the macroeconomy, were undertaken in order to integrate Vietnam into the international economy. These policies led to rapid growth in GDP -- between 1992 and 1998, agricultural GDP grew by 4.5 per cent, industrial GDP by 13 per cent and GDP in services by 8.3 per cent (World Bank, 2000).

A major component of *Doi moi* was the change from collectivized agricultural production to household based production. Agriculture sector reform began with the dismantling of collectives in 1988 and land was distributed amongst farming households. In 1993, a new Land Law[19] clarified that people had the right to use the land distributed to them for 20 years and this right could be renewed.[20] Households were allowed to sell or mortgage the right to use their lands. In 1998, an amended and supplemented Land Law stipulated further the rights and obligations for

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[16] In addition, planners made no attempt to analyze the processes and mechanisms that lead to deforestation. Instead, there is a tendency to simply refer to the various reforestation programs, presumably under the assumption that these programs are likely to compensate for the current forest retreat.

[17] *Doi moi* translates to economic renovation in English.

[18] The Politburo's Decree 10 (April 5, 1988) on Renovating Agricultural Management helped to change the way agriculture was practiced.

[19] In the course of the renovation process, the Land Law has been adjusted three times. The Land Law of 1988 provided the background for the recognition of households as independent economic units. Land was initially allocated to households for 15 years. The 1993 Land Law allowed long term usufruct rights (these rights include the right to exchange, transfer, lease, mortgage and pass on land for inheritance) certified with a red book certificate.

[20] Provided the land is used according to the purposes stipulated in the law.

households, and set national land allocation targets against a timeframe. By 1999, an estimated ten million households received land rights through Land Use Certificates, mainly in the lowlands (Huynh Thu Ba *et. al.*, 2002).

As of 1988 and onwards, the Vietnamese government maintained price controls on basic foodstuffs, creating strong incentives for farmers to produce cash and export crops, particularly rice and coffee. Over a fifteen year period, Vietnam transformed itself from a marginal food importer to one of the world's largest exporters of rice. The coffee sector[21] grew extremely fast in the 1990's and beyond. In the 1990s, cultivated area increased at an annual rate of nearly 15%, while output grew at an even faster rate (World Bank, 2004b).

The changes associated with agricultural land use (dissolving collective farming and handing over land use certificates to households) produced many diverse responses at the local level. Le Trung Cuc *et. al. (*1996) point to how localized outcomes of national policy on agricultural land allocation influence the larger picture of rural development in Vietnam, in particular by providing new incentives and opportunities in homestead production systems.

Improvements in rural living standards during 1993-98 have predominantly resulted from diversification of on-farm activities. To date, this diversification has been most dramatic within the agricultural sector, where average household incomes have grown by 60 per cent from 1993-98 (World Bank, 2000). [22] However, despite impressive rates of economic growth, poverty remains a rural challenge. According to the World Bank (2000), poverty is fundamentally a rural problem in Vietnam, with 90 percent of the country's poor living in rural areas and incidence of poverty being higher in rural areas (45 percent) than in urban areas (10-15 percent).

A move towards "household forestry": providing forest protection contracts and handing over forest lands

From the early 1970's to 1986, policies extended authority for much of the country's forested lands to State Forest Enterprises (SFEs), cooperatives, and local government agencies.[23] Forest land allocation was intended to mirror the agricultural land allocation process, with land that was formerly owned by state forest enterprises being handed over to households.

Policies which were supportive of economic restructuring (beginning in the mid-1980's) stressed breaking up collectives and privatizing agricultural production to the household level. Forest policies and programs began to reflect a variety of subsidies and tenurial instruments to facilitate privatization, market engagement and to encourage commercially oriented management. Households were either allocated barren land, which they could plant with long-term agroforestry crops, or existing forest land, which is contracted out to households to protect on a yearly basis by forest protection units or forest enterprise managers.

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[21] There is evidence that in some parts of Dak Lak, pepper cultivation took over from where coffee left off, when the price of coffee plummeted and several farmers changed to a different cash crop.

[22] While national poverty rates have been dramatically reduced, such that those under the poverty line fell from 58% in 1993 to 37% in 1998 (World Bank, 2000). However, further liberalization of the production and trade of farm inputs and agricultural products, removal of constraints to the development of rural non-farm enterprises and a reform of rural banking are critical if the dynamism of the rural sector is to continue.

[23] Vietnam began allocating forest land to cooperatives in 1968 and to households in some areas as early as 1983.

By the beginning of 1990, 2,638 communes, 7,442 cooperatives and work groups and 473,500 households had received 4.4 million hectares of forest land (Poffenberger, 1998). Thus, so-called "household forestry" was becoming a viable alternative to state forestry.

Access to forest lands (from the mid-1980's until 1998) came in two ways depending on the status of the forest land. For barren land and land with planted forest, the government transferred long-term land use rights to rural households. As of 1993, the transfer of long-term land use rights occurred under the framework of the Land Law (1993) and accompanying decrees.[24] According to Decree 02 (January 15, 1994) land with standing forest may be allocated to households for a period of 50 years, while barren land can be allocated for a longer period. By mid-1992, about 800,000 households had obtained land use rights for parcels of forest land (Poffenberger, 1998).

However, the liberalization process undertaken in the agricultural sector has not been matched with the same degree of success in the forest sector, for several reasons. One reason is that forest land allocation has proceeded rather slowly in most provinces. Forest land handover is in some cases problematic, due to inherent conflicts between the government and communities over use of forest land for different purposes, particularly in mountainous areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. Many tribal groups manage forests sustainably and others continue to farm upland areas by practicing shifting cultivation,[25] and unless these groups can find other means to meet food needs[26] this practice will continue. Another reason is that structural barriers (e.g. tax structure, permits to allow the means to trade products freely and access to credit) to earn income from forests remain higher than in agriculture.

Remaining natural forests[27] were under the authority of SFEs or other state entities, which contracted former employees and farmers living in surrounding villages for their management and protection. According to Decree 01 (January 1995), households receive regular payments by the state unit for the management of forest. The forest protection contracting system allowed for payments of 50,000 VND/hectare (the equivalent of less than 3 USD/hectare) per year to farmers to **protect** (not use, as in farm or take timber products) contracted land.[28]

Emerging problems in the forest land handover and Forest Protection Contract system

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[24] The Land Law (July 1993) defined the different land classes, regulated land administration and land use planning, and provided for the allocation of arable and forest land to private households and enterprises under long-term lease arrangements. The law restricts the power of the state to the specifications 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. Previous to passage of this law, villagers could not own or be responsible for land.

[25] Shifting cultivation is a complex topic. It is not a destructive farming technique when it is practiced in areas with low population densities and adequate fallow time for plots between plantings. Throughout South East Asia, shifting cultivation is often wrongly cited as the greatest threat to forests in the uplands. This assertion cannot be taken without regard for lack of access to lowland farming land, land production density, traditional farming practices and other policies (overharvesting in production forests, or encouraging migration to sites) which impact negatively on forests.

[26] For example in the Northern Mountain region of Vietnam, food security is still a serious problem. In remote villages, most households produce enough food for the entire year. In Khe Nong, among 20 random households, one household had enough food for 10 months, another for 8 months, four households had enough for 6 months and the remaining households only enough for 3-4 months of the year (Le Trong Cuc and Rambo, 2001).

[27] Note that this norm was upheld until around 1999, when the Dak Lak pilots handed over production forests to households and communities – this is covered in greater detail in chapter 3.

[28] The 50,000 VND figure was often not paid in full.

Forest protection strategies sponsored by the government provided cash incentives to families to act as custodians. At a workshop in Hue in 2000, a statement by the Director of Phu Loc Forest Inspection Station (in Thua Thien Hue province) summed up the uncertainty of the viability of the forest protection contracting system:

> The state pays 50,000 dong per hectare per year for protection of the forest. This continues for five years. It is not clear who is to be responsible for the forest after the five years has ended. The State cannot afford to cover the country under natural forests... In many cases the contracts for protection are not attractive to local households because the forests are located far away from their settlements. This has often led to conflicts between the households contracted for protection and other members of the community... The policy has not created a motivation for people to protect and manage the forests. Those contracted are in fact only providing labor against payment by the State (Zu, 2000).

Similarly, in Dak Lak province, major problems were unfolding due to the limited funds available for protection contracts. The contract system could not provide enough incentive for farmers, given that conversion of forest land into coffee or rubber plantations led to an income considerably above the revenues of the protection contracts.

It appeared that in pockets throughout the country, Forest Protection Contracts did not provide a solid incentive for farmers. There are several arguments for why the incentives were not sufficient. For instance, the payments provided only short term returns (as these payments were not to exceed 5 years in a site), and often the maximum 50,000 VND payment was not granted. More importantly, the payments did not provide secure access to forest resources. Even in the cases where FPCs were welcomed by farmers, they were not part of a package that addressed integrating management of bare lands into the larger agricultural picture, livelihood strategies or species choice for farmers (O'Reilly, 2000). In many cases, the payments did not deter illegal timber felling (MARD/DFD, 2001). A final criticism is that the Forest Protection Contracts did not build self-reliance or sustainable systems for forest management (Hobley, 1998).

The land allocation process itself has progressed at different paces. In general, the implementation of forest land allocation has been slow, much slower than for agricultural land. By late 1992, less than one percent of the forest land allocations were recorded in formal land use rights certificates (Me *et.al.*, 1993). If the forest land hand over rate where to continue at the slow pace of the mid-1990's, forest land allocation will occupy government agencies for several more decades.

Part of the reason for the slow pace was due to the fact that 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 remains prohibitively expensive. Some local authorities therefore issued preliminary certificates. Reports from Son La province indicated that until 1998 the conduct of forest land allocation tended to be rushed, but inaccurate (Smith, 1995).

Finally, forest land allocation was generally carried out in a rather mechanistic way by the forestry agencies and with no, or only limited, input from the community. As of 1999, the government had not cracked the problem of carrying out effective land use planning and allocation of forests with the active participation of local communities.

In addition to the problems cited above, forests in many parts of Vietnam were still being treated as open access resources. To correct this course, allocation of forest lands to households and communities had to take on a different form. What was needed was a serious effort to refocus attention on how to speed up the forest land allocation policies and to provide adequate benefits to local people so they would work effectively to restore and protect forests.

The forest policy process: Impetus for Change (From 1998 onwards)

Stemming forest degradation[29] in Vietnam was a serious problem as of 1999. Certain top level MARD officials in the Forest Development Department realized that they were unable to continue with the status quo. Having proposed another reforestation program that looked very similar to the old one, and with meager prospects for investment[30] and following a detailed review of the 327 Program, foreign donors were unwilling to invest in a program which they viewed as conceptually flawed. Furthermore, reforestation efforts were not achieving poverty objectives. From the mid-1990's onwards, poverty reduction became the major impetus behind joint Government of Vietnam-donor agency action. By 2000, with the release of the major series of publications on attacking poverty, it reframed a number of policy initiatives, and continued to be a major driving force in policy formulation and implementation from 2000-2005.

At the request of the Government, several conservation and rural development non-governmental organizations (NGOs), bilateral aid donors and multilateral agencies met with government forestry officials to discuss potential alternatives. A commitment to undertake a serious stocktaking of reforestation activities was agreed to by the Government. To signal their support for such an exercise, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed in December 1999 between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on behalf of the Vice-Prime Minister and 15 representatives of the donor and NGO community. The objective of the MoA was to reach agreement on a formal Partnership arrangement between the Government of Vietnam, interested donors and NGOs.

Forest sector policies began a serious transformation. This transformation was a departure from the norm of policy making from a top-down approach to a more open, deliberative process, with a long term view. Thus, the *modus operandi* for how forest policy was shaped, changed in two significant ways. One new way was the formation of a new, broader-based coalition, comprised of development practitioners, policy makers and policy advocates. I assert that this coalition was informed by innovative practices on the ground undertaken by local people. A second way was the set of beliefs introduced into the debate. These beliefs concerned the social and environmental issues surrounding forest management, as well as who should be involved in making forest management decisions. Together they have the potential to form the basis for a new set of institutional rules governing the forest sector.

I suggest that the 18 month stocktaking exercise undertaken by the Government-Donor Partnership began a process for policy-oriented learning, aimed at better understanding the role of social and environmental considerations in reforestation planning. By incorporating social equity and conservation concerns and broadening the focus of the national reforestation

[29] The main sources of forest degradation in Vietnam are arable land expansion, fuelwood consumption, commercial logging, shifting cultivation damage, fire damage, overgrazing, war damages and the construction of dams (World Bank, 1995).

[30] The national coffers were suffering from the fallout of the South East Asian currency crisis, there was little scope for re-investment from sales of tree crops planted under the 327 Program.

program, a more potent policy emerged. The Government-Donor Partnership formally adopted a wider scope for its work and the new national reforestation program[31] (previously focused on the target of planting five million hectares) evolved into a broader based approach, which was then called the Forest Sector Support Program (FSSP). Issues like biodiversity conservation planning, poverty, equity and local livelihoods, legal, policy and institutional reform, participatory land use planning and human resource development became central components of the FSSP.

Evidence of Community Forest Management experiments

Just prior to the Forest Sector Support Partnership agreement, a group of Vietnamese and donor representatives formed a National Working Group on Community Forest Management (NWG-CFM). This working group was established in Hanoi in November 1998 at a meeting of representatives of Vietnamese and foreign institutions working in forest development, watershed management and upland rural development in Vietnam. Participants at this meeting agreed on the need for a special forum to exchange information and promote complementarities between their activities related to community forest management. Their aim was to share project results and brainstorm on how community forest management as a model could assist the Vietnamese government to achieve better forest cover, greater socio-economic benefits for local farmers and watershed protection. These advocates sought to raise the awareness of policy makers through regular meetings, a number of conferences (at national and regional levels), publications and a website with content in English and Vietnamese.

As of late 1998, the Community Forest Management Working Group began studying and actively documenting cases of pilot schemes in community forestry. An analytical framework was developed to assess community forestry in its multiple forms throughout the country. The Working Group commissioned studies in order to explore how different geographical areas (the Northern Mountains, Midlands, Central Highlands and the Coastal Mangroves) may impact variables like forest land/natural resources, the predominant type of stakeholders, influence from government[32] and benefits.

A major forest sector review[33] undertaken by the Asian Development Bank in 2001 suggested that community forestry initiatives were occurring in many sites throughout the country. Another study,[34] a survey of local initiatives, confirmed similar results. According to Dr. Nguyen Hong Quan, Chairman of the National Working Group on Community Forest Management, communities were participating in forest protection, management and development in 1,203 communes of 146 districts of 24 provinces and cities as of November 2001.[35] According to this estimate, community forestry, in some shape or form, has spread to more than 40 per cent of

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[31] Program 327 ended in 1998, subsequent to which the government began a new national reforestation program under the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program (5MHRP). This Program is based on Resolution No. 8/1997/QH10 of the Second Session of the 10th National Assembly and Decision 661/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister on July 29, 1998. The overarching aim of the 5MHRP is to reforest and rehabilitate five million hectares of forest by the year 2010.

[32] Influence from the government can range from a) the government initiating and supporting forest development, community investment and management, b) some government support, but no formal arrangements for management of forests by communities to c) government control over management of forests, supported by government investment.

[33] Completed in January 2001 (Asian Development Bank-Technical Assistance, 2001).

[34] This study occurred over the same time period and was undertaken by the Forest Protection Department of MARD, in collaboration with the Working Group on Community Forest Management.

[35] This estimate was shared at a policy workshop held in November 2001, with the acknowledgement that these numbers are incomplete. Thus, it is likely to be an underestimate.

Table 1.2 Community forestry cases

Province	District(s)	Commune(s)	Information sources
Bac Kan	Cho Don	Thai Nguyen	Vietnam Finland Forestry Sector Cooperation
Cao Bang	Quang Hoa	Phuc Sen	National Working Group Community Forest Management
Dak Lak	Lak and Ea Hleo	Dak Nue and Ea Sol	National Working Group Community Forest Management, Dak Lak Community Forest Management Working Group, and Tran Ngoc Thanh study presented at the Hoa Binh workshop
Gia Lai	Chu Pah	Dak Tover	National Working Group Community Forest Management summary, report by Con and Doan 2000
Ha Bac	Luc Ngan	6 communes	CARE
Ha Giang		Nam Ty	Mountain Rural Development Program (MRDP)
Hoa Binh	Da Bac	Hien Luong	National Working Group Community Forest
Lai Chau	Tua Chua	Multiple communes	Social Forestry Development Project (SFDP)
Son La	Yen Chau	Multiple communes (including Chieng Hac and Khao Khoan, Na Pan and Ban Nhom villages)	SFDP, Working Group-Community Involvement in Forest Management report, Apel and Sikor 1998
Yen Bai	Van Chan	Nam Lanh	MRDP

provinces. Preliminary case material (as of 2002) on community forestry activities in ten different provinces is listed in Table 1.2 below.

In looking for a solution that provided an appropriate policy and legislative environment to allow active and productive management of forests by communities, Hobley (1998) endorsed what she described as a "protection through production approach." This approach would help increase the productivity and economic value of forest to local people (including production forest and less critical protection forest) to provide better incentives for them to become active forest managers as well as maintaining healthy protective forest cover.

This "protection through production approach" was adopted in Yen Bai and Ha Giang provinces, where the Vietnam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Program (MRDP) experimented with long-term allocation of forest lands to communities, income and benefit-sharing arrangements in

the community to fund forest management and protection activities, the preparation of commune and village based forest management and protection plans and the delegation of responsibility for monitoring to the commune level. [36] Ha Giang province produced a guideline on Community Forest Management Plans in 2002, which was shared widely by the Working Group on Community Forest Management members.

Grassroots as well as donor sponsored initiatives appeared in several provinces, leading to the creation of local legislation to guide the implementation of forest management planning and community forestry pilots. Dak Lak, Son La, Ha Giang and Yen Bai provinces provided the best examples of creating new local legislation and "learning while doing." Some -- but certainly not all -- of the early pilot operations were sponsored by bilateral aid agency project activities. News of the success of certain initiatives led to farmer-to-farmer exchange of information on forest management planning and this spawned greater dissemination of community approaches. A learning approach was fostered by the National Working Group on Community Forest Management. The focus of my study looks at policy-oriented learning on three major aspects – promoting forest land allocation, developing forest protection regulations and creating systems for benefit sharing in three key provinces.

[36] As of late 1998, the MARD policy department approved piloting of a new model for village and commune forest management and protection by the Vietnam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Program (MRDP) in Yen Bai and Ha Giang provinces. As of October 2000, the People's Committee of Son La province passed a local decision related to participatory forest land allocation to communities.

CHAPTER III: GLOBAL FOREST MANAGEMENT TRENDS

> In the early days of my exposure to forestry, I had occasion to discuss forestry problems with very many foresters, foresters of every conceivable specialization. Had I believed implicitly everything they told me, I would have been driven inexorably to the conclusion that forestry is about trees. But, of course, this is quite wrong. Forestry is not about trees, it is about people. And it is about trees only insofar as trees can serve the needs of people (Westoby,1987:ix).

This chapter provides an overview of the status of the world's forests, commenting on the changing scale of forests and forest use globally and the changing composition and use of these resources. (In order to provide a comparison, the time frame used in the previous chapter, from 1975 to 2005, is equivalent to the time frame used for the substantive part of this chapter.) This chapter notes the changing values surrounding forests -- not simply their economic value. Next, it identifies factors provoking major changes in forestry approaches -- essentially those moving away from top-down practices. To conclude, I break down what constitutes community forestry and show how it departs from top-down, state-led efforts of forest management.

Changing scale of forests and forest use worldwide

In the last three centuries, global forest area has been reduced by approximately 40%, with three quarters of this loss occurring during the last two centuries. Forests have completely disappeared in 25 countries, and another 29 countries have lost more than 90% of their forest cover (Shivenko *et.al.*, 2005).

Global trends indicate that although forest cover and biomass in Europe and North America are currently increasing following radical declines in the past, deforestation of natural forests in the tropics continues at an annual rate of over 10 million hectares per year.[37] A combination of forest degradation and fragmentation of many remaining forests are further impairing ecosystem functioning.

According to the FAO Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2005, the total forest area in 2005 is just under 4 billion hectares,[38] corresponding to an average of 0.62 ha per capita, or approximately 30% of total land area. Total forest area continues to decrease on a global scale, but the rate of net loss is slowing. Deforestation, particularly converting forests to agricultural land, continues at a significant rate, around 13 million hectares per year. At the same time, forest planting, landscape restoration and natural expansion of forests have significantly reduced the net loss of forest area. The global net change in forest area in the period 2000-2005 is estimated at -7.3 million hectares per year (equal to the land size of Panama). This amount compares favorably to the previous ten years, when the rate was -8.9 million hectares per year (1990-2000).

Forests are being lost on the largest scale in Africa and South America (regions with the largest net loss of forests). Oceania and North and Central America also registered a net loss. In

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[37] Ten million hectares is equal to an area larger than Greece, Nicaragua, or Nepal and more than four times the size of Belgium.

[38] Approximately eight thousand years ago, forest cover was an estimated 6.2 billion hectares or 47% of the earth's surface. Today, it is 30% (see FAO, 2005 estimates)

contrast, forests in Europe continued to expand, although at a slower pace than previously measured. Asia, a region with a net loss in the 1990's, achieved a net gain of forests in the period 2000-2005, primarily due to large-scale reforestation reported by China.

Looking back at the historical trends, Europe has lost 50-70% of its original forest cover (most of this during the Middle Ages), and North America lost around 30% (mainly during the 19th century). Countries in Europe and North America are now encouraging forest restoration and plantation establishment, which has lead to increases in forest cover, but these countries are losing forest quality[39] in some cases.

The area of temperate and boreal forests is either stabilizing or increasing in different regions. However, the quality of these forests is compromised by fragmentation, air pollution, fire, pest and disease outbreaks and poor management (FAO, 2005).

FAO figures from the Forest Resource Assessment-2000 estimated the total area of global forests at 3,869 million hectares or about 30% of the world's land area, with closed forests accounting for 3,335 million hectares.[40] Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of forest area by region of the world and Table 2.2 gives an overview of forest changes over the past decade.

Table 2.1: Forest area by region in 2000
(Shivenko *et.al.*, 2005 data from FAO, 2001, with modified data for Canada)

Forest area					
Region	Land area	Natural forests	Plantation	Total	Forest coverage
		(million hectares)			*(%)*
Africa	2978	642	8	650	22
Asia	3085	432	116	548	18
Europe	2260	1007	32	1039	46
North & Central America	2137	764	18	782	37
Oceania	849	194	3	198	23
South America	1755	875	10	866	51
World total	13,064	3,924	187	4,101	31

Table 2.2: Forest area changes 1990-2000 in Tropical and Non-tropical Areas
(FAO, 2001)

	Natural Forest					**Forest Plantations**			**Total Forest**
	Losses			**Gains**		**Gains**			
Domain	**Deforestation**	**Conversion To Forest Plantation**	**Total loss**	**Natural expansion**	**Net change**	**Reforestation**	**Afforestation**	**Net change**	**Net change**
Tropical	-14.2	-1.0	-15.2	+1.0	-14.2	+1.0	+0.9	+1.9	-12.3

[39] According to IUCN and WWF, forest quality is defined as the significance or value of all the ecological, social and economic components of the forest landscape (IUCN Forest Conservation Program website: www.iucn.org/fcp).

[40] The FAO defines forests as ecosystems that are dominated by trees (defined as perennial woody plants taller than 5 meters at maturity), where the tree crown cover (or equivalent stocking level) exceeds 10% and the area is larger than 0.5 hectares. The term includes forests used for production, protection, multiple use or conservation (FAO, 1995).

Non-tropical	-0.4	-0.5	-0.9	+2.6	+1.7	+0.5	+0.7	+1.2	+2.9
Global	-14.6	-1.5	-16.1	+3/6	-12.5	+1.5	+1.6	+3.1	-9.4

Detailed explanations abound for both the underlying causes and the immediate causes of forest loss and degradation worldwide. The real underlying causes of deforestation can occur far away from the forest itself. These causes include: consumption levels, international debt and structural adjustment, pressure for trade and development, poverty, population changes and land tenure. The immediate causes are largely a result of the underlying causes. These include: pressure from human settlement including agriculture, fuelwood and charcoal collection; operations of the timber trade, logging and intensification of forest management; the impact of other industrial sectors, such as agribusiness, mineral mining, oil exploration and atmospheric pollution (WWF/IUCN, 1996).

Changing value of forest resources and services

Forests supply an estimated 5,000 commercial products and the forestry sector contributed at least 2% of global GDP (FAO, 1997a). In terms of the main economic values, forest products provide over 3.3 billion cubic meters of wood (including 1.8 billion cubic meters of fuelwood and charcoal), as well as many non-timber forest products. According to the World Bank, as many as 300 million people (most of them very poor) depend substantially on forest ecosystems for their subsistence and survival. Further, 60 million indigenous people who live in forest areas are especially dependent on forest resources and the health of forest ecosystems.

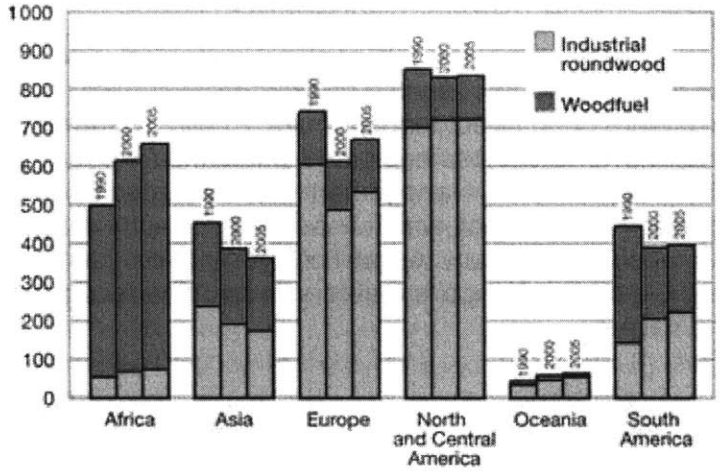
The World Bank (2004c) estimates that a quarter of the world's poor and 90 percent of the poorest are dependent on forests for their livelihoods. Two thirds of rural people in developing countries live in so-called marginal agricultural lands (upland watersheds) where forestry, tree crops and agroforestry are important land uses and ecologically more suitable than plantation forests.

The FAO states that one-third of the world's forests are primarily used for production of wood and non-timber products. Wood production continues to be an important function of many forests, and reported removals of non-timber forest products are on the rise. More than half of all forests are used for production of wood and non-timber forest products in combination with other functions such as soil and water protection, biodiversity conservation and recreation.

Global wood removals were forecast to amount to 3.1 billion cubic meters in 2005,[41] similar to the total removals recorded for 1990 and averaging 0.69 percent of the total growing stock. While Asia reported a decrease in wood removals in recent years, Africa reported a steady increase. It is estimated that nearly half of the removed wood was woodfuels (as shown in the following figure).

[41] Informally or illegally removed wood, especially woodfuel, is not usually recorded, so the actual amount of wood removals is undoubtedly higher (FAO, 2005).

Trends in wood removal, 1990–2005
(million m^3)



According to FAO, the value of timber product offtake is decreasing, while the value of NTFPs (non-timber forest products) is increasing, although it is underestimated. Roundwood removals in 2005 were forecast to value around US$64 billion, mainly accounted for by industrial roundwood.[42] The projected value of NTFP removals amounted to about US$4.7 billion in 2005.[43] The trends at the global and regional levels generally show a slight increase since 1990.

By 2020, demand for wood and woodfuel is expected to grow considerably. It is anticipated that this growth in demand will stimulate the establishment of more industrial plantations, the application of better management practices in existing natural forests, and technological improvements in the efficiency of wood use.

At the very least, 10 million people[44] are employed in forest management and conservation. Reported employment in forestry (excluding the wood processing industry) declined by about 10 percent from 1990 to 2000. Most of the decline has occurred in the primary production of goods, and this can probably be attributed to increases in labor productivity. At the regional level, Asia and Europe showed a downward trend, while in the other regions employment increased somewhat - most likely because roundwood production was increasing faster than increases in

[42] The reported trend shows an increase of about 11 percent over the previous 15 years, which is less than the rate of inflation over this period. Thus, the reported value of removals in real terms has fallen at the global level (FAO, 2005).

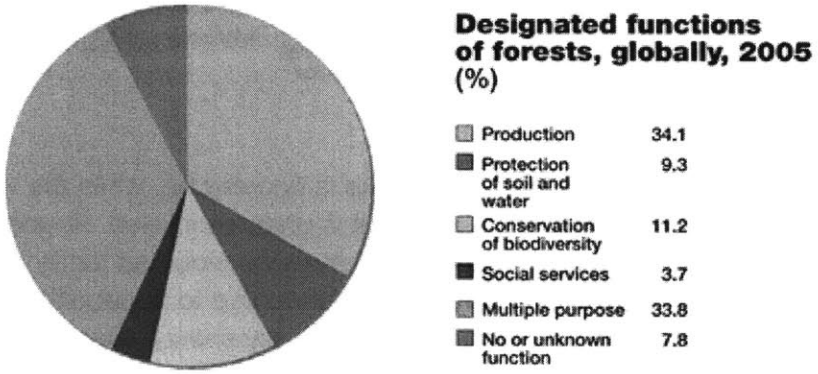
[43] However, information was missing from many countries, and the reported statistics probably cover only a small fraction of the true total value of NWFP removals. Edible plant products and bushmeat are the most significant products in terms of value.

[44] FRA 2005 only collected data on formal employment. However, some country reports did not separate informal and formal employment, so formal employment could be somewhat less than 10 million people. Taking into account the informal sector, the overall importance of forest employment for rural livelihoods and national economies is clearly higher than this number suggests.

labor productivity. In Europe, the decline in employment can also be attributed to the restructuring of formerly centrally planned economies.

Changes in Forest Management Paradigms

Throughout the 19th and a better part of the 20th century, sustained yield management (the management and yield of an individual resource or ecosystem service) provided the best science had to offer to ensure good forest management. Public awareness of the importance of forests and public concern over forest loss has grown substantially over the past several decades. In the 1990's, sustained yield management was displaced as the standard-bearer to strive for sustainable forest management, which ensures that a wide range of services from a particular ecosystem is taken into account. As part of the shift from sustained yield forestry to sustainable management, a major change is that forests are now recognized to be managed for a multitude of uses and values.



Forests are critically important habitats and essential to conserving biological diversity. At least 60% (and by some estimates closer to 90%) of all species are found in tropical moist forests alone, according to the UNEP Global Biodiversity Outlook (2001). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2003) indicates that the number of critically endangered species is increasing, and habitat degradation is one of the top reasons for biodiversity loss. Consequently, interest in the conservation of forests, particularly for biological diversity, has increased considerably during the past decade. It is estimated that about 12.4% of the world's forests or 479 million hectares currently enjoy protected area[45] status (IUCN, 2005). According to FAO conservation of biological diversity was reported as one of the management objectives for more than 25 percent of the total forest area. FAO figures also indicate an upward trend in setting aside forests in protected areas.

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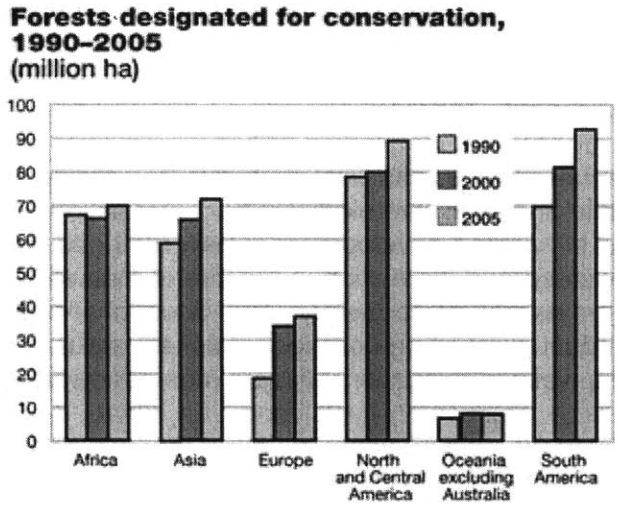
[45] North and Central America have the largest proportion of its forests under protected area status followed by South America. Results by ecological domain indicate that tropical and temperate forests have the highest proportion of forest under protected areas, whereas only 5% of boreal forests are located in protected areas (IUCN Forest Conservation Programme website: www.iucn.org/fcp).



The FAO Forest Resource Assessment estimated over 300 million hectares of forests designated for soil and water conservation. Protective functions of forests range from soil and water conservation (through watershed protection) and avalanche control to sand-dune stabilization, desertification control and coastal protection. As a measure of this growing role of forests, the FRA 2005 found

> Eighteen countries reported that all their forests are designated for protective purposes, as either a primary or secondary function. The overall proportion of forest designated for protective functions has increased, from 8% in 1990 to 9% in 2005 (FAO, 2005 website: www.fao.org/forestry/fo/fra).

Major trends affecting forests and forestry

Given the new goals for forestry, I explain how forest policy has changed throughout the world given this new context. In this section, I look at the changing social, economic and political factors that are shaping the relationship of communities with forest lands and resources.

The first trend is that forests are defined by multiple use, multiple values and multiple users (many different stakeholders). Over the past two decades at the international level, forest sector planning and policy has shifted in two significant ways. Forests are now recognized as providing more than timber[46] and greater prominence is granted to the public dimension of forests.[47] Similarly, the terms defining forest sector planning are changing. This paradigm shift is reflected in post-UNCED[48] debates on forest conservation and management being less about the specifics of scientifically-based silvicultural practices than about a desire to reconcile the many

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[46] In most developing countries, rural populations use forest resources to satisfy basic life necessities like fuel for cooking, fodder for animals or as their croplands. At the local and regional levels, watershed catchment values and micro and meso climate benefits are of great importance.

[47] For multiple products and services, including: environmental services (watershed functions, carbon sequestration and climatic effects), recreation purposes, aesthetic values and spiritual values.

[48] UNCED was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

different perspectives on what constitutes sustainable forest management[49] (Spears, 1999). This shift triggers a realization that resolving forest management problems locally and nationally justifies collective action[50] (Hobley and Shields, 2000; Ostrom, 1992; Ostrom, 1990; Feeny *et.al.*, 1990; McCay, and Acheson, 1987).

Ecosystem (or environmental) services can help protect water quality, conserve soil, mitigate or positively affect local climate and conserve biodiversity. Increasing awareness of the many benefits forest provide has stimulated development of new methods for realizing forest values. Recent years have seen widespread innovation in the use of market-based approaches to ensure that forest managers as well as consumers take account of environmental and social values in land use and product purchasing decisions. Markets are now functioning for carbon offsets, biodiversity offsets, wetland mitigation, and payments for watershed management.

Many things have changed in the past 15 years in timber markets and for environmental services. Some consumers want different forest products (ones that meet environmental and social needs) – leading to certification standards[51] for commercial timber products (such as Forest Stewardship Council). This has helped to change the market towards seeking more sustainable sources of timber. However, this is a niche market and the vast majority of consumers do not discriminate.

Besides valuing forests for environmental services, another multiple use of forests – that for recreation and education -- is increasing, however there little data is available on it. The only region with fairly good data on the use of forests for recreation, tourism, education and/or conservation of cultural and spiritual sites is Europe, where provision of recreation was reported as the primary management objective for 2.4 percent of the total forest area. In all, 72% of the forest area of Europe (excluding the Russian Federation with vast production forests) provides recreation.

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[49] Spears describes sustainable forest management (SFM) as balancing "the production of forest goods and services to meet varied human needs on a continued basis and in ways that leave the various ecosystem capacities of forest-land unimpaired" (Spears, 1999:148). Further, SFM is a continual process rather than a definite end point, and precise definitions of SFM need to be locally negotiated and adjusted to reflect varying cultural, socioeconomic and ecological circumstances.

[50] A large body of literature on common pool resources (often using forests or fisheries as examples) and the creation of institutions for natural resource management regimes has occurred over the last 30 years. Much of it was in reaction to Garett Hardin's (1968) Theory of the Tragedy of the Commons, which predicted the degradation of all resources under common usage, stimulated a significant amount of scholarship on the issues surrounding governance, common property resource regimes, property rights and means for collective action. Hardin foresaw a failure to achieve many collectively preferred social outcomes because he felt that individuals have a temptation to free ride on the contribution of others. More than three decades of research have focused on systematically examining the factors underlying success and failure in the commons, with a particular emphasis on creating effective institutions for natural resource management (Ostrom, 1987; Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom, 1992; McCay and Acheson, 1987; Bromley, 1992; Feeny, Berkes, McCay and Acheson, 1990; Wade, 1986).

[51] Certification developed when NGOs and industrial partners recognized the environmental impacts of deforestation and decided to identify good sources of timber production. End users are able to trace products from this timber through the manufacturing process via a chain of custody system. Market demand for certified wood products creates a business opportunity for timber producers and manufacturers. The FSC is one of several certification schemes developed over the past 15 years that have registered 30 million hectares of forest worldwide.

In addition to the environmental services and recreation values, forests are also recognized as a vital carbon sink. [52] Deforestation, degradation and poor forest management decrease carbon storage in forests. Sustainable management, planting, and restoring forests can increase carbon sequestration. According to FAO estimates, carbon in forest biomass decreased in Africa, Asia and South America from 1990-2005, but increased in all other regions. Globally, carbon stocks in forest biomass are decreasing by 1.1 Gt of carbon annually, owing to continued deforestation and forest degradation partly offset by forest expansion and an increase in growing stock per hectare in some regions (FAO, 2005).

Evidence of how Forest Management has changed

This section identifies what factors have provoked major changes in forestry approaches -- essentially those moving away from top-down practices. In essence, the evolution can be traced to four trends. The goals of forestry have changed over time, and several trends (new ownership, decentralization and a people-centered approach to forestry) have altered the practice of forestry worldwide.

New goals for forest management

Ecosystem approaches, striving for sustainable forest management and the consumer advocate-led push for certified timber products illustrate that forestry goals in mainstream society are no longer confined to using forests to extract industrial timber. Forests are now expected to serve the needs of people – more broadly than forestry simply as a supplier of commercial, or even public, goods and services. "Forestry, after all, originated centuries ago, in the needs of specific services which forests, properly managed, can provide for as long as those needs persist. In that sense all forestry is social" (Leslie, 1987: ix).

However, the definition of societal goals has changed over time and varies with one's perspective. Different stakeholders are demanding the delivery of a large range of goods and services from the forest and not simply industrial roundwood. While forests are important for industrial development, they are also vitally important for rural populations. Forests provide many environmental benefits, including watershed maintenance and the ecological stability needed to sustain agricultural production. They provide the principal source of energy and building materials and are an important source of income, food, fodder and other products. In many instances, the very survival and well-being of the rural poor depends on their access to forests, trees and other natural resources and the quality and quantity of these resources.

Throughout much of the developing world, rural populations use forest resources to satisfy basic life necessities (such as fuelwood and fodder for livestock). Governments, in need of foreign exchange, have viewed forests as a readily exploitable resource. In many countries governments sell off timber quite cheaply, sacrificing public revenues and non-timber benefits of standing forest. In addition, the terms of many timber concession agreements and revenue systems have encouraged wasteful, resource-depleting logging (Repetto and Gillis, 1988). Ironically, awarding contractors from multinational companies logging rights at heavily subsidized rates is a problem throughout the world – it happens as readily in the United States or Canada as in India or Indonesia.

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[52] The world's forests store an estimated 283 Gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon in their biomass alone, and that the carbon stored in forest biomass, deadwood, litter and soil together is roughly 50 percent more than the amount of carbon in the atmosphere (FAO, 2005).

One perspective may simply value the trees for industrial uses, while another perspective would value how trees can be used to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor (thereby enhancing local people's outcomes vs. the outcomes of a timber estate). There are also different space dimensions to these two perspectives, in that traditional forestry demands many trees growing a great distance from people, while community forestry acknowledges that many people live in and close to forests and forests are an integral part of the environment, as well as an integral part of livelihood strategies (Bhargava, 1993).

Numerous international bodies such as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) and the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development (WCFSD, 1999) have voiced concern about the deepening forest crisis, and the theory and practice of making the transition to SFM is a topic of intensive national and international debate. More recently, the IFF, IPF and UNFF[53] have all adopted SFM as a standard to strive for. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment,

> [SFM] has been widely embraced at national and international policy levels, but it has not yet been implemented to the point where it is appreciably mitigating the negative trends affecting the world's forests. SFM provides an increasingly sophisticated set of policies and tools for setting forest management on a more sustainable trajectory. Implementing SFM, however, requires overcoming many of the same economic, political and institutional hurdles that drive deforestation and forest degradation (Shivenko *et.al.*, 2005: 583).

Additional evidence for the emergence of a new paradigm which goes beyond the industrial and ecological aims that sustained yield forestry previously determined. An ecosystem approach is broader in its goals than sustainable forest management. IUCN (a large conservation NGO) defines it as an approach which

> seeks to conserve the cultural and environmental benefits of forests whilst ensuring that these forests continue to provide economic benefits, both to local communities and as a contribution to national growth. A balance therefore has to be found between management for timber and non-timber forest products and management for recreation, landscape, watershed protection, soil fertility, biological diversity and carbon storage values. The latter benefits can be provided by creating protected areas, but this is not the only, or necessarily the most effective way. Today, forests devoted to commodity production are also expected to provide environmental and cultural benefits. Ecosystem approaches require that forests are managed together with agricultural, urban and other lands as part of the broader landscape. This ecosystem has to be managed to secure social, economic and environmental benefits (Sayer and Maginnis 2005: 17).

Another telling example is the language used in the IPF/IFF Proposal for action, Point 3 to: "Develop and implement appropriate policies and mechanisms to secure land tenure, promote benefit-sharing, recognize access to and the use of forest resources by local and/or indigenous

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[53] In the mid to late 1990's, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) were hosted at the UN to facilitate five years of international forest policy dialogue. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), established by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) for two years (1995-97) to provide a forum for forest policy deliberations. Subsequently, in 1997, ECOSOC established the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), for three years (1997-2000). The UNFF (United Nations Forum on Forests) runs from 2000-2006.

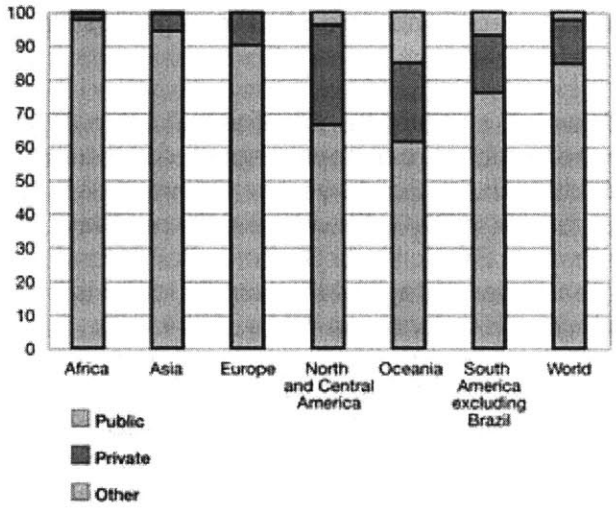
communities in order to support sustainable forest management." This Point relates to similar aims expressed in the following sections IPF 29 c, IFF: 56j, 64c, 64d and 115d. Similar language is found in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with more than 12 references (including Decision COP6/22 Para 29 and 35) to SFM, equitable benefit sharing and local people's (including indigenous) participation.

A final example is found in Brazil, where a new forest law is about to be adopted by the Congress. For instance, the new forest concessions to be approved will be selected on the basis of the best value for products and services, the highest socioeconomic benefits, lowest environmental impact and the highest added value locally. The new bill proposes concessions for three different types of management -- protected areas, community forestry areas, and private concessions. The overarching principles and objectives guiding Brazil's management of public forests include guaranteeing forest conservation in public lands (to help preserve important biodiversity, soil and water values and services), promoting sustainable forestry activities, respecting the rights of the local community, providing incentives to add value at the local level and guaranteeing stable conditions for long term investments. [54]

Legitimating access to forest resources

Forest ownership is now increasingly in the hands of local people. Eighty four percent of the world's forests are publicly owned, but private ownership is on the rise. FAO figures indicate the trends towards community empowerment, decentralized decision-making and increased involvement of the private sector in forest management seen over the past 20 years are reflected in changes in forest ownership and tenure in some regions. Differences among regions are considerable. North and Central America, Europe (excluding the Russian Federation), South America and Oceania have a higher proportion of private ownership than other regions.

Ownership patterns, 2000
(%)



[54] Material gathered from a presentation made on the Management of Public Forests in Brazil by Tasso Resende de Azevedo, Director of the National Forest Program, based in the Ministry of Environment. Presentation made in Washington D.C. on December 5, 2005 at the United States Forest Service, International Program offices.

When local usufruct rights (use rights)[55] are not acknowledged, particularly when dependency is evident, this leads to conflict. These conflicts may augment, leading to disputed rights and contested claims to forest resources (Kaimowitz, 2003). However, in several places in the world,[56] these rights and claims are being acknowledged (White and Martin, 2002). Legitimating access to forest resources entails addressing the uncertainty of resource access, through a number of means -- ranging from transfers of forest land or usufruct rights, or granting of stewardship arrangements.

Many countries grant formal long-term use rights to local households or communities, under diverse models. Experimentation with various models (ranging from joint forest management agreements to control of village forests to complete transfer of forests) highlights a major policy trend – a shift from state-led management of natural resources to numerous community management models. In Tanzania, villages are granted village land titles (allocating a mix of private farm plots and communal land, often including forest). Forests have been legally passed to villagers (including indigenous peoples) in much of Mexico and parts of Central and South America. Joint Forest Management (JFM) arrangements in India provide forest groups legal partnership-shares in forests as assets. In Nepal, the 1993 Forest Act granted legal rights to form a community forest user group -- which is "officially recognized as an autonomous corporate body with perpetual succession and the legal power to develop, manage and utilize the forest in perpetuity" (Shepherd, 2004:592).

Community management of forests, fisheries, irrigation systems and general land use provides a credible strategy for resource conservation and sustainable development in many countries (Shepherd, *et. al.,* 1999; Gilmour and Fisher, 1998; FAO, 1997b; Poffenberger and McGean 1996; Ascher, 1995; Jackson and Ingles, 1995; Ostrom, 1992; Ostrom, 1990; Poffenberger, Mark, 1990; Feeny *et.al.*, 1990; McCay, and Acheson, 1987; Ostrom, 1987).

Ellsworth and White (2004) suggest that at least 7 percent, or some 246 million hectares, of the world's forests are now recognized as fully owned by indigenous and other communities, and at least 4 percent, or some 131 million hectares, have been legally set aside for these groups by governments. Further,

> These averages rise to at least 14 percent "owned" and 8 percent "set aside" when only developing countries are included. While these numbers may appear small, community ownership and access has approximately doubled in the last 15 years. Communities own, or have primary access to a majority of forests in PNG, Mexico and China; they either own or access 10 million hectares or more in Brazil, the U.S., Peru, Bolivia and India. It is also important to note that a far greater percentage of the world's forest is actively claimed and/or managed by communities (Ellsworth and White, 2004:7-8).

Public ownership is all lands owned by central, regional or local governments, and it is divided into areas administered by government directly and lands set aside (or reserved) for local communities (including indigenous groups). Private ownership is broken into two categories: forests owned by indigenous and other local community groups and forests owned by private individuals and firms. See Table 2.3 for a complete breakdown. Communities now legally own and manage at least 11 percent of the global forest estate, and at least 25 percent of developing country forests. Thus, a quarter of the global forest estate is, *de jure* or *de facto*, under

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[55] Usufruct refers to "the right to use and enjoy the profits and advantages of something belonging to another as long as the property is not damaged or altered in any way" (American Heritage College Dictionary, 1993:1486).

[56] Nepal, Tanzania, Brazil are among the many countries to have granted use rights to forests for villagers.

community control[57] (White and Martin, 2002). While this figure may seem small, it reflects a 50 per cent increase in the last 15 years. In fact, communities own approximately three times as much forest in developing countries as do private individuals and firms.

Table 2.3: Estimated Distribution of Forest Ownership

Categories	Expressed in Percent of Total			
	Public Forests		**Private Forests**	
	Administered by Government	Reserved for Community and Indigenous Groups	Community/ Indigenous	Individual/ Firm
Global Forest Estate	77	4	7	12
Developing Countries	71	8	14	7
Developed Countries	81	1	2	16
Countries with Tropical Forests	71	6	13	10
Top biodiversity (17 megadiverse) countries	65	6	12	17
Top 5 roundwood producers	80	7	6	7

(Source: White and Martin, 2002:7)

Most 'traditional' forest management systems gave those who lived in and near forests assured rights over the resource through the customary tenure systems that were in operation. While many state tenure systems formally annulled these rights many years ago, forests still exist as 'de facto' natural capital in many areas, and in some countries legislation has permitted the return of forests in whole or in part to local owners.

Decentralization and devolution of natural resource management

The third trend is decentralization and devolution of natural resource management. Earlier management regimes excluded people from forests and the results were an undermining of community support for forest management and declining livelihoods. Over the past 15 years, forest sector planning has been influenced by trends to decentralize[58] and devolve power and authority over natural resource management.

Agrawal (2001) claims that over 60 countries are decentralizing some aspect of natural resource management. The motivation for decentralization is varied, ranging from realizing cost-savings for forest management, to recognizing the value participation, to seeing better results when local institutions are responsible to upholding democratic principles, like downward accountability.

According to Ribot and Larson (2004)

[57] Owned or controlled by indigenous and rural communities.

[58] Throughout the developing world, decentralization allows local groups to implement local solutions for forest management.

> The degree of decentralization and its outcomes are shaped by many factors: local capacities; incentive structures; ideologies; political and social histories; forms of local social organization; degrees of local stratification; unresolved land and forest tenure relations; failure to account for time and insecurities...produced by change; the strength and manipulation of elite actors; state and government resistance; and government, NGO and development agency commitment to 'traditional' or private and third-sector institutions over democratic authorities (Ribot and Larson, 2004:8).

As local people seek to re-claim forest resources from the state, and new legislation authorizing devolution is adopted and implemented around the world, the share under community control is steadily rising. Yet many countries still resist handing over land to community control. Ascher (1995) cites four major reasons for government to resist handing over resources to community control. First, community resource management models challenge the reputation, control and discretion of the government. Second, allocating resources to marginal, impoverished and indigenous groups denies the government the opportunity to award ownership rights to more powerful constituencies. Third, conventional wisdom views local resource users as exploiters, rather than the solution to the problem of managing natural resources. Fourth, granting use rights and management authority to the resource users (e.g. a subset of a community) rather than the entire community does not conform to the structures (i.e. administrative units) upheld by local government systems.

People-centered model of forest management

The fourth trend is the rise of a people-centered model in forest management which is treated more completely in the description of community forestry.

However, in the 1990's, the disconnect[59] between the official forest policy (*de jure* tenure) on state forest territory and use within (*de facto* tenure) the actual forested areas was glaringly apparent. Most traditional forest management systems provided those who lived near forests assured rights over the resource through customary tenure systems (like when indigenous people are granted use rights to forests, such as Brazil's indigenous extractive reserves). While many state tenure systems formally annulled these rights, customary law provided day-to-day validity. Thus new legislation in many parts of the world acknowledges customary forest laws (as suggested in the previous section on ownership). Although there are many promising signs of change, numerous tenure and resource access conflicts – particularly in the heavily forested parts of the world (Indonesia, Brazil and throughout the Congo Basin) continue.

Perhaps the earliest and most prominent acknowledgement of "forests for people" by the international forestry community was the Jakarta Declaration from the World Forestry Congress[60] in 1979. The Declaration states that forestry development should be not only **for,**

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[59] As a consequence "while government officers carry the legal authority to act as keepers of the forest, they are vastly outnumbered by indigenous and migrant users, and thus, it is people from local communities who are frequently the *de facto* forest managers" (Poffenberger, 1996: 36).

[60] The first World Forestry Congress was held in Rome in 1926, and it typically occurs every six years. These gatherings serve as a forum for governments, universities, civil society and the private sector to exchange views and experiences and to formulate recommendations for implementation at national, regional and global levels. The Congress also provides an opportunity for the forestry sector to produce an overview of the state of forests and forestry in order to discern trends, adapt policies and raise awareness of issues among decision-makers, the public and other parties concerned. Its functions are advisory, not executive, and participants attend the Congress in their

but **by** rural communities. This statement represented a paradigm shift for the forestry community as a whole. Further, in order to maintain rural communities' interest in forestry activities, goals of economic improvement and poverty alleviation were emphasized. This particular World Forestry Congress marked a turning point, when "mainstream foresters gave international recognition to the importance of developing forests in ways that directly benefit local communities" (Colchester *et. al.,* 2004: 5). FAO and the World Bank embarked on new projects to encourage poor people to plant trees and recover wastelands, and throughout the 1970's and 1980's, there was heavy investment in social forestry projects, particularly in Asia.

Community forestry

Over the past thirty years, forestry planning has evolved in many countries from a top-down, technically-focused activity to a more participatory and locally-oriented process. Integration of experiences from rural development helped to focus on community needs and to develop collaborative programs. In many cases, these changes have led to the adoption of community forestry.

However, in the early days of social[61] or community forestry, token attention was paid to addressing the concerns of local people. This type of forestry was characterized in many projects as a provision of labor, upheld by the rhetoric of participation and people's interest. Where this was the case, it continued the process of alienation of earlier forms of forestry (Fisher, 1995). The fact that this process was perceived to be insufficient – was due in part to the rise of participatory planning. Thus, a process which was lacking in full participation -- when people's welfare was the objective -- turned to failure.

At the same time, a push to declare more forests either production forests or conservation areas also contributed to excluding communities from forests, and rendering local forest use illegal. In most cases, the forest reserves were exclusively used for extraction that generated revenues (not necessarily effectively) for the central government. Little or no emphasis was placed on the social and economic dependence of the rural populations on forests. The implications of this oversight led to conflict[62] and disenfranchisement[63] of forest-dependent people (Poffenberger, 1998; Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

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personal capacity. These prestigious events produce high quality papers, are recognized for their insightful deliberations and are known for reaching broad consensus on authoritative, although not binding, policy and technical advice to governments and international organizations. The Congress has three aims to: bring together knowledge and experience to give guidance on the formulation and implementation of forest policy; express views which may help research organizations to identify future areas of study and international organizations to plan future work; and promote the elaboration and world-wide acceptance of technical standards such as an international forestry terminology, a uniform classification of forestry literature, and consistent research methods (World Forestry Congress on the FAO forestry website: www.fao.org/forestry/wfc).

[61] Pardo (1985) defines social forestry as any situation that closely involves local people in forestry or tree growing activities for which people assume responsibilities and from which they derive direct benefits through their own efforts. In most cases social forestry is used interchangeably with community forestry, varying by country.

[62] Increased policing was used to keep vandals (impoverished villagers living in or near forests who do not have tenure or usufruct rights to the forest) away from the forest.

[63] Formerly, large areas used for shifting cultivation were allowed to lay fallow for 15 to 30 years. As more land was appropriated by the government, less land was available for shifting cultivation, and as fallow times shortened, people became alienated from forest land.

However, a development trends in the 1970's of calling attention to and responding to local needs focused on this issue. By the late 1980's, two significant advances included more sophisticated approaches to participation, particularly, in the way that participation is understood, and an increased appreciation of the sociology of resource management (Fisher, 1995; Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

Some forestry professionals felt that for sustainable resource management efforts to succeed, it is imperative that those who are most concerned with these issues - the local people or stakeholders - are given ample opportunity to determine project objectives (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; World Bank, 1996; Western and Wright, 1994). In participatory natural resource management, local people are respected for their knowledge of the local situation, and consulted extensively in project planning.[64] Local people are generally best prepared to provide details regarding the nature of local problems, their causes, potential solutions, constraints, and strategies to overcome the constraints. If participatory approaches succeed in addressing problems that local people define themselves, these people are empowered by their role in planning and decision making.

Evolution of forest planning: learning from failure

I will briefly summarize how top-down forestry created unsound conditions for improving the socio-economic status of the rural poor. As of the 1970's, many forestry projects supported by FAO and the World Bank focused on creating village woodlots and, although villagers were asked to join in the implementation of forestry activities, their roles were limited to providing labor for the project activities. Technical project designers planted trees they identified as the best fuelwood species. Little attention was paid to the multiple roles of trees or the species valued by local populations.

Much of the reforestation project planning occurred in an institutional vacuum. Despite good intentions, many project planners generally were not concerned with how the plantations and woodlots would be used once they reached maturity or how benefits from the tree resources would be distributed. Therefore, plantation reforestation projects efforts failed because local people were not at the core of project planning and three major social and institutional factors were overlooked. The first factor was an underestimation of the difficulties communities faced in resolving the governance and management issues associated with woodlots and plantations. The second factor was indeterminate tree and land tenure -- tenure issues plagued many of the projects and there were often conflicts over who had rights to the resources in woodlots. The third factor was uncertainty over access to benefits. Villagers were not willing to invest labor into planting if they were uncertain about whether they would have access to benefits (FAO, 1997b).

Reforestation efforts were focused on the biophysical elements of the environment. Technical project designers concentrated on planting trees they identified as the best fuelwood species and little attention was given to the multiple roles of trees or the species valued by local populations (FAO, 1997b; Gilmour and Fisher, 1998). In the late 1970's, community involvement was limited to asking villagers to provide labor for project activities, for example in the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Westoby (1987) cites failed attempts at reforestation and poverty alleviation in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

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[64] During the participatory planning process, facilitators communicate their interest in learning from local people about their situation and how to improve it.

Over the past thirty years, forestry planning (by multilateral and bilateral aid groups, NGOs and research oriented agencies) evolved in many instances from top-down and technical-focused projects to participatory approaches. According to FAO, most of the early projects[65] (in the 1970's and early 1980's) addressed the:

> projected fuelwood and timber shortages and favored the creation of vast timber plantations. The approach was generally highly technical and standardized, taking little account of existing production systems and agroforestry efforts. Local activities were often swept aside in order to make room for the plantations. Most of these early projects failed (FAO, 1997b:1).

As suggested earlier, people were not willing to invest labor into planting if there was uncertainy over the tenure and benefits. The major failing was that

> Despite the best intentions of these projects many failed at least in part because they underestimated the difficulties communities faced in resolving the governance and management issues associated with woodlots and other local forestry initiatives (FAO, 1997b:2)

However, most scholars agree that forestry projects have made greater strides in making local people natural resource managers than your average conservation project. According to Shepherd (in McShane, 2004)

> [Forestry projects] have been tackling obstructive legal, policy and institutional frameworks (e.g., Talbott and Khadka, 1994; Ribot, 1995; FAO, 1997b; Kaimowitz, Graham and Pacheco, 1999), unhelpful tenure arrangements (e.g., Raintree, 1987; Shepherd, 1993; Wily and Mbaya, 2001), and the conditions for successful common property resource management (e.g., Berkes, 1989; Ostrom, 1990; Bromley, 1992; Arnold, 1998) for some time. They have become aware that it will often be necessary to address the competing interests of different government agencies in this process. Often, protected area and wildlife policies are more retrogressive than forest policies, for instance: most of the latter have been revised in the last decade, while few of the former have.

Summing up: responses to these trends

I have indicated earlier in this section that there is growing interest in some quarters in employing a more participatory, collaborative form of management as a potential strategy for forest conservation. However, the challenge remains in devising mechanisms which enable both local people and nations to benefit from goods and services that improve livelihoods, without compromising long-term resource and development goals. In some instances (Nepal, Mexico, India), community forestry has provided that mechanism.

Over the past thirty years, the international forestry community (for example people attending the WFC or UNFF sessions) has changed its perception of forests (multiple benefits rather than just timber), thereby broadening forest management possibilities. Community forestry provides

[65] Some of these projects were located in the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

an alternative way to manage forests, by enabling local people to undertake management responsibilities. In part this is "motivated by a recognition that forests could not be properly managed without some level of active support from local people" (Gilmour and Fisher, 1998:28).

In part, increasing pressure on forest departments to become more efficient in their use of government funded resources contributed to engaging local people in forest management and participation ensued. Among the responses to these trends is the greater willingness to consider local forest management as a viable alternative to centralized state control. Throughout the world, a large number of forestry activities -- from spontaneous initiatives to local community or NGO efforts to national, multilateral or bilateral supported projects -- with participatory, local forest management or community forestry components are being implemented, initiated or planned most recently in sub-Saharan Africa (Wily, 2002). Some of the biggest advances in establishing community forestry arrangements (which bring a new economic base to communities in remote areas) were made in Nepal and Mexico. And while there are good cases of this occurring and there are less successful examples (Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2003; Warner, 2000).

Illustrating the shift from centralized to decentralized forestry

As mentioned in the previous section, traditional forestry is characterized by its emphasis on maximizing industrial production and technical topics like land availability, species type and technical requirements for forest maintenance. In contrast, community forestry explores differing views of land tenure, local peoples' preferences and needs for multiple species, and studying historical trends in management and allows for local management and benefit sharing.

In this section, I break down what constitutes community forestry and show how it departs from top-down forest management. The indicators include: secure access to forest resources, people-centered projects, a new role for government agencies, a holistic approach which includes social and institutional aspects in forest management and an evaluation or learning approach. Finally, I argue that community forestry has grown into a development philosophy.

Forestry has shifted from woodlots and reforestation to natural forest management and regeneration. Previous promotion of tree planting for timber and fuelwood supplies has likewise shifted to multiple use forestry, non-timber forest products, and the promotion of wider livelihood strategies (Colchester *et. al.*, 2004).

Community forestry includes such activities as the establishment of tree plantations, active tree farming, farm forestry, reforestation, natural or assisted regeneration. Community forestry programs:

> are associated with growing trees for the benefit of the people in the immediate vicinity and envisage increasing productivity and raising village income. In totality, the program offers a tree based environment – an environment for land transformation, an environment for production, and an environment for strengthening the local economy and increasing employment opportunities (Bhargava, 1993:18).

Community forestry recognizes the need to manage forests for multiple purposes and to achieve socioeconomic objectives. The technology used tends to be locally-derived and specific to local needs. Villagers are the target beneficiary of these projects and also the main target group to determine the "rules of the game", which do not conform to a blueprint approach. Often a farm forestry or agroforestry approach is taken, to allow villagers to diversify their

development options. It can also provide support to the principles of local participation, decentralization and "subsidiarity" – meaning that it allows decisions to be taken as close to the level affected as possible (Arnold, 2001). A succinct summary of many of the additional key differences between top-down, conventional state forestry and community forestry is found in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: A comparison between state forestry and community forestry

	State forestry	Community forestry
Objectives	One dimensional, raw material for industry, protection.	Multipurpose and socioeconomic objectives.
Technology	Imported, centralized, precedence over local technologies, uniform and strictly adhered to.	Varies. Indigenous, locally manageable. Imported technology must suit resources and needs.
Local*	Unimportant as long as there is no encroachment.	Important. Used and institutions supported as a resource.
People's participation	Insignificant. People are target groups and consumers and/or employees.	A requirement for relevant production. People are a resource, an asset to be supported. Involvement and responsibility.
Role of people vs. experts	People are the problem, experts the solution.	People are the solution and a resource. Experts are to support them and their activities and the development process.
Local solutions	Uniform.	Diverse.
Land	Government.	Communal, village and private.
Organization	Centralized "work order" system.	Local, village production unit (e.g. extended family or family).
Professional sphere	Segmentation, "forestry".	Integration with other farming activities.
Structure and magnitude	Few large plantations with uniform management.	A large number of small areas with a variety of input requirements and production.
Time perspective	Long term.	Short term, or limited resources for delayed benefits.
Relation to other activities	Separate.	Integrated in space and time in the small farmers' production system.

(From: Arnold, 2001, adapted from Ohlsson and Byron, 1988)
* Local intended to mean within the village or the forest surrounding the village

Secure access to forest resources

Earlier failures brought lessons (such as paying people to reforest rather than looking into the tenure or access to forests) which led to more participatory forms of forestry – by the 1980's and 1990's this shifted management responsibility to local forest user groups[66] through co-management under JFM in India, Forest Stewardship Agreements in the Philippines, Indonesia's Community Forest Permit, Mexico's *ejido* system or through actual transfer of tenurial rights, as in Nepal.[67]

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[66] A user group is: "a specified group of people who share mutually recognized claims to specific use-rights" (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

[67] Lindsay (1998) points to nine characteristics of secure community tenure, including clarity, certainty, duration, enforceable, exclusive, clear boundaries and group membership, government authority, recognition of rights and means to protect rights and solve disputes.

At the same time, appreciation grew that rural communities' own knowledge, institutions, management systems and practices were not only well adapted to their environments but also highly adaptable to changing circumstances. This strengthened arguments for greater devolution of authority to local communities (Colchester *et. al.*, 2004; Arnold, 2001).

People-centered projects

Forestry projects have moved beyond conventional plantations, often building on local knowledge and existing agroforestry or forest management systems. Previously local people were not given an adequate role in decision-making. By bringing in the missing voice of local actors, communities can now determine what forest planning looks like. This allows communities to have a voice in species selection and management decisions. A greater push for participation in planning processes is due to the fact that in some cases of natural resource management, wider involvement in determining parameters and principles of self-determination have created more successful outcomes (Cernea, 1991; Ostrom, 1990; Chambers,1983).

Recent community forestry projects strive to be more sensitive to the need to involve local people at all phases of project development and implementation. Good examples of second generation community forestry projects begin with participatory planning exercises that identify local needs and adapt the project design to local circumstances.

Figure 4a and 4b illustrates the difference between the top-down approach and the people-centered approach. Previously, forest projects were carried out using the classical state-run approach, where the project designers are the dominant actors and the users (project recipients) were largely excluded from the process. Community forestry represented a new paradigm for forestry by attempting to place the users at the center of the action (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

Typically user groups are responsible for identifying their own problems and priorities, suggesting solutions to their problems, developing an operational plan for forest management, taking responsibility for managing forest, and supporting forestry field workers.

Since the 1980's, the emphasis has gradually shifted from technical innovation – in which knowledge about forest management is passed down to farmers, and authority is shared with or devolved to them – to a focus on the validation or revival of customary systems of forest management controlled by communities.

As mentioned earlier, community forestry is based on the premise that local people have the capacity to manage forests effectively. And when the reality of a functioning local forest management system is acknowledged, this has led to recognizing a legitimate role for rural people in managing forests in policy and legislation.

New role for government agencies

Third, a major component of community forestry involves reorienting the role of government agencies from a "policing" focus towards a more supportive or facilitating role (Fisher, 1995). The extension agents (typically the beat forest officer or below district level government forest

agency employee) facilitate the implementation process, provide a link to officialdom, ensure technical requirements are being met, facilitate links to other agencies, ensure all interest groups can participate, and ensure that the process is not dominated by powerful individuals or groups (RECOFTC, 1994).

The extension agent and the user groups work together (often in the forests surrounding the village) to jointly develop a management plan. This plan becomes in effect a contract between these two parties, in that it secures legitimate access to and use of forest resources for forest users, and specifies the benefits to the forest users. Further, this contract is upheld by sanctions, as the state reserves the right to take back possession of community forestry if the terms and conditions of the handover are not met.

Figure 4a: Top down technical approach to forestry

(**Source:** Gilmour and Fisher, 1991:137)

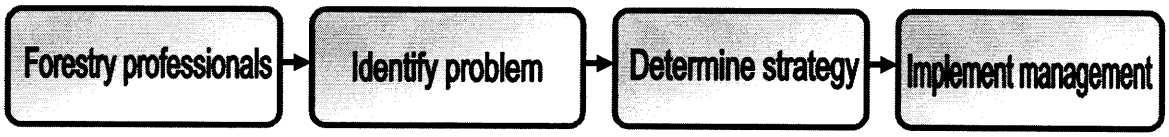
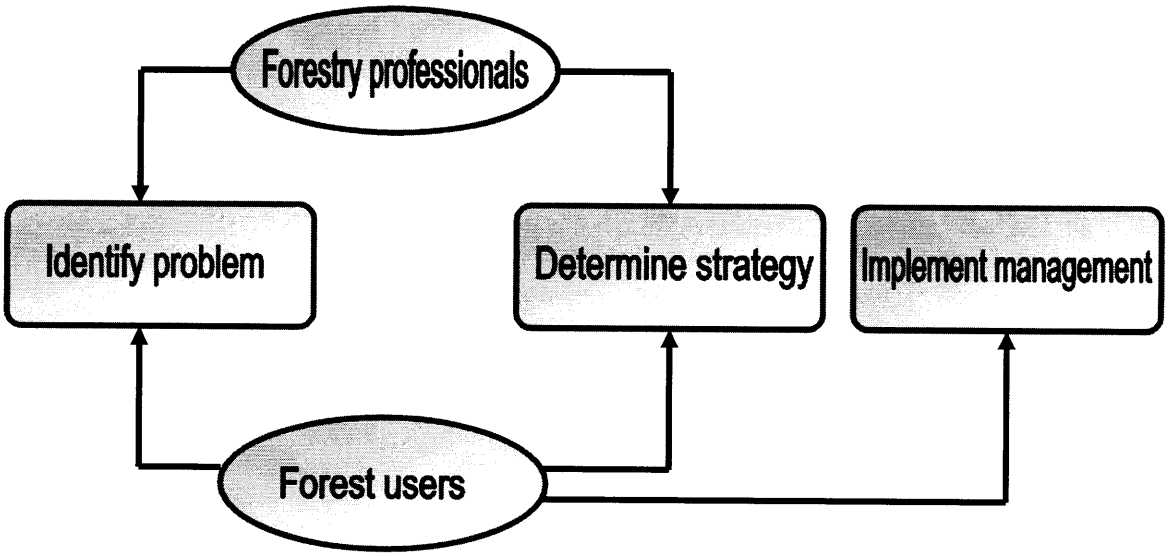


Figure 4b: People-centered approach



Sociology of resource use

Fourth, community forestry[68] acknowledges the importance of social and institutional factors or sociology of forest resource use, and is therefore more holistic in its approach. Not only are people engaged in a different manner (as mentioned above), but there is a growing acknowledgement that the world's poor[69] are disproportionately located in rural areas and heavily dependent on forests for their survival (World Bank, 2004c; Shepherd *et.al.*, 1999). Therefore, a greater understanding of the dynamics of resource use is critical.

Rapid rural appraisal and participatory rural appraisal techniques[70] are critical to studying the sociology of resource use. This initiated the development of specific conceptual tools (e.g. user groups, interest groups, and local institutions). Forest project personnel use these tools to explore the roles of communities in forest management, distinguish between user groups and interest groups, identify local institutions, and evaluate equity outcomes (differentiated by gender, age, caste or social class, etc.). This in turn has contributed to a more sophisticated understanding of local dynamics and social processes (Gilmour and Fisher, 1998).

Evaluation and lesson learning

Fifth, integration of experiences from rural development, helped to focus on community needs. Community Forestry began in the 1980's when rural development specialists were beginning to look at the lessons of the failed plantations and woodlots. They realized from their experiences that foresters could be more effective when they first identified local community needs and used this as the basis for developing a collaborative program with community members to improve the sustainable use of forest resources. These programs combined the knowledge and professional skills of the forester with the knowledge and resources of the local community (Gilmour and Fisher, 1998; FAO, 1997b).

In large part, the evaluation or lesson learning approach comes from being exploratory and willing to acknowledge the unknowns, as well as being flexible -- with an ability to think and act. Gilmour and Fisher (1991) advocate using this approach by adopting action research as the *modus operandi.* I will briefly explain the importance of exploration and flexibility to better illustrate the departure from conventional forestry practices.

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[68] This is based on key design elements from an influential community forestry project in Nepal, the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Project.

[69] Rural poverty typically stems from low levels of productivity, limited access to markets, remote locations, inequality and other factors.

[70] Rapid rural appraisal is a methodology for "international development research, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. It is used to gather, analyze, and deliver information that is timely, cost effective, accurate, contextual, insightful, and highly useful as a basis for developing planning and action." (Messerschmidt, 1995:9). Participatory rural appraisal places the local people in the center of gathering the information and generates results based on local input, as opposed to rapid rural appraisal which may simply be used to gather information.

Community forestry is (in theory, not always in practice) exploratory and does not use a blueprint approach. One must acknowledge that there are a number of unknowns, particularly in terms of social interactions between forestry agency staff and villagers.

Unlike traditional forestry, community forestry is flexible, in linking itself to the uncertain nature of forest related "problems." Instead of using a predetermined approach or simply transferring technology, it is recognized that when information is collected and evaluated, the solutions to perceived problems may need to change. It is even possible that the nature of the perceived problems changes. This stands in stark contrast to the way government bureaucracies[71] operate, as they tend to have value systems that respect rigidity and uniformity over flexibility and innovation.

Acknowledgement of a flexible and action research approach is exemplified in the evolving nature of how community forestry is defined. As one of the first generation references indicates, FAO (1978) conceived community forestry to be any situation which intimately involves local people in forestry activity.

While this concept is very broad in scope, it embraces a full range of situations, including establishing woodlots, growing trees, processing tree and tree products, and generating income from small scale industry. What it rules out is large scale industrial forestry and other forms of forestry that contributes to community development through forms of wages or employment.

In 1991, Gilmour and Fisher defined community forestry as:

> the control and management of forest resources by the rural people who use them especially for domestic purposes and as an integral part of their farming systems (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991:xx).

By 1993, these innovators in community forestry amended their definition to reflect the growing importance of environmental factors, such that community forestry was about the control and management of forest resources by the rural communities who use them to support their farms and household economies thereby contributing to sustainable rural development and conservation of the environment (Fisher, 1993).

Arnold in an early review of 25 years of Community Forestry, stresses the evolutionary nature of community forestry definitions, stating that they have evolved to become more relevant to needs and interests of rural people with a 'stake' in forests. As suggested in the earlier section on societal goals, Arnold sees that community forestry is interpreted as part of the process whereby forestry is being refashioned in line with broader societal and economic changes (Arnold, 2001).

A more recent definition by the same authors quoted earlier emphasizes the centrality of genuine local control. Gilmour and Fisher assert that three essential features to community forestry include:

> the notion that local people are capable of taking a useful role in forest management, the notion that they have a legitimate right to be involved, and the notion that some level of local

[71] This point can be viewed as threatening or revolutionary to government bodies that depend on determining outcomes in advance and using formal expertise as technical knowledge.

participation is a minimum characteristic of community forestry (Gilmour and Fisher 1998:31).

Community Forestry as a new development philosophy

Community forestry by the mid-1990's had transformed from a social movement into a development philosophy, embracing the following principles:

> 1) An important contribution to sustainable rural livelihoods for large numbers of rural households; 2) A philosophical commitment to people's participation, principles of self-determination, and democracy; 3) An efficient way of managing forests by harnessing the skills, motivation and labor of interested local populations; and 4) A means of reducing the role of, and costs to, the state of protecting forests and the conservation values of forests (Arnold, 2001:19).

Brown (1999) contributes significantly to making the case that community forestry is a development philosophy. He suggests that when done well, the reasons for community involvement in forest management are based on a number of strong suits. These include the factor of **proximity,** which appreciates that local forest users are the immediate custodians of the forest; **impact,** whereby livelihood activities have a direct effect on the condition of the forest; **equity,** which could provide greater equity and social justice in forest exploitation activities; **improved livelihoods** by providing a safety net function; **enhanced management capacity,** when local involvement in management can improve the quality and condition of the forest; **biodiversity values** could be enhanced or maintained, as local users are likely interested in multiple products and environmental services; **cost-effectiveness** which would curb the government cost of management; **adaptation,** allowing for flexible and adaptive management; and **better governance** can help create checks and balances.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH PLAN AND RESULTS FROM PILOT PROVINCES

This chapter is divided into two main sections, a discussion of my research plan and methods and the results from the three province case studies. First, I focus my attention on policy advocates and their role in providing lessons from the provinces to the national level. Second, I link what happens in each province relative to forest land allocation, forest protection regulations and benefit-sharing in terms of learning variables and their impact on national policy.

Section A
A policy-oriented learning model for Vietnam

I draw on aspects of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (discussed in Chapter 4) by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999, 1997, and 1993) to examine why, after more than a decade of a centralized decision-making, top-down, target-driven and often authoritarian approach to formulating forest policy, the Vietnamese government chose to act differently in forest policy making in 2005. My research focuses on advocates' influence on changing procedures, policies and organizational arrangements.

The advocates I analyze are a core group of government officials, project-based innovators and bilateral aid donors currently supporting field sites and training projects in community forestry in Vietnam. These people joined forces with government forest officials from different ministerial departments, research institutes, international NGOs, multilateral and bilateral projects and individual forestry experts to form the National Working Group on Community Forest Management (NWG-CFM). This working group derives lessons learned from community forestry pilots in order to seek government support to adopt a formal community forestry policy.

I assert that a learning process occurred that was bottom-up in its direction of influence, whereby lessons from the field influenced district and provincial officials who, allied with policy advocates, then worked to influence national policy makers. My research question is: How did local forest management change forest practice and policy in Vietnam?

In order to answer this question, I investigated community forestry[72] pilots in three provinces. My dissertation reviews the state of affairs in forest policy as of 2005, and compares the current circumstances to a period stretching from 1992 to 1998. The new policy (as of late 2005) embraces a significant departure from the state-led, highly centralized approach to forest policy making. Further, strides to advance the social and environmental agendas with respect to forest policy have been made.

My study explores whether a trickle up process is occurring, as many of the lessons from these field sites are shared with decision makers. I believe that learning from and sharing these experiences is contributing to policy-oriented learning[73] and influencing the formulation of new

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[72] According to a comparison between conventional forestry and community forestry by Jackson and Ingles (1995), community forestry: provides for local control over forest management; encourages local participation in defining the needs and setting priorities for development; encourages local participation in implementing solutions; provides directly a local source of funds for community development and strengthens local links between development and forest conservation. Conventional forestry does not guarantee any of these conditions.

[73] Following Heclo, policy-oriented learning refers to the "relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and are concerned with the attainment (or revision) of policy objectives" (1974:306).

policy. I review how lessons learned from the field (i.e. local experimentation, project learning and bottom-up planning) can redefine national forest policy priorities. I test whether the new forest policy reflects the values, ideas and strategies that the community forestry advocates have been promoting.

This research explores the ways in which advocates seek to promote policy learning to shape public policy. My case study illustrates how new actors (other than the policy elite) appeared on the policy making scene. I investigate how these new actors brought lessons from the field to decision makers, thereby introducing a new approach to policy formulation. My study indicates that advocates for community-based approaches are interested in communicating the reality of what is happening in the field to central decision makers. I analyze whether communicating these lessons from the field has had an impact on forest policy. Further, I propose that a policy-oriented learning process may have occurred.

Research Plan

I selected three provinces for case studies, where each province showed a willingness to experiment, but went about the piloting in different ways and with different key actors involved. One province (Dak Lak) was the initial pilot province for Forest Land Allocation, with support from the Provinicial People's Committee and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and a province-wide working group, another province had intense donor support and technical assistance from a GTZ project (Son La); and the third province (Thua Thien Hue) had a combined effort of the Forest Protection staff working with communities, to foster its piloting.

Drawing from the case studies, I trace and analyze how a number of approaches served to inform, and to a certain extent, shape policy reforms. The three main areas I selected to focus on are piloting of community forest land allocations, local forest management planning initiatives, and benefit-sharing legislation. I identify different influences within the cases: for example in some places, the change came out of pilots and experiments at the local level, elsewhere sharing of lessons and study tours were conducted between provinces and in other places, indigenous group land management practices were recognized. I also trace the activities and ideas emanating from the Community Forest Management Working Group[74] from 1998-2005. I attempt to characterize this working group's influence by focusing on moments when this group built theory from practice and read the changing state conditions governing forest land stewardship.

Research Methods

Preliminary field research
In 1999, I spent five weeks in Vietnam to interview stakeholders about forest and land use policies, and the potential for community forestry. My first year paper assessed the barriers to adopting community forestry approaches in Vietnam. I focused on the issues of national legislation supporting security of access to resources users, as well as interest and capacity for collaborative management and institutions for local decision-making and authority in several field sites.

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[74] The Working Group is the most important convener of forest policy for my topic, but I also share the inputs from other organizations which share information on forest policy.

National policy and project documentation analysis

From 1999-2002, I gathered a wide range of background (policy and project) documentation on forest policy in Vietnam. My data comes from multiple sources, including the Community Forest Management Working Group, the Partnership for Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program, the Asian Development Bank technical assistance to reform the forest sector and bilateral aid[75] donors who currently fund community forestry field and training projects. Additional material came from non-governmental organizations working in Vietnam on broader issues like environment and community participation.

A major part of my analysis entails reviewing informal and official documents, legal texts on the Forest and Land Laws, documents produced for the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program reformulation process and Forest Sector Support Program planning. I reviewed community forestry conference documents, published reports and articles specific to forest policy planning in Vietnam and community forestry initiatives.

Action research

I conducted action research[76] as a participant observer of an intensive ten month policy making process in Vietnam from September 2000 – May 2001. During this time, I was seconded to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development as an environmental advisor and was involved firsthand in the policy reformulation for the Partnership for Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program which led to the Forest Sector Support Program. I served as a core member of the Synthesis Team, a six person team[77] responsible for reviewing all the major forest sector policies related to reforestation activities, environmental planning and social programs launched in the prior ten years. We based a portion of our analysis on results from an eight month exercise involving hundreds of Vietnamese consultants traveling to distant communes and villages to investigate the results of reforestation programs to date. Our six person team worked together for five months (from October 2000 to February 2001) to produce a major discussion report presenting lessons learned, sharing results of past programs, and pointing out gaps and failures in implementation. This draft report was shared widely within the policy community and an open discussion of its interim findings was held at a three day workshop. We received substantial input from Vietnamese provincial and district forest officers as well as top level policy makers. Our final report provided guidance towards restructuring policies and institutions in the forest sector.

During this five month period, I conducted two focus group discussions with government officials from central, provincial and district levels on current policies and institutions to support community forestry and environmental planning. In addition, I interviewed different government actors about the nature of community forestry pilots, the legal aspects involved in government adoption of a community forestry policy and prospects for the future.

Subsequently, I was a participant observer[78] for the first two rounds of a Logical Framework (Logframe) Analysis drafting group. This group held a series of meetings to review the

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[75] Principally including but not limited to support from the following governments: Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark.

[76] The principle activities involved in action research include planning, acting, observing and reflecting. It is a highly reflective, experiential, and participatory mode of research in which all individuals involved in the study, researcher and subjects alike, are deliberate and contributing actors in the research enterprise (van den Berg, 2001).

[77] Comprised of 3 foreigners and 3 Vietnamese.

[78] Acting as the second facilitator and the first faciliator's resource person.

Government of Vietnam's 10 year draft Forest Development Strategy and to negotiate the basis for the Forest Sector Support Program (FSSP). This exercise entailed formulating broader goals for the forest sector, supported by a focused objective or purpose and outlining a number of result areas for implementation.[79] Each discussion draft was subject to comments and input from a larger group of forest advisors and government officials.

I also provided input to the transition group responsible for preparing a large formulation exercise. During my final month in Vietnam in 2001, I served as a member of the Joint Formulation Team, responsible for using the results of the Logframe document, the Synthesis Report and the Forest Sector Development Strategy as the basis for producing a larger forest sector planning strategy.

Interviews, field notes, and focus group meetings

In 2000-2001, I attended and facilitated many informal meetings, focus group discussions and scoping exercises on activities in the forest sector. I participated in Partnership Steering Committee meetings, several workshops and a series of important policy meetings at different levels (central, provincial and district) of government. I collected field notes of various meetings and interview notes from meetings with government officials, NGOs, project personnel, donor officials, members of the Partnership Steering Committee, members of various advisory groups throughout the policy reformulation process and members of the Community Forest Management Working Group.

Provincial cases

I began with preliminary data (from field notes, interviews, workshop reports and project papers) on community forestry piloting initiatives occurring in ten different provinces. In May and June 2002, I returned to Vietnam to conduct another round of interviews to investigate what was occurring in several field-based community forestry pilots. I visited three provinces (Son La, Hoa Binh and Thua Thien Hue)[80] where community forestry initiatives were well advanced and interviewed relevant actors about the nature of these pilot activities. Details of the type of information sought follows below, including the set of questions in Box 1.

Case study interview questions

It was estimated that as of late 2001, community forestry pilots were occurring in more than 1200 communes. I used field data and case material from community forestry initiatives in three provinces to assess how local experimentation altered the policy landscape. This helped address questions related to the value of field experiments, the role of advocates, and policy-oriented learning. For instance, what has community forestry contributed to the revised forest policy planning framework? Or what lessons are available from pilot models which inform and influence policy at the regional and national levels?

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[79] This Logframe planning process resulted in a two discussion drafts, complete with indicators, means of verification, assumptions and ideas for activities, to support the result areas, contribute to achieving the purpose and the overall goal.

[80] I originally selected three provinces (Thua Thien Hue, Son La and Dak Lak) to review community forestry initiatives. Unfortunately the visit to Dak Lak was cancelled. This was due to insufficient lead time for getting approvals (this was during a period when foreigners traveling to the Central Highlands were highly restricted). I visited Hoa Binh, then supplemented the Dak Lak information literature from the Dak Lak provincial FLA working group, a number of papers produced by the SMRP and RDDL projects and discussions with current and former project and government personnel.

To learn more about the province-led initiatives, I asked the following questions: What are the key lessons learned and major contributions made by each project or province-wide initiative? Did certain cases rely on particular strategies, such as direct intervention through the Community Forest Management Working Group, use of formal presentations, publications, workshops, site visits, a focus on training and extension, legislative changes, using different actors, or trying to change the local incentive structures?

To collect my case material, I conducted a series of interviews (semi-structured open-ended in format) with different actors, including policy innovators at the community level (village leaders, selected farmers and project personnel), policy advocates (project personnel and government officials, members of the Working Group on Community Forest Management) and representatives of international support for community forestry pilots. I also interviewed (former and) current forestry officials at the national, provincial, district and commune level.

My research plan was to speak with a minimum of 4 informants at different levels (community, district, provincial, national) in order to test whether policy-oriented learning was occurring. Each informant I interviewed was asked a set of generic questions. For example: What forest policies have changed over the past 5 years? Why did these policies change? Who first introduced the concept of community management of forests to you? More detailed questions, such as those for district level forest officers (see text in Box 1) follow.

Additional questions were posed to villagers and national level policy makers. Depending on the nature of the discussion, additional questions asked varied with the respondent's observations, institutional affiliation and their level on the potential chain of ideas and learning. With policy innovators and advocates, questions centered on what types of strategies were used, how they got their message across, and how they determined who they could ally with in government. With government officials at various levels, questions focused on why certain decisions were made (or not made) and when. For example: Why would the government (particularly with its scientific expertise in forestry) wish to give up some of its authority in managing forests? Why should it share benefits from forest products with local communities? Are there not other more responsible actors (like State Forest Enterprises or the private sector) that could manage forests better (more productive and cost-effective) than communities? With higher level decision-makers, questions focused on the basis for making decisions and when they were made. Some questions sought to engage government officials to discuss policy inconsistencies and the role of piloting and local legislation formulation vs. national policy development.

Box 1: Interview questions for district level forest officers:

Inception
How does forest management planning start? What led to it? Who took responsibility for initiating it? Do you initiate it? If so, how? Does the community initiate it? And if so, please describe how this happens? Who was present and what were their reactions?

Roles
Can you describe what your role is in forest management planning? Has this role changed over the last 5 years? What are your thoughts about this role? Has it made your work more difficult or easier? In what ways, can you please provide examples? How would you describe your relationship with people in the communities?

Decision-making and input
How do you decide about forest management systems? Do you listen to suggestions from villagers? What types of ideas do they have? What do you think of the ideas they have? Are they appropriate for planning a management system? Do you take these ideas into consideration? If yes, then how do you take these ideas into consideration? How do you present your ideas, make suggestions and provide technical advice? Can you please describe how the forest management planning process happens (what are the steps)? What problems have arisen during this process? What have you (or others) done to resolve these problems?

Link to policy
How did you come to learn about the forest management/benefit-sharing legislation? Do you know why it was created? Is it necessary for forest management planning? Has this legislation been useful in clarifying issues? Do you see difficulties now or in the future as this legislation is only local and contradicts national legislation?

Knowledge of practice
Can you describe how you came to learn of the Son La (Dak Lak, or Dak Lak, Yen Bai, Ha Giang) provincial initiatives in community forest management planning? Could you give me a concrete example of where this has worked and where it has not worked (with as much detail as possible)? What could be done to make it better?

After my visit in mid-2002, I maintained good contact over the years with several people from the SMRP/Mekong Info program, the Working Group on Community Forest Management and the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program/Forest Sector Support Program within MARD. From 2003-2005, I collected additional journal articles, conference papers and project reports on community forestry. I remained in email contact (and would occasionally request updates on relevant topics) and received material from ten sources working in Vietnam.

Policy analysis

My analysis led me to look at experiments (see Figure 5) in each of the three provinces on the topics of forest land allocation, forest protection regulations and benefit sharing. I provide an overview of learning on each of these topics, with respect to methods, outcomes, legitimacy of norms established for each experiment (to establish validity with methods and outcomes) and institutional capacity to carry out the experiment. I then review the impact on national policy,

where this learning had an influence on the Land Law (2004), Forest Law (2005) and related regulations and/or implementation guidelines. I benchmark these issues with a comparison between what was achieved as of 1998 on these topics versus what has been achieved in 2005.

Figure 5: Experiments in each province	Learning	Impact on national policy
Son La: a. Forest land allocation b. Forest protection/mgt plans c. Benefit sharing	1) Methods 2) Outcomes 3) Legitimacy of norms; Legitimacy/Validity with methods and outcomes 4) Institutional Capacity	Learning had an influence through the following: Land Law 2004; Forest Law 2005; and related regulations and/or implementation guidelines
Dak Lak: a. Forest land allocation b. Forest protection/mgt plans c. Benefit sharing	1) Methods 2) Outcomes 3) Legitimacy of norms; Legitimacy/Validity with methods and outcomes 4) Institutional Capacity	Learning had an influence through the following: Land Law 2004; Forest Law 2005; and related regulations and/or implementation guidelines
Thua Thien Hue: a. Forest land allocation b. Forest protection/mgt plans c. Benefit sharing	1) Methods 2) Outcomes 3) Legitimacy of norms; Legitimacy/Validity with methods and outcomes 4) Institutional Capacity	Learning had an influence through the following: Land Law 2004; Forest Law 2005; and related regulations and/or implementation guidelines

Chapter 3

Section B
This section describes how experiments on Forest Land Allocation, Forest Protection Regulations, and Benefit Sharing led to learning in three provinces (Dak Lak, Son La and Thua Thien Hue) which in turn informed national policy. It then presents how this learning had an impact on national forest policy.

Dak Lak Province

Dak Lak Province, the first of the three provinces in my study, is located in the south west Truong Son mountain range. Total land area is nearly 2 million hectares, of which nearly 50% is covered in forest.[81] Dak Lak is made up of 44 different ethnic groups, including the Mnong, Ede and J'Rai, along with a sizable Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese) population. More recently, migrating groups from Northern Vietnam (such as the Thai, Tay and Nung) have relocated to the district.[82]

Deforestation in Dak Lak was a great concern for forest agency officials. A forest inventory conducted in 1993 indicated that the province had 1,231,900 hectare of forest land, or 63% forest cover. By 2000, forest cover was reduced to 52%, or 1,018,200 hectare. In seven years, more than 230,000 hectares of forest were lost.

Three primary reasons account for the rapid loss of forests in Dak Lak province. The first reason is a dramatic increase in the local population, due principally to in-migration. For example, the province had 1,152,000 residents in 1992 and this number increased to 1,844,000 by 1999 (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001). Migration came in two waves – government sponsored and spontaneous. The early settlers were predominately ethnic Vietnamese, encouraged to move to the area by the government. Many of the recent migrants were ethnic minorities from the Northern provinces, often settling in highland areas in or near forests.[83] Second, an enormous expansion of agricultural land has occurred, up from 93,000 hectares in 1976 to 525,000 hectares in 2000. Much of this expansion was due to an explosion in coffee cultivation,[84] often at the expense of natural forests. Dak Lak is the major coffee producing region in Vietnam, and this development brought great economic gains and put Vietnam into the position of the second largest coffee supplier on the world market (Brazil is the first). Other important agricultural crops in Dak Lak include rubber, pepper, forest products and cashews. And although most of the

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[81] 1,959,950 hectares from a GTZ report published in 2003 (Wode, 2003). The Central Highlands consist of four provinces, which as of 1996, averaged a forest cover of 56%. By province, the forest covered varied: Gia Lia 38%, Kon Tum 75%, Dak Lak 62% and Lam Dong 57% (MARD, 1996).

[82] There are at least 44 ethnic groups living in Dak Lak. In the two districts were FLA was most advanced, Lak and Ea Hleo, the figures according to Birner (2000) broke down as follows: the population of the Lak District was comprised of 64% ethnic minorities and 36% Kinh, while Ea Hleo District was made up of 38% ethnic minorities and 62% Kinh. The ethnic minorities traditionally living in the district include mainly J'Rai and Ede. Tay, Nung and Yao minorities have migrated to Ea Hleo District from Northern Vietnam.

[83] Sources estimate that between 1940 and 1989, the numbers of lowland Vietnamese, in the Central Highlands rose from 5 percent to 66 percent of the area's population. The population explosion has necessitated not only the formation of new districts and administrative groupings within the region, but also the creation of a new province, Dak Nong, out of the southwestern portion of Dak Lak in 2004.

[84] The coffee sector grew extremely fast in the 1990s and beyond. In the 1990s, cultivated area increased at an annual rate of nearly 15%, while output grew at an even faster rate (World Bank, 2004b). As of 1988 and onwards, the Vietnamese government maintained price controls on basic foodstuffs, creating strong incentives for farmers to produce cash and export crops, particularly rice and coffee.

forestry land in Dak Lak is managed by State Forest Enterprises (SFEs), in reality many communities use the SFE lands to cultivate rice and industrial crops. The third major reason is that despite the logging ban,[85] illegal logging[86] is widespread.

1. A. Forest Land Allocation

When collective farms were dismantled, agricultural land was handed over to individual households throughout the country. However, as suggested in the previous chapter, forest land allocation was proceeding very slowly.

In Lak District, during the time of the 327 Program, forest management tasks were shared by the Lak Forest Enterprise, the Management Boards of the Nature Reserves and the district authorities. The Lak Forest Enterprise was responsible for contracting land for forest protection under the 327 Program from 1994-1998 and during that time 4,000 hectares of forest were assigned to 137 households in two communes (Dak Nue and Dak Phoi). The criteria used to select these households included being residents of the village, ethnic minorities, solid party members and poor (Birner, 2000).

Land allocation was established as an alternative to the policy of yearly protection contracts under the 327 Program, providing a long- term and more sustainable approach. In Dak Lak, the forest protection contracts were considered to be too short-term to stimulate commitment to protect forests[87] and the funding to maintain this program was unlikely to continue according to government officials.

Although Decree No. 02[88] of the Government was promulgated in 1994, it took until 1998 for Dak Lak to begin allocating forest land to households on a trial basis. Three major reasons for this delay include a lack of capacity to undertake FLA, contested land claims and in Dak Lak -- unlike several provinces in the North where the forest land to be allocated was mostly vacant land, barren hills or unstocked forests -- most of the forestry land was well forested and classified as production forests, managed by State Forest Enterprises (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001). Several SFEs were unwilling to hand over forest land, despite the fact that the future of state management of forests, under the State Forest Enterprise system was no longer considered viable. Reform was underway, tied to the national Decision 187 (1999) on Reform of Organization and Management Mechanism of State Forest Enterprises.

In 1999, after a discussion between the Prime Minister and the Province People's Committee, it was agreed that forest land allocation would be initiated as a pilot in Dak Lak province. Responsibility for the pilot was assumed by the Dak Lak People's Committee.

The overarching assumption was that handing over forest land to households and local groups would address the problem of forest loss and degradation. The People's Committee of Dak Lak Province initiated FLA to communities, groups of households and individuals by granting land-

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[85] Since 1995 a logging ban was in effect for the entire province -- while it was not until 1997 that there was an overarching national logging ban.

[86] In fact, illegal logging was occurring to obtain timber and to clear land to establish crops – such as coffee, pepper and perennial crops (Birner, 2000).

[87] A report from DARD concluded that farmers acting as hired labor under the forest protection contracting system in many cases did not motivate good forest management or provide benefits to encourage forest management.

[88] On Allocation of forest land to organizations, households and individuals for long-term forestry purposes.

use rights for a period of 50 years. This initiative, teamed with the commitment of the province to move from state managed forests to participatory forest management, influenced national forestry policy development (Wode, 2003). The FLA pilots in Dak Lak inspired Son La and several other provinces to experiment with FLA programs.

The Dak Lak case shows a province with a very progressive attitude and outlook towards FLA. A Working Group on Forest Land Allocation and Joint Forest Management[89] was established in March 1999. From the working group, major objectives of FLA piloting were generated. Provincial authorities stressed dual goals that "Forest land allocation should lead to better protection and management of the forest and it should lead to improved livelihoods of the local people." (Birner, 2000:10) The pilot was intended to gather lessons from experiences and share information on Forest Land Allocation.

Ea Hleo Forest Enterprise was the first State Forest Enterprise to volunteer to embark on this process. The pilot happened while the FLA policy at national level was undergoing an overhaul to replace Decree No. 02,[90] but SFE reforms were proceeding very slowly. This meant that more power was vested at the commune and district levels[91] to undertake Forest Land Allocation.

Ea Hleo Forest Enterprise (EFE) played a pioneering role in the process of allocating forest land to households since the idea was borne by the EFE management itself. EFE did not receive an order from higher levels of government to develop this pilot (Nguyen, *et. al.*, 2001).

According to EFE's director, the following considerations led to the decision to start an FLA project. EFE (unlike many other SFEs in the province) actually had a positive experience with the assignment of forest land to households under the 327 Program. When the 327 program unexpectedly stopped, EFE's management searched for other possibilities to involve households in forest protection in order to stop the rapid degradation of forest resources. As the National level Decree No. 02 allowed for allocation of forest land to households, EFE's management considered this option. Further, to carry out such a pilot project was also seen as an opportunity to make use of the highly qualified staff[92] of the forest enterprise (Birner, 2000).

However, the logging ban prohibited any further harvesting. Instead, this project, decided to undertake FLA, as it was assumed that this process would become more important in future. As of early 2000, EFE's director approved a plan that allowed 30% of EFE's total area (nearly 10,000 hectares) to be allocated to households (Birner, 2000).

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[89] Decision 272 of the Dak Lak Province People's Committee set up a working group to develop provincial draft guidelines for FLA, systematically monitor implementation of FLA activities, study and document information and experiences from FLA for provincial and national dissemination, assist DARD and DFD to organize workshops and conferences related to land allocation and forestry issues, assist DARD and DFD in organizing training courses on institutional and technical forestry-related topics and keep regular contact with the National Working Group on Community Forestry and to conduct research programs at the provincial level (Working Group on Forest Land Allocation and Joint Forest Management and DARD, Dak Lak Province website, 5/23/00).

[90] In the form of Decision 245, 1998, of the Prime Minister on State Management Responsibility of all Levels of Forest and Forestry Land and Decree 163, 1999, of the Government on Organizing and Leasing Forestry Land to Organizations, Households and Individuals for Stable and Long-term Use for Forestry Purposes.

[91] The chairman of the District People's Committee has the authority to make the final decision on FLA.

[92] Of 20 staff of the SFE, 14 had university degrees.

Methods

The Forest Protection Office felt it best to grant forest land to those living close to it, and in order to reduce potential conflict [93] to let the villagers decide among themselves on household land allocation. Villagers convened a village meeting to decide how the land should be divided and distributed (who would receive which forest plot).[94] EFE staff contacted households through a questionnaire and received 200 household responses from three villages. After screening the questionnaires (using the criteria suggested below) 115 households were selected, corresponding to the number of forest plots expected to be available.

The SFE employees listened to the ideas on FLA put forward by the villagers, including selecting households based on poverty (those households lacking agricultural land) and being an ethnic minority. Then EFE shared some of their ideas, such as the availability of household labor[95] for forest protection, and past performance on forest protection by households under the 327 Program. The Land Management Office, along with staff from the cadastral unit, was in charge of allocating red book certificates[96] (Birner, 2000).

The following table illustrates the series of workshops, village meetings and provincial decisions that allowed a pilot province to allocate forest land, negotiate forest protection regulations and benefit sharing arrangements.

Table 3.1 Dak Lak FLA Planning 1998

Decision or major event	Date	Content	Objectives
Decision 96	January 21, 1998	Assignment of responsibility to EFE to implement forest land allocation with 1,000 ha in 1998	Giving general directions to carry out forest land allocation to local farmers
Decision 41	January 21, 1998	Pursuant to the decision, official plan assigned to EFE to carry out forest land allocation program	Submitted the official plan to EFE to make a budget available to undertake the process
Official letter 103	February 19, 1998	Guiding implementation plan for EFE to implement forest land allocation to farmers	Giving more specific principles for FLA to Ea Hleo
First workshop jointly organized by EFE and district authority Workshop held at Ea Hleo PC	June 13, 1998	Report a draft policy/plan of FLA Different stakeholders in province, district, commune invited to discuss the policy of benefit sharing as well as various possible steps to apply	Informing decision makers at different steps, draft of benefit sharing prepared by EFE to get comments before informing the local people
Second workshop jointly organized by EFE and commune	July 24, 1998	Informing in detail the forestry policy of the local government, aiming to reallocate FL to local people	Discuss with villagers about the policy of FLA, checking expectations and

[93] A potential source of land conflict came from areas where people had possessed land prior to the collectivization time (1975) and were requesting that these lands be reinstated (Birner, 2000).

[94] Estimated average plot size per household was between 15 and 20 hectares.

[95] Households with only one or two members are not considered. Further, ethnic minorities were only selected for the first allocations of forest land, as they were more impoverished than the ethnic Vietnamese in the region.

[96] The Land use certificate is transferred by the district PC to a household assigning long term rights to a particular plot of land. The assignment is recorded in a red book.

authority Workshop held at Ea Sol PC			getting feedback
Third workshop organized at hamlet levels	July 30, 1998	Discuss more detail with villagers at 4 hamlets where forests are to be allocated	Make sure that villagers, village headmen, and people understand about FLA policy
Official letter 487	August 14, 1998	Increase the planned area for FLA in Ea Hleo to 2,000 ha	Increase 1,000 ha more for FLA, due to Dak Mol dropping out of the program
Deliver questionnaires to each household	August 1998	Questionnaires are to gather opinions from different households as well as expectations on FLA	Make sure that the government policy will touch households
Fourth workshop at EFE	August 22, 1998	Bring opinions of villagers to district decision makers Inform draft of forest policy on allocation process, as well as plan Get consensus of District PC before submitting to provincial level	Keep local PC involved in the process
Fifth workshop at DARD, First draft of FLA plan after comments are considered from lower levels	August 29, 1998	First ratify the plan of FLA of EFE before submitting to a higher level	Get agreement from DARD before submitting to other related departments

(Source: Tran, 2000, with minor modifications)

However, despite the commitment by members of the province working group, and efforts on the ground, forest land allocation as a whole did not advance quickly in Dak Lak Province. Reasons for this are principally due to unresolved conflicts over land and the increasing value of forest land (where not only was there good forest on the land to be handed over, but desire for farming land was steadily increasing). Several reviews (including Tran *et. al.*, 2003 and Wode 2003) urged a rethink of the approaches taken. Wode found that although there was a focus on the approach of forest land allocation, this was not sufficient. In fact,

> forest loss continued or even increased in some areas allocated to local people as no practicable concept is in place to guide the new forest owner in sustainable forest management. Local people often lack sufficient understanding about their new rights and obligations and no supporting system from relevant forest agencies has been developed so far (Wode, 2003:3).

As of 2003, a new concept of community based forest management emerged. This concept was jointly developed by the provinical working group members, the Rural Development Dak Lak project[97] (RDDL), the Extension and Training Support Project of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)-MARD Program and local stakeholders at village, commune and district level. As of 2003, in Lak and Ea Hleo districts, two very different approaches were taken with

[97] Supported by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the project applied participatory approaches to village and community development planning, forest management and land use and land allocation activities. The project goal was to contribute to the National Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Program through sustainable and participatory natural resource management. Phase 1 runs from 2003-2009.

pilot communes, varying by the highly different forest conditions in the area. Lak was heavily degraded and thus, adopted afforestation, natural regeneration and testing of agro-forestry models. Ea Hleo district adopted a natural forest management approach, which promised immediate benefits for community members.

This new approach made an explicit link to the Working Group on Forest Land Allocation and Joint Forest Management. And following the National Workshop on Community Forestry Management in May 2003,[98] the Rural Development Dak Lak project furthered its commitment with a promise to develop and implement a Community Based Forest Management pilot scheme for Dak Lak province (Wode, 2003). In contrast to the earlier attempt to promote a blueprint approach, the new approach was demand-driven. The communities take the initiative by requesting to make an application for a Community based forest management permit, prepared by the Commune People's Committee and submitted to the District People's Committee.

The new community based forestry concept aimed:

> to tackle the main causes for forest degradation in the province by emphasizing a clear shift towards increased rights over forest resources being transferred to communities, groups of households and individuals... [by] consider[ing] (i) approved long-term land use rights after forest land allocation, (ii) participatory resource assessment for informed and detailed forest management planning and (iii) silvicultural capacity building at grassroots level, as the main pillars to ensure sustainable Community-Based Forest Management (Wode, 2003:7).

Thus, the reformulated approach acknowledged that FLA needs to be undertaken in a participatory manner to reduce inequities and potential conflicts. As of 2003, a new participatory approach, (supported by technical assistance from Son La province) using photomaps to identify and agree on the form of allocation. These maps helped villagers to delineate forest blocks on transparencies placed over geo-referenced aerial photographs (Wode, 2003).

Outcomes

Throughout the province, FLA began rather slowly, with an initial four months for discussions with key stakeholders, followed by five months to gather information in order to undertake the land use survey. A number of policy discussions (between March – September of 1999) led to the development of a FLA policy, backed by a Provincial Decision from the PPC. Delays were incurred due to re-demarcating plots for allocation.

In Dak Phoi Commune, initially the plans were to allocate forest lands to all seven villages in the commune, but given the time lag and costly process[99] of FLA, this was minimized to three villages. EFE allocated the first 2,000 hectares of forested land in Dak Lak with contracts and

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[98] Organized by the National Working on Community Forest Management and attended by 73 government policy officials and Vietnamese and overseas project staff of forest projects.

[99] Comparison of costs per hectare for allocation (Dak Lak in 1998) was 60,000 VND/per ha versus those for forest protection contracts at 20,000 VND (Son La in 1997). Average costs in Dak Lak came to 50,000 VND per ha, while the norm was around 2000 (Elke Forester, personal communication). Dak Lak was a province with much more inherent conflict (due to the pressures for land to cultivate more coffee, and the forest land with forests on it), and the institutional arrangements were perhaps less well aligned there than in Son La or Thua Thien Hue over the same time period.

the non-forested areas for Red Book certificates (Birner, 2000). Initially, only forest land from 2 SFEs (Ea Hleo and Dak Mol) was allocated to households on a trial basis. By 1999 and 2000, other SFEs joined (including Lak, Ea Kar, Cu Jut and Quang Tan).

In 1999 in Dak Lak province, production forest was being handed over to households, with the expectation that as of 2000, it would also be allocated to communities and groups of households. The Dak Lak People's Committee awaited guidelines from the national level on this topic (Birner, 2000). Workshops on Dak Lak Forest Land Allocation were held in the province and in Hanoi, during which the FLA program merits, difficulties and lessons were discussed.

In February 2000, the People's Committee of Dak Lak issued a Decision on FLA of the Ea Hleo case and a set of guidelines called the "Interim Regulations on Allocation of Forest and Forest Land to Organizations, Households and Individuals for Long-term sustainable usage for forestry purposes." According to Birner:

> The draft Interim Regulations contain very detailed specifications concerning the allocation (issue of land use titles) and the assignment (contracts, but no land use titles) of forest land... the documents of the People's Committee reflect a strong concern to link socio-economic issues (improving the livelihood of ethnic minorities) with environmental objectives (forest protection) within the forest land allocation program (Birner, 2000:50).

Forest Land Allocation in Dak Lak was initially slow, but this picked up gradually when the PPC issued Directive No. 02[100] (2001) to speed up allocation and the issuance of certificates of forest land use rights in Dak Lak. After two years of piloting, only 8,214 hectares (with 424,000 cubic meters of growing stock) was allocated to 415 households and 19 groups of households (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001).

As of 2001, on the positive side, according to a SMRP team, the following achievements had been noted:

> Natural forests with high growing stock were, in a show of courage, allocated to households. [In some cases] land was allocated to groups of households, meeting the aspirations of villagers. Certificates of land use rights were issued for allocated plots. There has been good coordination among...organizations in the land allocation process, in which the SFEs play the key role (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001:5)

The Province People's Committee approved a process for land allocation formulated by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which was presumably well suited to Dak Lak's particular conditions. However, it turned out that the guidelines were very complex and too demanding for the context. These methods -- along with other complications, like riots over land disputes and the FLA process conducted only in the Vietnamese language, instead of the local ethnic languages -- proved to be a downfall in the province, making FLA costly and slowing the pace at which it could proceed.

Between 1999 and 2002, a total of 16,199 hectares were allocated to households (32%), groups of households (32%) and communities (36%). By November 2003, the number of hectares

[100] Instructions of Dak Lak People's Committee on Promotion of forest land allocation and issuing forest land use certificates in Dak Lak Province.

handed over totaled 24,885 (in Lak and Ea Hleo districts). Future plans for allocation in two districts included handing over an additional 122,995 hectares to local people.[101]

2003 was a turning point for Dak Lak. The initial guidelines proved to be too elaborate to implement and several of the early cases of land allocation ended in serious conflict -- often between communities. In addition, the procedures of issuing certificates of land use rights were far too complicated.

Wode's review strongly recommended that a revised and simplified guideline be developed by the Working Group on Forest Land Allocation and Joint Forest Management with support from ETSP.[102] He found that "In view of further up-scaling of FLA it has to be emphasized that [the] existing provincial guidelines are still too complex and not practical enough for the implementing agencies" (Wode 2003: 26).

After this review, the Dak Lak Province technical guidelines (developed previously by the SMRP project and the Dak Lak People's Committee) were under revision. RDDL launched two pilots on community based forest management and one pilot on PLUP/FLA[103]. As of 2004, RDDL supported training on Community Based Forest Management (CBFM), in order to boost the management skills of local communities and move towards more of a demand-driven approach in forest planning for the forest users (Roth, 2004).

Also in 2004, RDDL undertook an assessment of the conflict situation among stakeholders involved in the PLUP/FLA process. During this exercise, an attempt was made to evaluate the FLA already implemented by assessing the information level of the stakeholders about their rights, obligations and benefits in the process. In addition, the suitability of the form of allocation was also reviewed, to determine whether the stakeholders agree to the status quo or if an inequity arose or if a chosen form of allocation was expected to lead to conflicts in the near future.

A final outcome was the introduction in 2003 of the new conceptual framework of CBFM. This framework was based on a review of the local context for forestry development (including a review of past, sometimes poor, performance), the lessons learnt from FLA experiences over four years, and experience gained by other projects in the region (Wode, 2003).

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

In Lak district, the Peoples' Committee was very heavily involved in the FLA process. The Chairman of the Peoples' Committee saw FLA as an appropriate policy to protect the forest resources of the district. He valued the chance to give forest resources an owner. There was a desire to establish a legal basis for allocation, using the work in Dak Phoi as a useful model to be applied elsewhere. The Chairmen expressed the view of the People's Committee as:

> confident that there will be only a few problems concerning FLA to households, if the villagers themselves can decide how the forest land should be allocated because they know the situation best (Birner, 2000:18).

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[101] Although given the slow pace of SFE renovation, the projected 122,995 ha figure appears to be optimistic.

[102] Extension and Training Support Project of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)-MARD.

[103] Participatory Land Use Planning, a methodology which is covered extensively in the Son La Province case.

A good deal of the faith that the People's Committee members felt was due to the presence of strong traditional community structures within the villages, which was considered to be the foundation for solid forest management and protection. However, this faith was not held by all in government, and many conflicting views were voiced by officials during the FLA process.

Two different perspectives surfaced on the topic of FLA. One perspective maintained confidence in the villagers' ability to manage forests and the other perspective saw forest land allocation as a large gamble. The two following quotes summarize the hope and/or misgivings of embarking on FLA:

> [it is a] promising option that forests could be better managed if handed over to local farmers. Hopefully, the test program could help by changing the loggers to become protectors, this may be a good alternative, or it could obtain unexpected results rather than just waiting and seeing forest destroyed day by day (SMRP, 2000:6).
>
> Assuming, if the testing program were to fail and as a result 7,000 ha of forest would have disappeared, Dak Lak could still learn a lot of lessons [about] managing forests (SMRP, 2000:4).

Institutional Capacity

Given the importance of the major institutions and stakeholders responsible for the implementation of FLA, this section is divided into the government role, the SFE role, the community role and the technical assistance/project role in Forest Land Allocation.

Government role
To strengthen the collaboration and cooperation among organizations that undertake state management functions relating to forestry, and at the request of DARD, Dak Lak set up a Forestry Advisory Team, consisting of representatives of concerned bodies in the province (Decision No. 272 in March 1999). The team helped the province expand its FLA program, promoted the involvement of communities in forest allocation and forest management, and facilitated information exchanges to help policy-makers of the province set forth forest development policies that are suitable to the provinces' conditions.

To put the government's Decision No. 245 on the Decentralization of State Management of forests into action, the Province People's Committee of Dak Lak decided to assign the Chairmen of the District People's Committees to be responsible for managing and protecting their respective forest areas. However, these decisions have only addressed the administrative management role of different governmental levels, rather than identify clearly the rights and conditions required for the implementation of these decisions (on for example, personnel and finance) (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001).

As of 2001, although the province had organized training courses on the implementation of Decision No. 245, this training fell short of expectations. As a result, this decision has not been clearly understood by different government levels and functional organizations. The functions and task of different government levels and sectors, as defined in the provincial legislation, were in many cases, overlapping. This ambiguity forestalled wide-ranging success in Forest Land Allocation.

The SFE's role

Three inhibiting factors make the SFE role in Dak Lak difficult. The first is that the SFEs, in several cases, were opposed to allocating the land to households, groups of households and communities (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001).

Another reason is that the SFE staff did not possess the participatory skills to engage the community members effectively on FLA. Given that some SFEs disseminated predetermined procedures rather than getting village input and generating ideas jointly, the result was often less than satisfactory.

Finally, between SFEs and local authorities, there was a confusion of state management functions of and business management objectives for forests (Birner, 2000). The SFEs manage large forest areas, which adhere to the administrative territory but are spread over many communes and districts. As a result, unless there is close coordination between the commune and district authorities, it is difficult to influence the SFE and its activities.

The community's role

Several reviews over the years revealed either limited or patchy participation of stakeholders during village meetings on FLA (Sikor, 1999; Birner, 2000; Nguyen *et. al.* 2003; Wode, 2003). At times it was simply incomplete information to begin the process[104], in other cases it was consultation, but then ignoring the wishes of the community in the FLA design. For example, the form of land allocation (to individuals, groups of households or communities) was not decided by the community but was imposed by the implementing agencies (like in Ka Ri village in Ea Sol commune). Villagers requested a reallocation of the land to the community, reversing the initial allocation made to individual households.

And, according to these reviews, the villagers often do not have a great deal of impact on the FLA design. According to the conflict assessment review:

> The general impression...was that if villagers disagree with the implementation plan of PLUP/FLA proposed by the government agencies, they may voice their opinions, but will eventually accept the decisions, imposed by the government agencies (Viriyasakultorn, 2004:13).

Assistance from projects and research agencies

Another set of actors supporting methodology development and lesson learning on the FLA process came from technical assistance projects and nearby universities. In the early days of FLA, it was SMRP (Sustainable Management of Resources Project) with funding provided by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), which was part of a network of projects sharing experiences on participatory natural resource management with practitioners and decision makers.[105] SMRP was active in promoting Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) approaches in Dak Lak as early as 1997. A review of the project by Sikor in 1999 recommended an expanded role for SMRP in documenting the FLA process, by assisting with field testing, through preparing background documents and keeping track of major legal documents. SMRP assumed this role by providing administrative and institutional support to DARD and collaborating with a new research partnership (co-hosted by the division of Resource

[104] Especially poor village members were reluctant to receive forest land as they were afraid that with receiving land use certificates they were also expected to invest in the forest area (Wode, 2003).

[105] Promising approaches in participatory natural resource management are tested in selected pilot sites and these experiences are shared widely.

Economics at Humboldt University in Berlin, the Agriculture and Forestry program at Tay Nguyen University in Dak Lak and the Institutes of Economics and Ethnology in Hanoi) which agreed to develop assessment methods for FLA.

Working closely with the working group, RDDL (as mentioned previously in the methods section) assumed a portion of the "FLA midwife" role after SMRP closed down its field operations in Dak Lak. Starting in 2003, RDDL is implemented by the Department of Planning and Investment of Dak Lak Province with support from GTZ. The project objectives are to alleviate poverty and improve livelihoods of the rural population through development and/or adjustment of participatory planning procedures, which enable community and social organizations as well as government institutions to identify and thereafter support sustainable natural resource management systems. This includes trying to build institutional capacity for village development planning (VDP), forest management and land use and land allocation activities.

Finally, much of the cooperative work on learning from the FLA experience was undertaken by the Working Group on Forest Land Allocation and Joint Forest Management of Dak Lak. The working group collaborates with several partners active in Dak Lak, including the RDDL project, the Extension and Training Support Project of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)-MARD Program, SMRP, the Social Forestry Support Program (SFSP, supported by Helevetas), Tay Nguyen University and local stakeholders at village, commune and district level.

2. A. Forest Protection Regulations

Methods

In the early implementation of FLA, village forest protection regulations began with a meeting held at the district level, attended by the People's Committee chairmen from all communes. The meeting enabled a discussion on the directions and guidelines to develop regulations for forest protection and management at the village level.

The forest protection officers were aware that traditional village regulations existed especially for watershed areas and for forests where the villagers used to collect timber for immediate domestic needs (e.g. for house construction or coffins). At commune level, the forest protection officers explored (with the assistance of the traditional village headmen) whether forest protection regulations existed and were practiced in their area. Then guidelines for forest protection regulations were developed in cooperation with the traditional village headmen.

Based on the work in 25 villages, between 2000 and 2002, SMRP and the Provincial Forest Department produced technical guidelines for Forest Land Allocation and a similar process was developed and used for Forest Protection Regulations.

Although village headmen in some cases represented the villagers, this was not true everywhere. A revisiting of the Forest Protection Regulation system was in order by 2003 by the Dak Lak Working Group on FLA members, as it was not effectively building on villagers' knowledge. In order to address the problems of FLA in the province, an attempt to jump start the process was made, by adopting a community forestry model.

Forest Protection Regulations began with village meetings in which community members shared their ideas and opinions on the purpose of the FPRs and agreed upon what they would like to achieve. Once the regulations have been developed and agreed by all community members, they were submitted by the village leader to the commune authorities and from the commune to the district authorities for approval. The result of the approval was a legally binding document to enforce land use rights and to consult higher level administration for support in violation cases that could not be solved by the village alone (Wode, 2003).

To facilitate the development of FPRs, a resource assessment is undertaken, for information gathering and monitoring purposes. Participatory forest resource assessment allows for the evaluation of forest resources, which can be used for forest management and planning purposes. It is a joint activity involving the commune forest management board as technical agents, extension workers as facilitators and local forest users. The process aimed to support stakeholders to gain confidence in the techniques which would enable them to independently carry out future resource assessments. It would reduce the workload of Forest Protection agents and help establish a basis for mutual trust and information exchange between Forest Protection staff and local stakeholders (Wode, 2003).

As of 2004, a participatory approach developed by the SFDP project in Son La was transferred to improve Forest Protection Regulation planning in Dak Lak. According to Roth (2004),

> The methodology aims at building the farmer's capacity to analyze their forest resources and traditional regulations, eventually identifying and adopting the specific set of forest regulations that will best respond to farmers' and [the] government's forest management needs. It is furthermore targeted to improve the relationship between Forest Protection Officers and local communities via the establishment of a rapport of trust, respect and exchange of information (Roth, 2004:6).

Outcomes

Responding to the obstacles identified in April 1999, Dak Lak province issued: No. 13 Instruction of Dak Lak People's Committee as a measure to treat and control the illegal forest logging for cultivation of coffee, pepper and short lived crops.

SFEs reported a number of poor experiences in forest protection in 327 program sites, where households ignored forest protection regulations and even destroyed forests in some cases (Birner, 2000). Often the forest protection rules were generated from outside and they did not prove effective. It was recognized that it was essential to recast forest protection rules in light of traditional practices and local needs. From 1999 to 2000, Forest Protection Regulation Guidelines were developed in cooperation with the traditional village headmen.

In April 1999, the Dak Lak PPC felt that along with the legislation to promote and guide forest protection and management, guidance was needed to address enforcement and to seek to punish forest destruction. This Instruction No. 13 was titled "Some measures to treat and control the illegal forest logging for cultivation of coffee, pepper and short lived crops," containing details on how to treat illegal forest destruction and a commitment to reforest illegally logged forest areas.

When FLA began in 1999, the Department of Forest Protection was in charge of implementing a program on Forest Protection Regulations. The program consisted of a two-day training course to be conducted for 125 communes. At that time, selection was made of pilot sites to gain

experience with the program and drafting of FPR by the local people, with the assistance of the commune authorities.

A national Circular, No. 56 on village level Forest Protection and Development Regulations, was adopted in 1999. The Circular text did not specify that a participatory approach be used. And in the majority of cases, a blueprint was circulated, which was a list of prohibitions typically superimposed over traditional community practices.

As of 2001, in cases where a participatory process of land allocation occurred, awareness of local people about forest protection improved. And in these cases, people were actively involved in managing and protecting the forests allocated to them.

An important review of FLA progress linked with forest protection measures showed that although forests in Dak Lak are declining, allocated forests declined one-third less than unallocated forests (Tran *et. al.*, 2003).

In Ea Hleo, Lak and Krong Bong districts, a consortium of projects (SMRP, SFSP and ETSP[106]) supported the development of Village Forest Management Regulations in 14 villages with assistance from district Forest Protection Officers. These projects also involved six households in Diet village in on-farm trials with agroforestry systems.

In 2004, RDDL conducted training on participatory means to establish (or revise) forest protection regulations. The results from Ta Li village (in Ea Sol Commune, El Hleo District) were positive and built upon "existing traditional laws and strong community cohesion" (Roth, 2000:7). Further, by acknowledging individual rights and responsibilities, violations were more closely monitored and reported. In Jol village (Dak Nue Commune, Lak District), the training brought to the surface larger issues, including a general dissatisfaction with the FLA situation (16 of 30 households received forest land, on an individual household basis). Revisions were made to the existing FPR, and the process provided greater input from villagers on the FPR design process. The team conducting the training strongly advocated replication of the training courses and they shared the field experiences with government officials at a meeting in June 2004 (Roth, 2004).

By 2005, the RDDL[107] project, together with relevant provincial agencies, periodically reviewed the community-based forest management scheme, particularly with a focus on capacity building needs or additional financial support. A final evaluation is to be conducted after five years of CBFM implementation (which would be in 2008, at the end of the piloting phase) to assess the validity and feasibility of the technical, organizational, administrative and financial arrangements developed during the piloting phase (Wode, 2003). The District People's Committee is responsible for conducting the evaluation. The outcome of the evaluation would shed light on whether the requirements[108] for the granting of a long-term CBFM permit are met, or whether adjustments are needed to make a community eligible for a CBFM permit.

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

[106] The German supported Sustainable Management of Resources Project in the lower Mekong Basin; the Swiss sponsored Social Forestry Support Program and the Swiss funded Extension and Training Support Project.
[107] The German funded Rural Development Dak Lak project.
[108] In cases of serious mismanagement of forest resources the CBFM permit would be revoked.

Forest management among ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands has a long tradition. It has resulted in several cases of locally adapted effective concepts of forest protection and use based on ecological, social and cultural considerations. In the area of Ea Hleo, traditional village norms on forest protection appear to be active, and in some cases are supported by traditional by-laws. In Ea Son commune, Cham village traditional law effectively ensured the protection of forest areas of over 20 hectares in proximity to the village center and surrounding areas like Chu Phot mountain.

> The community furthermore shows a very strong commitment on forest protection by independently arresting and fining outsiders engaged in illegal logging activities in their village forest areas, even though no forest protection regulations were in place and no support from Forest Protection staff was available. Traditional forms of resource protection and management should therefore be strengthened and incorporated into modern forms of participatory forest management to the greatest possible extent (Wode, 2003:5).

Solid, locally generated rules are stronger if they reflect local norms of practice and traditional resource management systems. It is possible to make use of customary traditions and combine these with ideas from the new commune forestry units to make more powerful and effective protection regulations. The Tran study (2003) indicated that

> community rules, in spite of changes, remain effective in the local forest resource management system even after Forest Land Allocation implementation. Rules established by [the] community are dominantly governing the exploitation and usage of forest resources (Tran *et. al.*, 2003:7).

One final point on building upon traditional resource systems is the importance of self-initiation, where genuine interest needs to be generated on the part of the community. This extends to community forestry itself, which is best initiated by an interested community. Without an interest in undertaking forest management and a sense of ownership in the decision making process, implementation is unlikely to succeed (Wode, 2003).

While there is an appreciation for traditional rules of forest management, by the forest protection officers, there is also skepticism[109] about the extent to which these rules are functioning in certain areas.

There is a great deal of variation on whether forest protection by villagers is effective when faced with strong external threats. Within Ea Son commune, villages face severe forest losses caused by armed Kinh outsiders encroaching into areas of allocated forest, and the forest owners do not dare to act[110] for fear of revenge (Wode, 2003). For the most part, when forests were allocated to individual households, the forest protection governance measures developed were weaker than when forests were allocated to the community (Tran *et. al.*, 2003).

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[109] These officers are uncertain as to what the role of clans in forest management could be, if in some cases the size of clans has increased to such an extent that clans may not constitute a functioning management structure in the village (Birner, 2000).

[110] According to the experience of the Forest Protection Office, villagers feel that they do not have the means to act against outsiders (Birner, 2000).

Institutional Capacity

Originally, forest protection was implemented through the Forest Protection sub-department generated village regulations. In 1999, the People's Committee of Dak Lak issued Decision 441 (March 2, 1999) requesting each commune to establish a forestry board. These boards had an annual budget for operational costs. However, for the most part, the commune level personnel lacked the capacity (due to too few people having many roles and quite limited budgets) to manage forests well. As a result, many violations of the Forest Protection Regulations by illegal loggers and by ordinary people were not being dealt with in a timely manner.

By promoting a community forestry model in 2003, the aim was to establish forest protection regulations, (which not only built on traditional practices of forest protection) but they also enabled the communities' capacity to analyze forest resources (through the resource assessment exercise). The ability to analyze forest resources[111] allowed stakeholders to become better forest managers, and better able to monitor forests. Thus, building institutional capacity could occur by facilitating community forest planning through:

> a participative approach [which] helps local people to understand why and how management decisions are made and ensures that their demand and expectations are incorporated in the results (Wode, 2003:13).

This allows for a participatory monitoring program to be set up at village level. Which enabled stakeholders to:

> take over tasks and responsibilities in assessing their own progress towards the defined planning goal. In this process the community itself analyses information that they have determined as important (like number of forest violations, impact of forest thinning or harvesting) (Wode, 2003:16).

The monitoring element of forest protection regulations also feeds into a forest management planning process which allows villagers to identify future production and protection goals for different forest areas. As suggested by work in Son La (transplanted to Dak Lak), the resource assessment can in part be done by villagers taking a transect walk through the forest to look at current resources and site conditions.

A reporting role is established for commune and district level staff to monitor, approve and see that reports are submitted (e.g. timber harvest application form or tax and benefit sharing arrangements). Enforcement of the FPR is assumed by the monitoring and evaluation component of the CBFM, which combines external monitoring (by supportive agencies like Forest Protection Offices) with internal monitoring (carried out by the community) to increase awareness of stakeholders and to assess the need for adjustment or further external support for the demands of the villagers.

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[111] At local level the villagers are responsible to ensure that regulations designed by them are followed. This is one of the main reasons why participation of community members in the design process is of crucial importance. In the process of implementing and enforcing FPDRs, local people are getting familiar with their rights and responsibilities as well as the fines applied to violations. Forest protection groups are formed among villagers to ensure compliance with the agreed regulations (Wode, 2003).

3. A. Benefit Sharing

Methods

Table 3.2 illustrates the series of workshops, village meetings and provincial decisions in late 1998-1999 that produced the basis for handing over forest lands and planning for benefit sharing in the province.

Table 3.2 Dak Lak FLA and Benefit Sharing Planning 1998-1999

Decision or major event	Date	Content	Objectives
Official letter No. 979	September 14, 1998	Give comments about the plan and the policy of benefit sharing (first draft)	Discussion to determine suitable means for FLA
Official letter No. 257	March 16, 1999	Providing comments about the plan and discuss how forests can be allocated to local farmers or long-term contracts for forest management prepared (second draft)	Discussion to decide how existing forest can be reallocated or just make long-term contracts with local people
Sixth workshop at DARD	April 10, 1999	Providing comments on the plan and discuss how forests can be allocated to local farmers or long-term contracts for forest management prepared as well as means to share benefit (third draft)	Discuss at provincial level outside DARD
Seventh workshop at DARD	April 18, 1999	Discussions to revise some contents in the plan (fourth draft)	Discuss with other departments outside DARD, DPI, LMD such as Justice department, Department of Scientific Technology and Environment, Communist parties
Eighth workshop at DARD	May 25, 1999	Discussions to revise some contents in the plan (fifth draft)	Consideration to prepare an agreement among DARD, DPI, LMD before sending to Dak Lak Peoples Committee
Ninth workshop at Ea Sol commune	July 20, 1999	Requirement from the Dak Lak People's Committee to make sure that after revision the plan will still satisfy local farmer's expectations	Checking that the plan satisfies expectations of villagers after many discussions
Proposal of multi-departments of DARD, DPI, LMD No. 772	August 14, 1999	Final agreement of three major organizations about the proposed plan for FLA in Ea Hleo	Final preparation to submit for approval
Decision No. 2232	September 7, 1999	Approval of the proposed plan on FLA in Ea Hleo	Official approval and classify the roles of different related organizations Presented clearly that existing forest resources be allocated to local farmers accompanied with land use rights certificates

(Source: Tran, 2000, with minor modifications)

Benefits were determined for timber products, based on a system which rewards villagers for each year spent managing and protecting the forest. Thus, after paying taxes, villagers are entitled to 6% of the value of the exploited timber. A household that manages and protects forests for 5, 10, 15 years will enjoy 30%, 60% or 90% of the value of the exploited timber. If timber is not harvested before year 16, the household will receive 100% of the value of the timber allowed to be exploited (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001). Government regulations on harvesting practices apply.

If villagers need timber for house construction, then a request is made for the local authority to authorize it. The District People's Committee can issue a permit to log up to 5 cubic meters of round wood per household.

As the forest is replanted (with investments made by the household), 100% of the product will belong to the household. Tax is exempted for the first cycle. Land use tax is applied from the second cycle and thereafter. Other policies are implemented in accordance with Decision 661 of the government (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001).

Outcomes

In September 1999, the Dak Lak People's Committee set out some regulations on farmer's usufruct in order to speed up the land allocation process. Benefit sharing allowed villagers to collect non-timber forest products from their allocated forest land. Article 12 of the interim regulations[112] stated that of the forestry land allocated to each household, there should be a part used for agricultural production, such that the household can develop agro-forestry production on the land (including planting industrial crops, fruit trees, home gardens, or raising livestock while protecting the forest). However, forestry land with natural forest on it could not be converted to agricultural land.

However, in areas were there is little natural forest, the results of the FLA provided little benefit to the local people. Often these resources are only poor bamboo forest or even bare land with very limited benefits to be expected in the near future e.g. in Dak Nue commune where 85% of the allocated forest resources are classified as bamboo and bare land.[113] However, in some areas like Ea Son commune, a much more promising benefit situation occurs (with only 8% of the allocated forest resources classified as bamboo or bare land and most of the forest allocated is classified under categories 3a, or 2a or 2b).

The benefit policy of the province included rights to obtain land for cultivation, logging for house construction timber, and collecting NTFPs. For those places where agricultural land is not available, the People's Committees at all levels were to find solutions to grant households agricultural land (to provide for people's livelihood). Under discussion for households with little or no access to farming land was an offer of up to two hectares of agricultural land.
The benefit sharing policy for the province strongly reflected a commitment to socio-economic issues (improving the livelihoods of ethnic minorities) with environmental objectives (forest protection) within the forest land allocation program (Birner, 2000).

Results on benefit sharing were varied due to different types of forest and different outcomes affected by local power structures. In mid-2002, a local study of benefits (Nguyen, 2005a) confirmed that the practice of benefit sharing differed from what was legally allowed. For instance, in some villages, both forest owners and non-forest owners (as in those who hold a red book certificate and those who do not) benefited from use of the forests. Permission to collect timber (by permits) was granted unevenly, resulting in some households without permission collecting timber. Finally, in some cases, examples of state patronage emerged, influencing who received benefits and at what level, typically favoring local officials (*Ibid*).

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[112] People's Committee of Dak Lak (February 2000) Interim Regulations on Allocation of Forest and Forest Land to Organizations, Households and Individuals for Long-term sustainable usage for forestry purposes

[113] Of types 1 a, 1b and 1c in the Vietnamese forest classification system.

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

The amount of benefits received varied enormously, due to different types of forests handed over and different policies adopted, despite the fact that the policy was meant to be uniform throughout the province (Tran *et. al.*, 2003).

It appears that in many places there were no immediate[114] additional benefits (if access to forest resources did not change matters with forest land allocation). In Dak Nue commune, Jol village customary laws on natural resource management seem to be more eroded, (perhaps due to the wish of the villagers to allocate forest land to individual households only). Forests in that area were under a great pressure to convert to agriculture, and could only withstand if sufficient economic benefits could be obtained in the near future. Consequently, villagers clearly expressed their interest in the establishment of plantations with fast growing species like *Acacia* (Wode, 2003).

Unlike the Thua Thien Hue case,[115] provincial authorities in Dak Lak did not experiment a great deal the development of a benefit sharing policy prior to adoption of the national Decree 178. Provincial authorities found implementing Decree No. 02 to be problematic, as the government had not issued any policy on benefit sharing, applicable to forested land allocated to households. As a result, several villages found there to be little guidance or clarity on benefit sharing measures.

Institutional Capacity

Although benefits to communities have increased since the beginning of FLA piloting, several of the reviews stressed that community knowledge on rights, responsibilities and benefits is uneven. Some of this is due an overemphasis on FLA, without due concern to guiding the new forest owners in proposing benefit sharing arrangements. This problem is further compounded by inconsistent participation by community members in the FLA and Benefit Sharing processes to date. According to Tran and colleagues,

> ...the participation of local people in the FLA [and benefit sharing] program obviously has an impact on the organization and management of forest by local people. The more their participation, the more they could contribute comments, understand policy, recommend approaches as well as measures to efficiently manage forests (Tran *et. al.*, 2003:25).

Further, the more people participate in discussions on the FLA process, and if their views are taken seriously and adopted regarding rights, obligations and benefits, the greater chance there is for better forest management, protection and local benefits for communities.

As previously noted, the role of the SFEs in this process has not strongly encouraged full participation by communities, since SFE staff are not well trained in facilitation skills.

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[114] However, the right to bestow the forest land to children could potentially provide a great incentive to invest labor or finance into forest management.

[115] Where they were actively writing their own benefit sharing policies, rather than waiting for the central government to produce a policy and hand it down to them.

With the introduction of the community forestry model in late 2003, the aim was to provide information exchange and to enable effective collaboration among different agencies, projects and national programs. Training was a top priority for implementation, including activities like training of trainers, training development and follow-up activities such as coaching, feedback and evaluation (Wode, 2003).
Training[116] was to be made available for district agencies, like the Forest Protection Offices or the Agriculture and Cadastral Offices, the SFE staff and the communities themselves.

Wode summarizes the community forestry model with the various roles and responsibilities as follows:

> The system envisions communities or groups of households as main decision-makers and beneficiaries to whom forest land is allocated, while commune administration provides services in coordination and controlling of resources planning and utilization. District level authorities are [the] main bodies for approval of forest [management plans]...and [responsible for resolving conflicts] in cases where conflicts on forest resources cannot be solved within the commune (Wode, 2003:8).

Son La

In Son La, the dynamics of forest land allocation were very different to those in Dak Lak, for several reasons. State Forest Enterprises were not the primary forest owner in the province[117] and there was not a great deal of natural forest to begin with (forest cover in 2000 was 21%). Forest land allocation in Son La adopted a "learning-by-doing approach," which proved to be far more successful and systematic in its implementation than in Dak Lak province. A great deal of the power which enabled large advances on forest land allocation, forest protection and benefit sharing in Son La is due to the technical assistance and guidance from an influential project in the province, the Social Forestry Development Project (SFDP) and its ability to work effectively with villagers and local forest state agencies.

The Social Forestry Development Project Song Da was a technical cooperation project[118] between the Governments of Vietnam and Germany, executed by the Department of Forestry Development within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and supported by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ). The project area was located in the Song Da (Black River) watershed (an area of 2.6 million hectares) in the northwest of Vietnam. The project pilot areas were located in a predominantly Thai inhabited Son La Province (with ethnic

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[116] Training documents should provide detailed information about objectives, timeframe and materials needed for all involved steps as well as further suggestions and examples to provide guidance to the trainer (Wode, 2003).
[117] There were only 6 SFEs in Son La managing less than 341,000 hectares of production forest as of 2001.

[118] The project goal is that the living conditions of the local population in the Song Da region are improved while stabilizing the ecology. The project purpose is for rural communities in Son La and Lai Chau provinces manage their natural resources in an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable way. The overall timeframe of the project is 12 years, from 1993 until 2004, divided into 4 phases. SFDP started in 1993 with an orientation phase, followed by the first implementation phase from April 1995 until December 1998. A second implementation phase ran from January 1999 until December 2001. A final hand-over phase was from January 2002 to December 2004.

Vietnamese and Hmong minorities) as well as in the Hmong populated Lai Chau Province. The Thai and Hmong ethnic groups account for nearly 65% of a total population of over 3.2 million people in the watershed.

Forest degradation in the province was due to a combination of forest fires, illegal logging and shifting cultivation. The SFDP project, along with local government, led the fight against the main causes of deforestation in the province, rural poverty and insufficient food production.[119] The project goal was to attain higher food production and cash income in a more sustainable manner, as well as to increase forest cover through natural regeneration, plantations and forest management activities.

From 1993 until 2004, this project worked with local officials and villagers to test out, refine and share experiences from different methodologies prior to adopting, and sharing the lessons learned more widely with the national forest policy community. Son La Province benefited greatly from the development of methodologies on participatory land use planning and land allocation, community forestry, social and economic planning at village levels, and agro-forestry extension.

Son La province is home to perhaps the most important watershed in the country -- the headwaters for the Red River Delta and the site of a major hydroelectric dam (to be expanded to become the country's largest dam). The Provincial Forest Plan (2001-2010) for Son La stresses the importance of restoring, protecting and developing vegetation cover for watershed protection, special use and production forests. This objective is essential to meet the direct and long-term requirements for sustainable forest management. In addition, protecting watershed values is vital to maintaining a number of other sectors, like agriculture, water resources, fisheries, tourism and energy. The Provincial Forest Plan is also concerned with the positive transition of forest production from traditional exploitation-oriented forestry to what is referred to as "people forestry" focused on protecting, restoring and developing forest.

As described in the Chapter 1, forest land allocation (as opposed to agricultural land allocation) was proceeding slowly in most of the country. One of the most critical sticking points was due to land use conflicts between villagers over exactly where agricultural land versus forest land was considered to be. Son La and Dak Lak provinces were granted a pilot status to experiment in addressing these issues.

During an interview[120] Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Lung (former Song Da Social Forestry project advisor) explained that Dak Lak and Son La were the two provinces serving as pilot provinces. After Son La established a working group on Forest Land Allocation, the chairman and the vice chair of the Son La Province People's Committee met the Prime Minister and agreed to allow these pilot provinces to undertake allocation of existing forest as of the end of 2000. It was also agreed that the government was to learn from the experiences of the two pilot provinces.[121]

1. A. Forest Land Allocation Methods

[119] Average food income per person per year (rice equivalent) is only 200 kilograms, while in the delta provinces it is 350 kilograms.
[120] Interview held on May 31, 2002.
[121] There is no official document marking this agreement, but the understanding to proceed with the pilots was firm.

Son La developed its own methodology on land use and participatory land allocation -- commonly known as LUPLA (which stands for Land Use Planning and Participatory Land Allocation) which helps to define and enforce the forest land use certification process. LUPLA entails extensive consultation with villagers, who are asked to describe current land use patterns. By taking account of local conditions, consultative approaches are used to gather information about the total forest area, ownership, function and spatial distribution of forest types.

Discussions with villagers yielded information on current land use, which was then plotted onto rectified photomaps. Villagers were then asked to select and delineate forest blocks for joint management on transparencies over a geo-referenced aerial photograph overlay. These results were transferred to a computer and used to produce accurate land use maps. These maps served as a representative tool to engage villagers in discussions on natural resource use, planning and management.

According to the people facilitating the discussions, the accuracy[122] of the map, combined with the involvement of local stakeholders provides the basis for a meaningful discussion on the social, economic and environmental problems to be factored into the planning process. Villagers discuss land use choices for different forest zones, designating each zone with a corresponding management function (either production or protection) and ownership. This information is compiled, and it is reproduced as a 3D model, which is then transferred to a village forest map.[123]

A second village meeting occurs to discuss land use planning and to propose a forest land allocation plan. Land use choices are made to designate certain areas as forest land, agriculture land, residential land or other use types. After further discussions and agreement, the next steps include a draft mapping of village land use, which is discussed at a workshop on forest land allocation. After the workshop, a land use and forest land allocation plan (signed off by the village chief) is sent to the Commune People's Committee and District People's Committee for approval.

The LUPLA process provides the necessary legal recognition for forest land allocation. The end result is issuing land use right certificates (in the form of Red Book Certificates[124]), ensuring long-term security to invest labor and finance in forest management and protection.

Outcomes

In April 1999, the Son La Provincial People's Committee issued its "Guideline on Participatory Landuse Planning and Land Allocation Applied at Commune Level in Son La Province." The three objectives of the guideline included direct and full participation of local people in the entire process of land use planning and land allocation; feasibility within locally available financial, human and technical resources at district and communal levels; and an acceleration of the land

[122] A Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver further complements data collection and allows instant verification of the developed village forest land use map at the site.
[123] The 3D model allows villagers to discuss current land use, as well as point out the location of roads, streams, fallow land, upland fields and forested land. The topographical map is scaled at 1/10,000.
[124] In the process of allocation of existing forest to groups of households, for all of the forest types, red books are granted and they are valid for 25, 30 or 50 years.

use planning and land allocation process in an efficient and sustainable manner by applying Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques.[125]

The most significant outcome in Son La was the sustainable solution achieved by combining land use planning with land allocation. The purpose behind Land Use Planning was that

> land is distributed rationally according to usage structures, a basis is provided for the commune's annual plan, different types of land are managed uniformly and land use demand of different sectors and land users is addressed in the most beneficial manner for local socio-economic development
> (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999:6).

Further, according to the PPC Guideline, Forest Land Allocation must be based on land potentials and expected benefits of users (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999). Priority is granted to hand over land plots for agricultural purposes so as to ensure food security.

Following the results of LUPLA, the outcome for villagers was increased rights and obligations (in the form of forest protection regulations and benefit sharing, to be covered in the following two sections), allowing them to protect and sustainably manage forests within their village boundaries.

Son La province was selected to pilot implementation of two national decrees (Decree 02 and Decree 163) on allocation of forest land and existing forest. This piloting program began in earnest in 2000, working to reach the mid-term plan goal of 300,000 hectares. This pilot program tested the methodology spelled out in the LUPLA guidelines. The pilot program was implemented by two agencies, Forest Protection sub-Department and Cadastral Department[126] and supervised by the Provincial Steering Committee chaired by the vice-chairman of PPC.

The Province People's Committee (PPC) made substantial progress on implementation of Decision 245 on the Decentralization and Management of the State Involved in Forest and Forest Land. In Son La, a good deal of effort was made to adapt to the specific characteristics at the locality, especially at commune and village level. To follow through on this, the PPC approved Decisions No. 3010 and 3011 to foster allocation of existing forests, and create pilots for forest protection regulations and benefit sharing.

In Son La, the majority of forest land allocation went to communities. Handover of forest land to communities (and groups of households) was widespread and seen as a desirable solution for forest management in many parts of the province. During my interviews in the province in mid-2002, the figures for the first eight months of implementation of forest land allocation in Son La indicated a strong preference for groups of households and community tenure. Province-wide the figures showed that only 15% of forest land went to households, while 40% was allocated to

[125] PRA is a broad form of gathering information with participants (interactive, rather than extractive) by undertaking exercises like village and forest walks, wealth ranking, creating resource profiles and maps, and seasonal calendars. Robert Chambers (first associated with popularizing Rapid Rural Appraisal techniques) is perhaps the most recognized proponent of using PRA.

[126] Renamed the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) as of 2003.

groups of households and another 40% to communities, with the remaining 5% to organizations.[127]

By the end of 2002, more than 350,000 hectares were allocated to more than 40,000 households, 20,000 groups of households and 3000 organizations. By December 2003, more than 800,000 hectares were allocated to 53,173 households, 4,451 groups of households and 1,967 organizations. Forest land allocation in Yen Chau was finalized[128] for all 14 communes in the district at the end of 2003. In this district, the major stakeholder groups were communities, accounting for the largest share (more than half) of allocated forest area (425,608 hectares).[129] The pilot for forest land allocation concluded in Son La in late 2004 with a total of 600,000 hectares handed over to households, groups of households and communities.[130]

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

From the "Guideline on Participatory Land Use Planning and Land Allocation applied at the Commune Level," an explicit reference is made to how land allocation is to occur with a combined effort from both a bottom up approach and a top down approach. The bottom up approach is seen in the shape of assistance from forest land allocation staff, where the local people are to develop a land use planning and land allocation plan on the basis of local demands (and potential) and subsequently request support from central or local government in pursing this. The top down approach is where the central or local government works out development plans and strategies aimed at making the most of the potential strengths of the land and other natural resources of the region (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999).

Concerns for equity and participation of local people figure strongly in the guidelines. For example,

> Land Use Planning and Land Allocation must ensure justice and rightness for all residents in the commune...People's participation is an indispensable part of land use planning and land allocation. It creates a strong link between authorities and people and provides the necessary stimulation and confidence for people to actively participate in the process, helping to prevent negative impacts and ensure social justice. The working group shall act as a consultant only to assist them methodologically so that they can deal with the work themselves. Only in this way can the principles of justice, democracy, and participatory involvement be observed, allocation be accelerated and cost and time lowered (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999:5).

Further, a participatory process to engage local people is fully embraced:

> This means applying PRA [and] RRA to motivate all populations concerned to participate in the process from the beginning until a decision is made. The entire process is

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[127] Of 52,592 hectares, 8,323 hectares were allocated to 5,571 households; 20,860 hectares to 1,371 groups of households; 21,060 hectares to 2,960 communities; and 2,348 hectares to 72 organizations. These figures came from an interview with Provincial Forest Development Sub-Department staff on May 29, 2002.

[128] SFDP is also active in Lai Chau province, which held provincial budgets for LUPLA activities (applying the approved guidelines). Total coverage for LUPLA was just over 100 villages in 8 Communes since 2001. In contrast to Son La province, the expansion of the methodology in Lai Chau province is extremely slow due to lack of political support and alternative use of capacities.

[129] Interview with district level Forest Protection staff on May 30, 2002.

[130] Email from Elke Foerster, former SFDP Project leader, dated April 7, 2005.

> considered as a forum for discussion on land use as well as remaining problems in land allocation and village development. Participatory involvement signifies cooperation and coordination among agencies at all levels (communal, district and provincial) and an inter-disciplinary union of forestry, agriculture, cadastral sectors, state-owned enterprises and local people (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999:5).

The Son La pilot maintained a strong learning focus, to provide experiences and share information on Forest Land Allocation.

First, this methodology became institutionalized through application in other cases, thereby taking LUPLA beyond the project and Son La Province borders. In 2001, the Son La – Lai Chau Rural Development Project[131] carried out LUPLA using the guidelines developed by the SFDP project and provincial government. From 2001-2003, the EU project implemented LUPLA in 13 communes of 6 districts focusing on allocation of forest land and existing forest.[132]

Second, a fair amount of uptake from the pioneering work undertaken by the SFDP project has been integrated into the Swiss Development Cooperation/Helvetas training work on Community Forestry, which supports the curriculum of all the forestry colleges throughout Vietnam.

Third, in order to assess the impact of this process outside the province, the SFDP project, in coordination with Forest Protection sub-Department, initiated land allocation impact assessments based on experiences from Dak Lak in January 2004. This resulted in the province developing LUPLA tools, which were then tested in Chieng Hac commune.

Finally, the most significant example is that the new Land Law (July 2004) included an elaborated guideline for LUPLA. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Institutional Capacity

In the pilot phase, a good deal of energy was poured into using technical training in two districts to pilot use of new methodologies. Once there was satisfaction with the results of the pilots, these methodologies were scheduled for upscaling. A training of trainers approach was used to provide technical training to a greater number of districts for the dissemination of approved methodologies.

Training of forest officers was closely linked to the development of methodology discussed in the previous section. Initially the methodology training was aimed at project staff, however it was adapted more broadly for provincial, district and commune level field staff. One overarching goal was to use the major methodologies to improve government capacity of forest management. A further goal was to equally use the methodologies to bolster or enable community management of forests by villagers.

From 1999 to mid-2002, over 150 training courses were offered to more than 1500 participants. Training focused on providing a series of customized workshops and training modules in Village Development Planning and Community Forestry for different target groups.

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[131] A project supported by the European Union located in the two provinces (Son La and Lai Chau).
[132] More than 55,000 hectares of forest land was allocated by the end of 2003.

The Son La Province People's Committee formed a steering committee for land allocation, including representatives from the Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development, Cadastral and Forest Protection. The steering committee was chaired by the deputy chairman of the PPC, and its duties include: 1) Advising the PPC on the study, recommendations to and implementation of government and provincial policies on land use and management for the whole province, 2) Developing plans, organizing implementation, registration procedures and granting land use certificates to organizations, households and individuals, 3) Providing training for cadastral and forest protection staff at district levels, 4) Appointing a working group for the tasks of monitoring, giving technical assistance in land use planning and land allocation and registration procedures for land use certificates, and 5) Appraising land registration documents to consider granting land use certificates for qualified organizations and 6) Handling violations (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999).

District level Steering Committees[133] on Forest Land Allocation were formed. Their tasks included: 1) Assisting the DPC to consider recommendations and implement government, province and district policies on land use management in the district, 2) Developing land use planning and land allocation plans for the district to be submitted to the chairman of the DPC for approval, 3) Guiding, instructing, monitoring and facilitating the implementation of land use planning and land allocation by different district agencies and Commune People's Committees (CPCs), 4) Appointing staff to the working group assisting CPC in implementing land use planning and land allocation, 5) Coordinating and connecting activities by district and communal agencies in the process, 6) Clarifying administrative boundaries, resolving boundary disputes among communes and organizations in the district, 7) Organizing the implementation and monitoring land use planning and land allocation activities in the whole district to make sure everything is conducted as scheduled and by law, 8) Reviewing registration documents to be submitted to DPC for consideration of granting land use right certificates to qualified households and handling unqualified cases within its authority, 9) Drafting registration documents to be submitted to the DPC for consideration of granting land use rights certificates to qualified households and handling unqualified cases within its authority, and 10) Organizing the documentation and utilization of land management records (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999).

A communal level Council for Land Allocation supported the steering committees and their duties included: developing land use planning and land allocation implementation plans for the commune, disseminating state policies on the rights and duties of people who are allocated land, collaborating with the working group to resolve problems and disputes in administrative boundary between villages and commune, reviewing the communal land use plan and compiling documents to be submitted to DPC for approval, organizing and considering the registration for land use rights by organizations and households and individuals and compiling cadastral documents to be submitted to DPC for approval, and publicizing land registration documents to obtain people's opinions and investigate complaints (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999).

The lowest level of implementation was a communal technical assistance group. The frontline officers working on LUPLA in the localities are responsible for:

[133] District level steering committees were comprised of the vice chairman of District Peoples Committee in charge of economic affairs, head of the district cadastral division, head of the forest protection station, head of the agro-forestry-rural development division, head of planning division, head of the finance division, head of the justice division and the director of the state-owned agro-forestry enterprises.

1) directly assisting Commune People's Committee (CPC) in implementing all technical aspects in land use planning, recording land declarations and making cadastral documents to be submitted for approval, 2) organizing villager's meeting to inform them of state and party policies and guidelines on land use planning and land allocation, 3) reviewing and finalizing the commune's detailed land use plan, 4) giving instructions on making 3D models and discussing with people village land use planning and land allocation plans to be submitted to the communal land registration council, 5) giving instructions on and receiving applications for land use rights by organizing, households and individuals, 6) organizing and implementing field allocation, finalizing land use planning and land allocation documents to be submitted to CPC for consideration and 7) finalizing land use planning and land allocation documents to be submitted to DPC for approval and land use certificate granting (People's Committee of Son La Province, 1999:10-11).

In addition to the two steering committees and the communal assistance group, there is support from DARD[134] and the Forest Protection Sub-department. DARD is responsible for forest planning formulation (on the three types of forest: special use, protection and production forests), coordinating with Cadastral and the Forest Protection sub-deparment to develop forest land use planning and work out the technical and economic norms for land allocation. The Forest Protection Sub-department is responsible for elaborating legal documents on forest land allocation (including formulating and sequencing the steps, establishing norms, and associated planning and policies), as well as working on dissemination and training professionals, coordinating with DARD Cadastral Department to demarcate forest types on maps and on site to determine forest land sites for allocation, and coordinating with Cadastral to control and deal with forest land use conflicts among and between organizations, households and other groups.

2. A. Forest Protection Regulations Methods

Seven steps evolved to guide the Forest Protection Regulation process. SFDP began first with preparation by facilitators, followed by village meetings where the background of the regulations, national and provincial government decisions and intentions were discussed, as well as the steps of the process, including the objectives for each step. Forest Protection Regulations were to be a joint learning process for the villager and the forest officer, by building the villager's capacity in decision making for forest management and protection (Miagostovich, 2000). An overview for village meetings in Son La is presented in Figure 6 (See Figure 6 with 9 steps).

After the village meetings, regulations are written in draft form, and these are sent to the district for approval. Then the regulations are disseminated at the village level, followed by implementation and monitoring (including enforcement with periodic reviews) of the Forest Protection Regulations.

Supported by District Forest Protection staff, discussions with villagers on the forest protection regulations lead to detailed information about forest areas grouped according to specific purposes,[135] possible benefits and compensation. Village forest protection groups are formed among villagers to monitor compliance of the agreed regulations. The Forest Protection Regulations not only establish responsibilities to protect forest resources, the regulations establish a system whereby villagers enjoy benefits from timber and non-timber forest products.

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[134] Department of Agriculture and Rural Development at the province level.

[135] Including restrictions on hunting and grazing and rules on fire prevention.

Outcomes

From 1997 to 2000 Forest Protection Regulations were developed in Son La. In 1997, the process of drafting district level guidelines to support forest protection and develop forest management planning began. By the end of 1997, SFDP pilots began at the village level in three communes, and in a total of 29 villages. The Son La People's Committee along with Forest Protection staff and SFDP project personnel established a study process while piloting the policy. The study process provided solid capacity which helped to transform the role of forest protection staff at the provincial level.

The parameters for Forest Protection Regulations were drawn up in Son La through a series of forest protection workshops, held at district and provincial levels. In 1999 and 2000, numerous workshops and ten training courses were held in 153 communes. In 2000, field testing occurred with 201 villagers, implementing upwards of 1428 village regulations.

Forest Protection staff organized several workshops, to review policy implementation by evaluating the results of the pilots, taking stock of progress, and monitoring difficulties encountered. Participants at the workshops included: Forest Protection and Forest Fire and Protection officers at district level, Forest Protection sub-department staff at the province level, the chairmen of the District level and Commune level People's Committees, and several villagers who worked on preparing the Forest Protection Regulations. At these workshops, successful examples of developing Forest Protection Regulations were showcased.

Significant progress in the design and application of the regulations occurred, enticing chairmen from non-pilot district People's Committees to request to join in upscaling FPRs. Through upscaling, Forest Protection Regulation spread from 97[136] to 145 villages with forest (and an additional 10 villages without forest), covering 67% of the total villages. After 2000, throughout

[136] No cases of communities uninterested in developing forest protection regulations were reported. In fact, of the initial 97 villages, all were extremely interested.

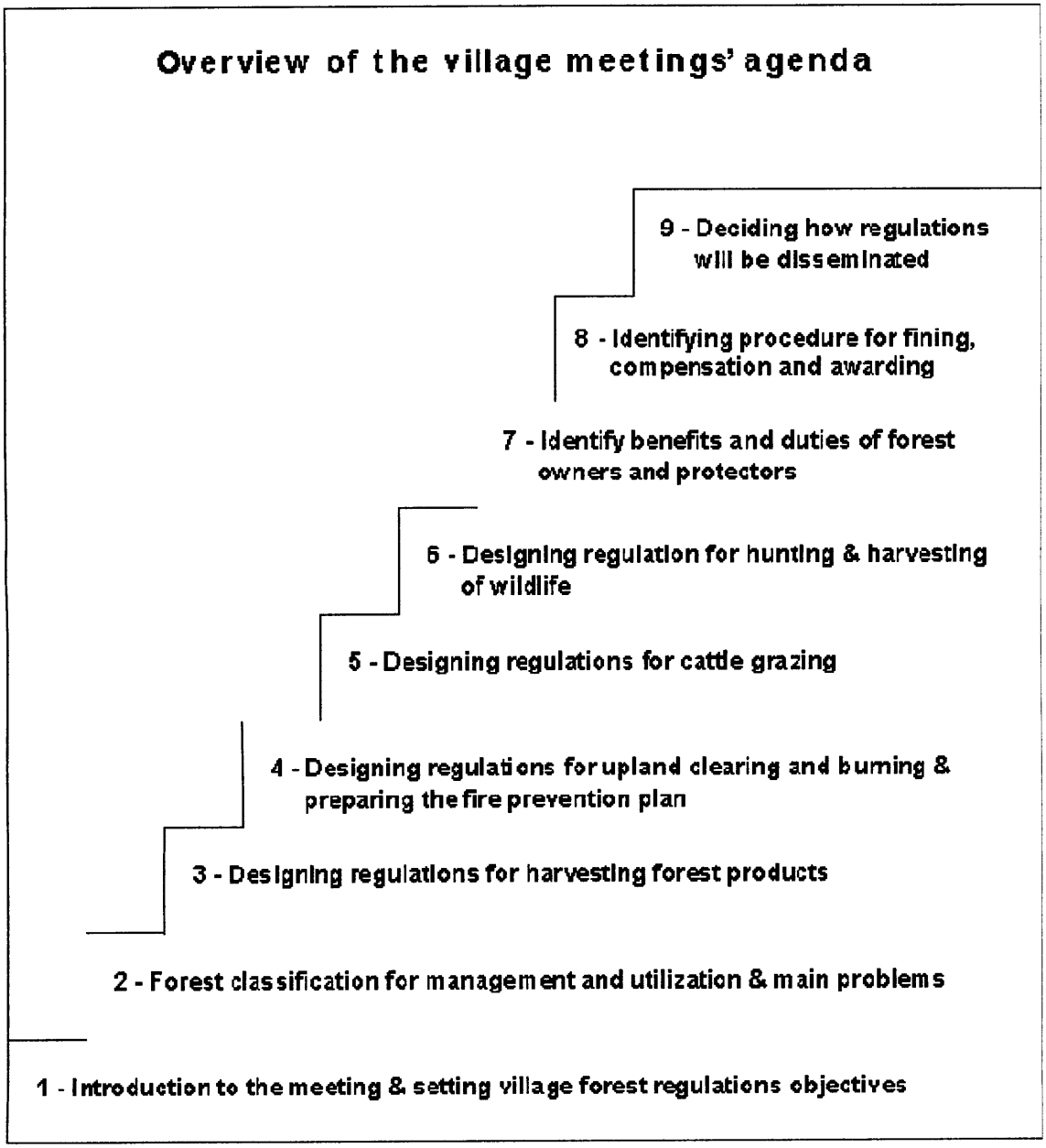

Figure 6: Overview of Village Meeting Agenda in Son La Province

the province, very few fines materialized and with villagers upholding forest fire protection regulations, violations were drastically reduced.[137]

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

After two years (1997-1999) of intense dialogue between villagers and forest officials, a sense of pride emerged. The source of this pride came from people actively contributing and playing an integral role in the creation of the Forest Protection Regulations. Local contributions to planning meant that the Forest Protection Regulations became the village regulations, and in many cases reflected *de facto* forest practices.

Villagers feel they "own" these regulations, because they were conceived using a grassroots approach.[138] Authority and accountability for the regulations occurs at both the village and district levels. The grassroots-produced results were successful, as Forest Protection staff at the province level confirmed that at least 70 % of the regulations were of sufficiently good quality, requiring little if any modification in the review process.

At the village level, a sense of self-regulation and improved governance for forest management was a major topic of my interviews. Villagers[139] explained that while the commune forest staff serve to uphold the law (by prosecuting offenders), the villagers play a key role in enforcement. They join the forest protection groups that work on behalf of the village to monitor, protect and report to the head of the village. Those participating in monitoring forest protection activities reported that the full involvement of local forest users in the development and enforcement of the regulations has transformed a previously poor relationship between villagers and forest staff. Further, this process built a strong rapport of trust, enabling exchange of information between forestry protection field staff and local communities. Based on interviews with villagers, establishing forest management regulations and negotiating a share in benefits contributed not simply to a better self-regulating system -- the villagers also felt that they had more power and therefore could take an active stance to solve problems themselves.

Institutional Capacity

As the regulations become the community's, the capacity of forest officers at the district level shifts to supporting implementation and monitoring of Forest Protection Regulations. In three communes where there were initial pilots, the capacity of the district forest officer to support community enforcement has improved. Previously, there were lots of violations on clearing land for cultivation or harvesting timber and bamboo and Forest Protection officers were overloaded meting out punishment for small to more serious violations.

By building up local action, village empowerment allowed a positive knock-on effect for government agencies, as they are allowed to refocus their efforts and this furthers local government capacity. As villagers are granted greater responsibility for the design, monitoring,[140] and implementation of regulations, this in turn reduces the government forest

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[137] According to Dao Hong Van, of Forest Protection in Yen Chau district, interview held on May 30, 2002.

[138] Despite the fact that this planning and drafting process takes a long time to prepare, the villagers reported that if anyone would complain, they would convince that person that it is worth the time and effort devoted to it.

[139] Based on discussions in several villages in Yen Chau district on May 30, 31 and June 1, 2002.

[140] Forest officials remark that despite the fact that at the village level, most people have a limited education, however, villagers demonstrate an ability to monitor and regulate effectively.

agencies' workload. At the commune level, the forest officer had a number of duties, but a limited amount of time, so the forest officer, as a result of the community doing more of the forest protection work, was able to focus more on other activities, such as expanding agroforestry. Where I conducted most of my interviews (Yen Chau District), no violations were reported. If illegal harvesting is detected, the violator would be taken to the head of the village and fined on the spot. As an incentive to take patrolling seriously, fifteen percent of the money collected is allocated to the people who discover the violator.

Forest protection patrolling groups are made up of community members, collectively protecting local forests. SFDP project staff [141] initiated meetings with eight households per group to discuss ideas on how to organize patrols. The main responsibility for the groups was to patrol the forest to look for examples of overharvesting of all products, not just timber.

All households pay into a group fund. In order to harvest 20 cubic meters of timber, each household pays a fee of 20,000 dong. Of this fee, 15% is allocated to the patrol group fund and 85% goes to a general village fund.[142] Compensation for the patrol group members varies -- at times it includes a limited amount of harvesting, other times food or small payments are made.[143]

Once a system was established, the villagers found it easier to monitor and patrol, as well as to harvest in groups and cross-check offtake. Each day those responsible for forest patrols conducted two to three sweeps through the forest. Typically two households assume the patrols for three days for one-quarter of the forest.

Forest Protection Officer Dao Hong Van explained that there were a few constraints to extending the pilots elsewhere in the province. Some difficulties were experienced in remote villages, for example when the head of the village is unable to read or write. This means that project personnel and/or forest protection staff need to spend more time in discussions to prepare the villagers. Another problem is that the budgets are limited, which limits the resources available to prepare plans, such as supplies for sketch maps, or for vehicles or labor costs.[144]

To supplement the work on Forest Land Allocation and Forest Protection Regulations, SFDP targeted forest users for additional training. The objectives of the training approach applied by SFDP were to facilitate forest users in assessing their available forest resources, promote participatory forest management, and develop a sound management regime to achieve management goals as identified in community forest management plans. This training was concentrated in two distinct exercises, undertaking Participatory Forest Resource Assessments (PFRA) and Community Forest Management Plans (CFMP).

Participatory Forest Resource Assessment (PFRA) allows for the collection of reliable data about existing forest resources, which is crucial to ensure sustainable forest management.

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[141] From an interview with Lo Van Binh, SFDP staff member, on June 1, 2002.

[142] The village funds are used for forestry activities, for fire protection, for small rewards, such as food as payments for conducting regular patrols.

[143] There is a village fund, where each household donates cash or 5 kilograms of rice. In some villages, there is a separate fund for fire prevention derived from the violations.

[144] Interview on May 30, 2002.

SFDP developed a methodology for PFRA to support local forest owners in obtaining quantitative and qualitative data about their forests. In this process forest owners were involved in conducting a simple (but technically sound) forest resource assessment on a random basis of 20 x 10 meter sample plots.

Community Forest Management Plans (CFMPs) are based on the data compiled during forest zoning and participatory forest resource assessment. CFMPs[145] are elaborated during village meetings, where
long-term forest management goals are discussed. After reaching consensus among the villagers, a five year CFMP is sent for approval to the district level. Annual forest plans were coordinated with the annual village development planning process, allowing community forest management planning to become an important part of the local institutional environment. After five years, the planning cycle starts again with a new participatory forest resource assessment.

CFMPs provide clear benefits for villagers and for forest agency staff. On the one hand, administrative procedures (such as applications for timber harvests) can be approved on the basis of reliable quantitative information about the condition of forest resources and monitoring can be based on the fulfilment of the annual work plan as prepared by the community. On the other hand, villagers gained more confidence in dealing with government agencies when applying for harvest operations due to transparent and accountable planning data collected by the villagers.

3. A. Benefit Sharing Methods

District forest officers suggested that the villagers can decide on certain parameters. Planning for benefit sharing tended to flow upwards, whereby the commune authorities collect the village proposals and if the proposals are accepted at the district level, they are approved. If they are not accepted, the benefit sharing proposals are revised at the village level. Then the district authorities communicate to the provincial level about the benefit sharing arrangement.

An SFDP project staff member explained that there is no standard amount for benefit sharing, as the amount is determined by the type and quality of forest and according to what is decided by the villagers. For example, if the forest allocated is dense, with more trees (type IIIa2 forest) and the volume is likely to be greater than 60 cubic meters, villagers are entitled to full benefits if they have invested and inventoried[146] the forests. In order to receive the benefits, villagers need to pay a resource tax and marketing tax.[147] If a villager wishes to harvest timber for house construction, they are exempt from paying the natural resource tax, but if they harvest timber to sell to the market, they pay a tax.[148]

Son La Province is quite different to Dak Lak in terms of benefit sharing arrangements. In Son La, the arrangements are phased, such that in year 0, the government has the right to 100% of the benefits of (as an example) 300 cubic meters. After five years, the community receives 1/3

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[145] CFMPs are elaborated for a period of five years to provide the medium-term stability that is needed to guide consistent implementation of sustainable forest management activities as prescribed in the plan.
[146] Inventories determine the volume anticipated from a timber harvest.
[147] Villagers receive 100% of the benefits after the tax. The villagers pay (a minimum of) 7.5% of the value of what is harvested, and up to 20% if all taxes apply.
[148] There is a forest product tax mentioned, also a forest protection and development tax – which comes to 10 to 20 % payment of the normal tax.

or 100 cubic meters, and after 10 years, the community (or households) receives 2/3 or 200 cubic meters and after 15 years, full benefits are accorded to the community or household.[149]

Outcomes

Some of the households in Son La Province were short of food for three to five months, and one of the most important benefits for them was the possibility to use 20%-30% of the area without forest cover for agricultural production.

A DARD employee suggested that previously when the land belonged to the collective, no one felt responsible for how the land was managed.[150] This has dramatically changed, now that the forests belong to households or communities – they own land and because of the benefits – the incentive to illegally harvest timber has been quelled. One of the most significant benefits is the right to agricultural land as a portion of the forest land allocation. Further, the monitoring role has changed, and when villagers understand the implications of Forest Protection Regulations and benefits, less state regulation is required.

A Forest Protection Officer noted that the villagers had more power and were more active in solving problems themselves (particularly in terms of violations). He suggested that a major incentive by the village management groups (responsible for monitoring the regulations and deciding on benefits) was discovering forest violations, resulting in a fine (dedicated to village funds).

However, this does not keep bad things from happening. One family sold a large amount of timber to a local sugar making factory. According to a former project advisor, the benefits are only good if people understand the benefit situation (and obviously the family selling timber to the sugar factory did not), so there is a need to improve the guidelines at commune level on benefit sharing.

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

In interviews with villagers,[151] information was gathered on the potential benefit stream. Four examples emerged of benefit sharing arrangements in Son La Province, as a result of the type of forest as well as the density and/or volume.

1. A household or community forest member receives 100% of the benefits, provided they have invested and inventoried (including a volume assessment) the forest area themselves. Provided there is clear forest ownership, two factors determine the total benefits that local people can receive. One factor is the density of the forest, for example if there are more trees than 60 cubic meters (a medium dense forest and a type of IIIa2 forest) the villagers receive all the benefits. Another factor is if villagers decide to sell to

[149] Fifteen years after receiving the forest land, they are entitled to receive 100% of forest area output, provided the forests have been well managed. If the forests are not determined to be well managed, the villagers would only receive 33% of the benefits.
[150] Based on an interview on May 30, 2002.
[151] Based on interviews on May 30-31, 2002.

the market,[152] they pay a tax. However, if timber is harvested for house construction, no payment of the natural resource tax is required.

2. The LUPLA process and the establishment of forest protection regulations granted households and/or communities the rights to use the forestry land. Villagers are therefore able to request permission to harvest from the Forest Protection officer and together they agree on the amount of the total harvest. They pay 7.5% of the value of what is harvested, but if outsiders harvest in village areas, then they pay the commune 15% of the value, which is sent to the district tax office.[153]

3. Discussions on benefit sharing arrangements started with guidance from provincial authorities on receiving benefits. This benefit sharing arrangement allowed for villagers to receive 100% of the benefits, less a combination of the following taxes when they apply: a natural resource[154] or forest product tax, a forest protection and development tax and a marketing tax waged on the forest products. These tax payments account for 10-20% of the value.

4. This example is simply a variation on the third example, whereby villagers benefit 100%, less payment of a flat fee applied per product. If you harvest bamboo, you pay 500 dong and if you harvest timber, you pay 20,000 dong per cubic meter.

Institutional Capacity

Benefit sharing in Son La is determined by the provincial Decision 3011.[155] However, there was uncertainty about the forest classification in some cases, and this means that the benefit status was also unclear. Nearly one-third of households (based on a survey in 2003 in 3 communes in 3 different districts) thought the entire harvest was theirs and were not clear about how different forest categories affected whether a percentage of the harvested products are returned to local authorities. And nearly one-third of households thought that the benefits were restricted to non-timber forest products, rather than timber and non-timber forest products. According to Pham Xuan Phuong:

> ...the distinction between production forest and protection forest in the study sites is not yet clear. Definition of benefit sharing for people is rather difficult, especially regarding allocation of very crucial protection forest since legally very crucial protection forest is only harvested at low extraction rates, and thus the economic outputs and hence the contribution to household income are low (Pham, 2003:95).

Although several communities were aware of their benefit sharing rights and obligations, this survey pointed to the need to redouble efforts on decisions taken on forest type and specifying

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[152] I was interested in whether anyone checks if a request for house building is authentic or not (if a party claimed to build a house, but actually wanted to sell forest products in the market). Each household is asked to file a paper requesting permission, and the village management board checks to see whether household sells or not.

[153] In the past, Forest Protection was responsible for collecting the tax, now the agricultural section can issue permission to the office at the provincial level. This changed in 2000.

[154] In some places it appeared that the natural resource tax had changed. Before 2000, households would pay 25,000 dong per cubic meter or 12,500 per cubic meter for house construction timber.

[155] Decision 3011 dated 12 December 2000 of the Son La People's Committee is on temporarily issuing the allocation policy for forest land and existing forest in the province.

an appropriate benefit sharing policy to match the forest sites. Further, better communication and monitoring of the benefit sharing arrangements were in order for local forest authorities.

Thua Thien Hue

As of 2000, Thua Thien Hue province had a total 214,000 hectares of forest, of which 170,000 were natural forests and 44,000 hectares were plantations. Average forest cover was 43 percent of the land area.

1. A. Forest Land Allocation

The story of community forestry in Thua Thien Hue is similar in some respects to Dak Lak and Son La and different in other respects. After the massive floods of 1999, and with the realization that illegal logging was seriously eroding forest conditions throughout the province, the Forest Protection staff responded to a local request to establish a village pilot in Thuy Yen Thuong [156] (in Loc Thuy commune, Phu Loc district).[157]

The pilot began and was conducted intensively with one village, which suffered greatly from the flooding in 1999. A management arrangement for watershed protection forest[158] was spelled out for a three year trial period, whereby if it was successful, then a land use certificate would be issued for 50 years.[159] If the experiment with Thuy Yen Thuong village was considered successful, it could be replicated elsewhere in the district.

In addition to flooding and illegal logging, it was recognized that the State Forest Enterprises (SFEs), while not doing a solid job managing forests,[160] were soon to be left with only small scale timber exploitation in the province. Timber harvests were guaranteed until 2005, after which no timber would be left to exploit. And, similar to discussions in Dak Lak, several forest officials did not believe that the Forest Protection Contract (FPC) system was providing a sound incentive for forest protection. However, if the FPC system was not producing a sustainable outcome, an alternative needed to be created to take its place.

The Director of the Phu Loc Forest Inspection Station (PLFIS) could not see the benefit of continuing with forest protection payments of 50,000 dong per hectare per year. He, along with

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[156] The village has 1,860 residents and it is majority ethnic Vietnamese. It is located near forests and the buffer zone of the Bach Ma National Park.

[157] In Phu Loc district, forest covers nearly one-third of the land in the district.

[158] One of three types of forest in the Vietnamese classification: protection forest, production forest and critical forest.

[159] If the community protects the forest in the first three years of the trial period, the Provincial People's Committee agreed to request authorization from the Government to allocate Land Tenure Certificates valid for fifty years. In Phu Loc much of the land is sloped, the Forest Department and the local people thought it best to initiate joint forest management arrangements, rather than parceling out individual plots. In the villages, each family would have potentially held plots with sloping land, so there was no sense for small plots to be allocated. From both the environmental and economic point of view, the idea of small plots was not a feasible one.

[160] Tram Huu Banh (director of the sub-DFD of Thua Thien Hue) Paper admits that the SFE management was suboptimal. "That is why, households and individuals are regarded as important subjects directly participating in the management of natural forests under the Government current policies." (from page 1 of his paper presented at the Allocation workshop for Community Forestry, 2003).

the villagers he consulted, thought that compensation for forest protection was more rewarding when it came through a benefit sharing arrangement (which included items sought after for domestic consumption, like poles for house construction, fuelwood and non-timber forest products).

Forest protection contracting was not a resounding success for the households enlisted in the program in Phu Loc district. This was in part due to the remote location of some of the forest areas, creating hardship for certain households to effectively protect forests. It was also in part due to the fact that there was a great deal of conflict over land uses. Among the reasons cited for why the FPC payment system was deficient was that it was only scheduled for five years, so it begged the question as to who is responsible for forest protection after the five years had passed. Finally, while the provision of labor provided a short-term gain, it could not provide a long-term solution to engage people in forest management (as suggested earlier in Chapter 1).

The Forest Protection staff acknowledged that they were taking a gamble on the future of very valuable forest, in the face of currently high levels of destruction (illegal logging was rampant and shifting cultivation was encroaching certain forest areas). In fact, the best quality natural forest (from both the protective and production functions) was selected for the pilot. And if this forest handover was positive in its outcome, then both functions would guarantee a continuous benefit stream, thereby increasing the chance of a sustainable outcome.

The PLFIS Director's assertions on the Forest Protection Contract system were backed up by authorities at the province level. At a national level conference[161] the Director of the Department of Forest Development in Thua Thien Hue Province suggested that piloting forest land allocation to communities and groups of households was the preferred option. The underlying logic for this was rather than risk further destruction to forests under the forest protection contract scheme, allocating natural forest areas to communities for protection, would be in exchange for benefit sharing. This new arrangement established a new exchange of sorts, whereby the Forest Protection Regulations serve to satisfy the Forest Protection department staff and the benefit sharing arrangements satisfy the needs of the people now responsible for forest management. In Thua Thien Hue Province, benefit sharing arrangements drove the forest land allocation and community forestry planning process.

The Director of PLFIS noted that "The objective of the trial is to enable local people to engage in sustainable forest development and protection while benefiting from doing so." [162] The overarching reasons to embark on this pilot include protecting watershed values, "giving the forest an owner" (e.g. the community or groups of households) with clearly defined benefits, thereby reorganizing forest production by handing over responsibility for management to a different set of actors.

Allowing local people to directly manage natural forests was a transition for a province where the focus had been solidly placed previously on using hired labor to reforest areas. Hired labor occurred under the World Food Program project, which was followed by the Program 327, which supported the Forest Protection Contract scheme. I will briefly outline the hired labor history to illustrate how the transition evolved to allow villagers to become forest owners and active partners in forest management.

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[161] The National Workshop on Allocation and Management of Natural Forests in Community Forestry, Hanoi, 22 May 2003.

[162] Interview date June 17, 2002.

Previous attempts at reforestation
The World Food Program (WFP) established a project in the district in 1994, which ran until 1997, aiming to reclaim bare land. This project generated a great deal of conflict with villagers already using the land. The village head and forest authorities asked villagers to meet and negotiate with WFP project staff. In exchange, the World Food Program project brought in seedlings for plantation establishment.

The World Food Program approach to reforestation was to ask each household to establish at least one hectare of plantation. As compensation for each hectare of forest planted, workers were given 33 kg of rice.[163] Although the World Food Program project was discontinued, much of the forest created still exists. When local people requested the right to harvest in these forests, this right was granted to households under sub-contracting arrangements.

After the World Food Program project, 327 Program funds were used to plant forests in new sites. However, only small areas of forest were established, and the 327 Program[164] was mainly used to create jobs. Then 661 Program funds and the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program continued the work of the 327 Program, to provide more jobs for local people. Throughout the 1990s in Phu Loc district, on average 200,000 labor days of planting were logged per year.

In all, assistance in establishing plantations from 1985 until 2002, yielded a total of 17,000 hectares. Forest Protection Staff estimate that at least one third of the population[165] live off harvesting forest products (including timber and non-timber forest products, like bamboo and rattan), with many households earning up to 100,000 million Vietnamese Dong from selling forest products from these planted areas.

A brief history of forest land allocation
This area was known for rich natural resources. From 1978 to 1985, the District People's Committee was the first to allocate forest land to cooperatives. However, there was no control over forests and this led to over-harvesting from the 1970s to mid-1980s, leaving the forests virtually exhausted by 1985.

In 1985, Phu Loc was the first district to initiate handover of forest land to households. From 1985-89, forest allocation continued in the district with a verbal agreement from the provincial level.

In 1989, the Forest Protection Department created a project proposal which reflected that if households could responsibly manage the forest, the department needed to locally restructure the forest land allocation process. In 1989, an allocation of 104 hectares of bare, unforested land was granted to one household. (The size of this pilot was unusual, as typical allocation size in the district is 30 hectares.)

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[163] Or the World Food Program provided the money equivalent for 33 kg rice.
[164] The area is a mix of eucalyptus species (very fast growing) and acacias species.
[165] The one-third figure is various households, rather than employees of State Forest Enterprises. The village of Thuy Yen Thuong has more than 250 hectares of plantations owned by households.

The District Peoples Committee of Phu Loc in turn issued a decision to allocate additional forest land. Vice Director Du piloted a local design of the red book certificate[166] in the district. After a meeting at provincial level in 1994, the Provincial Peoples Committee's decision was to issue pink book certificates for forest land. The Forest Department was committed to learning from these experiences.

Allocation of most of the forest land in the Xuan Loc commune[167] was undertaken by the district level forest inspection station. They have documented this with "preliminary forest land use booklets" with the stipulation that the household reforest the land allocated to them.

In an interview,[168] the villagers of Thuy Yen Thuong told me that in the past, they had access to good forest in the area, but later the forest was exhausted due to overharvesting. In 1998, the head of a village met with Forest Protection and other authorities, but the villagers did not know about allocation of existing forests. The villagers said that they would like to manage the forests by themselves. They organized many meetings to talk with Forest Protection about forest management and to work out a new planning approach.

1. B. Forest Land Allocation Methods

In early 1999 the villagers of Thuy Yen Thuong[169] proposed to the commune and the district authorities that they should be responsible for managing the forest. On August 19, 1999, a village management board was established (including the village chief and two vice chiefs), to act as an intermediary body between the village and the forest agencies, and the People's Committee (at district and province level).[170] By late 1999, the Provincial People's Committee authorized allocation to be contracted to organizations. At that point, the authorities found it difficult to allocate forest lands to households, because they did not know how to organize the benefit sharing, (and predicted conflicts between households arising if benefit sharing was not present). Rather than allocating very small areas to several households within a big area, a larger allocation[171] was made to several households or an entire village.

During an interview in mid-2002, Forest Protection staff explained that they had oversight for the following steps to allocate forest land.

- The first step is for the Forest Protection Officer to collect data from villagers on their opinions on forest allocation during a village meeting. At the same time, interviews should

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[166] During the initial phase of the pilot, communities were not able to get a red book for forest land. Although the rights are similar to holding a red book, in Thua Thien Hue the books were pink and they were distinct from red books by the fact that forest owners were not able to transfer or sell the forest land, and they needed to agree to sustainable development of natural resources, through the formulation of forest protection regulations.

[167] Xuan Loc commune covers much of the upland and midland sections of southern Thua Thien Hue Province. The commune is 36 square kilometers with 1700 residents, the majority of the population is ethnic Vietnamese, but one village is Van Kieu (PROFOR, 2002a).

[168] Interview with villagers in Thuy Yen Thuong on June 19, 2002.

[169] Interview with villagers in Thuy Yen Thuong on June 19, 2002.

[170] The village was further subdivided into ten separate sub-villages and vice heads were selected for each sub-village unit.

[171] In Phu Loc district, most of the forest land is sloped. It is also often far away from where people live, making access rather difficult. Therefore, on average, allocation of forest land to community (rather than households) is better. If the distance is long and it takes an entire day to arrive to your forest area, it is better to assign plots to community ownership.

be conducted with villagers and commune authorities, and SFE management board staff to map out a broad policy for allocation.

- The second step is to undertake a forest inventory and draw a map which distinguishes between agricultural and forest areas, indicating proposed forest land allocation. This work should be jointly undertaken by both the Forest Protection and Forest Development departments at province level, FIPI (Forest Inventory and Planning Institute) at province level, commune level officials, and the village management board, along with a few key farmers. The aim is to locate species, provide local information and demarcate sites in order to agree on timber harvest amounts.
- The third step involves a number of tasks, including beginning discussions about benefit sharing, and agreeing on proposed plans for forest allocation.
- Details on steps 4 to 6 are linked to establishing Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing arrangements (see in the next section).
- The seventh step is the handover of forest land to communities[172] – this is often a formal event in villages, where the project proposal and Forest Protection Regulations are approved.

A number of partners[173] (in addition to the forest agencies and the villages) had a role in supporting land allocation. Early methods were developed by the Hue agroforestry college department responsible for Social Forestry. They initiated participatory land allocation pilots in Nam Dong and Phu Loc. They began by designating and facilitating the handing over of agricultural land, and land without forests, within the existing forest allocation system. [174]

In Phu Loc, SNV[175] developed a methodology on Land Use and Participatory Land Allocation (LUPLA) and supported a training program to implement it on a commune-by-commune basis. The aim was to establish clear boundaries for designation between natural forest and agriculture areas, production and protection forests. The final decision making was granted to households, with a final sign-off on decisions from the district authorities.

Outcomes

Those working in Thua Thien Hue province openly acknowledged that there was limited knowledge at the time of the pilots on FLA, and that by explicitly learning and sharing experiences, a body of knowledge (and a community of practice) would grow over time. At the time that the pilots began, few studies had been undertaken on Community Forestry, particularly on the various types of Community Forestry.

Thua Thien Hue used a variant of PLUP, the LUPLA methodology, which at the time was being tested in four provinces (Son La, Thanh Hoa, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Binh). Advisors in these provinces adapted the methodology to the specific conditions of each province. The

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[172] One stipulation for land allocation was that within one year, if no investment had occurred, the forest owner was obliged to hand the land back to the state (this was also the norm in Son La).

[173] Helvetas (a Swiss nonprofit organization) is also working on land use planning in the province, in partnership with extension centers.

[174] It was not until much later that they assisted on handing over natural forest.

[175] SNV stands for Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers, which translates to the Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers. It is Dutch-supported volunteer program which over 40 years turned into a development agency in its own right. It is similar in nature to the U.S. Peace Corps or the U.K. Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) program.

Regional Coordinator of SFDP project visited Thua Thien Hue to provide input on use of the methodology.

SNV tested the LUPLA (as described earlier in the Son La section of this chapter) methodology and facilitated the hand over of red book certificates to individual households for bare land. In addition, SNV provided support to the District Peoples' Committee in 6 communes, while testing the approach extensively in 2 communes. In July 2002, a board was formed at district level, to continuously monitor LUPLA field work and implementation.

After Forest Land Allocation was initiated in Phu Loc, the District Peoples Committee held a stakeholder coordination meeting[176] to discuss the nature of forest land allocation. These meetings included representatives from Forest Protection, Forest Development, the pilot communes, State Forest Enterprises, NGOs and the Management Board of Bach Ma National Park. A meeting in April 2001 was not simply with the project coordinators, but also a strong show of commitment from 13 chairmen (out of 18 possible) of Commune People's Committees throughout Phu Loc district. Suddenly the topic of forest land allocation had moved beyond the operational level to become a topic of political concern. The Province People's Committee was supportive of the coordination board to share experiences.

In September 1999, the UNDP PROFOR Vietnam[177] project began discussions on forest land allocation to a group of households in a Van Kieu ethnic village (in Phuc Loc hamlet). Forests were allocated in May 2000.

Until 2000, very little forest land was allocated. By comparison, 153 households received 2,000 hectares for farming purposes (for land which was designated as an agriculture, forestry and fruit mix, or an average of 13 hectares per household).

In December 2000, Forest Protection staff[178] facilitated the first hand over of forested land to communities to Thuy Yen Thuong village. This handover marked a major event, as the Vice Minister of MARD visited the area to discuss management of natural forests with staff of the Forest Inspection Station (PROFOR, 2002a). This decision was viewed as the best way forward given the devastation from illegal cutting taking place throughout the province. The District Forest Inspection Station immediately received two requests from communities hoping to set up forest allocation arrangements like that undertaken in Thuy Yen Thuong.

The decision was made to begin a pilot to study this topic from 2000 to 2002 and then conduct a study and release a report. If the results were good, then this pilot would be expanded. This was upheld with a firm commitment from the Provincial People's Committee. They adopted a wider approach, according to the law. DARD then began assisting the Provincial People's Committee.

The Forest Land Allocation work began in earnest in 2000, in six communes in six different districts. From Thuy Yen Thuong village, this work advanced to Phu Hai 2, Loc Vinh commune, Thuy Duong Village (located in Loc Tien commune). In 2001, the provincial authority expanded

[176] The project coordination committee was established in late 2000, and began holding quarterly meetings.
[177] The United Nations sponsored Program on Forests (PROFOR), with field activities in Vietnam from 1998-2002.
[178] This forest handover to the community was facilitated with the PROFOR field team, which continued to study the situation. However, for day-to-day oversight and monitoring, this forest land allocation was jointly managed by the villagers and the staff at the district Forest Inspection Station.

to two additional communes. The second commune (in the same district) was Thuy Zung and the village was Phu Hili), where forest land was handed over.

By the end of 2001, a major reversal of the old version of forest protection allocation of existing/natural forests had advanced a great deal. By 2002, in Phu Loc district, 45,000 ha of forest land (or 66% of the district total) was handed over to groups of households, individual households and communities.

The success of the models started in Phu Loc district spread. Soon, other districts in the province wished to expand the model. In 2002, the Finnish Program for rural development of Thua Thien Hue began working in coordination with the Department of Planning and Investment, and the People's Committee of Phong Dien district to develop the model of forest allocation to communities of villages of Phong Son commune.

In Thua Thien Hue, by mid-2002, the Forest Protection Office requested special permission to expand forest land allocation by incremental piloting of small areas.[179] This request was granted by the provincial authorities, provided that the Forest Protection Office continued to provide feedback to the policy unit at MARD.

As of mid-2002, 5,000 households were allocated 6,000 hectares of forest land in Phu Loc district. For the most part, the handovers consisted of valuable forest land.

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

This FLA experiment is of a different nature in Thua Thien Hue province, as the majority population is Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese). Typically the Kinh have been early adopters of individualized land holdings, and they generally admit to being cautious about collective arrangements (given the low productivity during the recent state collective farming phase). Factors motivating villagers to pull to work together on community forestry in this province include the high level of destruction from illegal felling, the fact that much of the land area is steeply sloped, and the severe flood impact in the recent past. This culminated in reinforcing the need for joint action, and the good relations between forest protection staff and local population favored the chances of sharing responsibility for management.

There was a widespread discussion in villages in 2000, about which entity was the best (meaning the most qualified) to manage existing forests. The possible entities had expanded to include: State Forest Enterprises, industry/private sector, communities, households, and a combination of local authority and local people, NGOs, and the state forest authorities. However, the new managers needed to be capable of protecting and developing the land and their activities were expected to contribute to poverty alleviation and livelihoods.

Before allocation was undertaken, the key agencies including SFEs, management boards and cooperatives were asked whether communities were capable of managing forests. A majority of the agency staff were convinced that communities were unable to manage forests effectively.

As a common practice, a Management Board is set up to protect the forest. But as this model had not been successful, the forest inspection station allowed villagers to accept responsibility

[179] By mid-September 2002, they had the design and development stage complete for forest land allocation. Field application was to move on to another 2 test areas, including 10 new villages.

for forest management. The local authorities at the village and province level met, discussed and decided to make this pilot their own process. Although a community was not recognized as a legal entity,[180] the Province Peoples' Committee accepted the decision to pilot a new approach.

On December 30, 2000 a formal decision was signed and adopted by the Vice Chair of the Province People's Committee.[181] According to a review by UNDP PROFOR: "The decision to enter into a management agreement for an essential watershed protection forest is, strictly speaking, outside the rules established by the Government, but the provincial authorities have the right to make a trial." (PROFOR, 2002a: 31)

In early 2001, the Vice Minister of MARD declared that the trial in Thuy Yen Thuong was very interesting and the local initiative laudable. By mid-2001, Thuy Yen Thuong village attracted interest from provincial and central authorities. It was visited by persons or groups from different parts of the country, such as Dak Lak, a forest-rich province in the southern highlands, Nghe An in the north-central part of the country, and Ha Giang, a forest-poor province in northernmost Vietnam. The UNDP PROFOR stated that:

> The central level, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development sees the trial as promising and useful as a demonstration of how to formalize community forestry. (PROFOR, 2002a: 41)

Finally, in discussions with the Vice Head of Forest Protection Phu Loc District, he clearly perceived the community forestry efforts in the district as a direct response to the demands of local people. He suggested participatory forest management had an important role to play, which not only supports local people's management of forests, but provides, with the FLA, the means to combine benefit sharing with forest protection activities.

Institutional Capacity

In Thua Thien Hue, there is a solid effort from many different actors and institutions -- the government agencies, supporting organizations and the local people. This section will highlight the contributions towards forest land allocation from the Forest Protection staff, the villagers and the Hue agroforestry college.

Phu Loc District Forest Protection staff told how, over the course of many years, (as early as 1975 until the mid-1980s), they facilitated an introduction to social forestry activities in the district. They selected a site where nearly 50% of the total area was barren land, and with support from some projects supervised by the Forest Protection units, forest protection and management tasks were undertaken directly by local people. Support from local projects included providing 200,000 seedlings for local people. This support was aimed at key households – able to show solid examples of good forest management – and thereby serving as a mirror for others to learn from.

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[180] And thus able to be legally responsible for the rights and duties of land assignments, as determined by the Land Law of 1993. This is why the pilots were approved as experiments, to inform the redrafting of the Land and Forest Laws.

[181] The provincial authorities delegated the duty to make all the necessary preparations to the district Forest Inspection Station. The Vice Chairman of the Province People's Committee allowed the trial to go ahead.

In 1998, the district established a forest inspection station between the village and the forest. Well-qualified staff work at this station. Good relations were established between the staff and local people and this has helped reduce the level of illegal logging in the area (Zu, 2000).

Throughout the allocation process, the main tasks asked of the local people were to undertake forest protection and management and to consult the DPC as needed on forestry activities. The results of this early work by the local people resulted in an increase in forest cover - in 1986 forest cover was at 25% of Phu Loc district whereas by 2000 forest cover was 57% (more than doubling over the course of 14 years).

The initial pilot for forest land allocation came from Phu Loc district, where there were good community and Forest Protection staff interactions. In 2000 in recognition of this service, the Labor Hero award was granted by the Vietnamese President to the Forest Protection District Office in Phu Loc. The Forest Protection District Office was officially recognized for their good work on forest allocation and protection.

Forest Protection felt a strong sense of achievement with this award. They realized that it was in recognition of the pioneering work on forest land allocation. The Forest Protection staff claimed that this award equally belongs to the villagers, who planted trees in areas of low-lying areas and grasslands and restored these areas to forests. With the Labor Hero award, the Forest Protection District Office staff members achieved a sense of accomplishment and pride in their work, and were motivated to replicate what was achieved in the first village.

The Forest Protection Office was also responsible for holding training of trainers programs, including a training assessment conducted at household level. The training topics include: nursery management, setting up fruit tree centers, dissemination of policy on LUPLA and agroforestry techniques. Forest Protection staff coordinated the training with different stakeholder groups, such as the State Forest Enterprise staff, the mass organizations (like the farmer's association and women's union).

At Hue agroforestry college, a staff member explained that the training and focus of much of their research is on social forestry. They coordinate their field efforts with other partners including the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Social Forest Support Program, concentrating on agroforestry extension and forest land allocation. They were conducting survey work in Nam Don and Thuong Lo, and monitoring the results of land allocation with existing forest allocation.

2. A. Forest Protection Regulations Methods

With reference back to the steps (spelled out in the Forest Land Allocation Methods section, suggested by the local forest authorities[182]), there is a tight connection between devising forest protection regulations, negotiating benefit sharing arrangements and allocation of forest land.

- The fourth step (following from the first three described previously) is a village meeting organized by the commune authorities, to inform villagers about the process of forest protection regulations. This is also the time when a draft project proposal (for forest land handover) is put forward. Discussions are held between the villagers (without the assistance of Forest Protection officers) and the regulations are revised to a final version.

[182] The steps were discussed in an interview held on June 18, 2002.

- The fifth step is a workshop, with the Province People's Committee Chairman in order to review how the proposal matches with legislation and to provide an early version of the forest protection regulations. The villagers make a presentation to Forest Protection Office on both the Forest Protection regulations and the project proposal (in draft form). This workshop is held in the Forest Protection district offices, with the following stakeholders attending: the department staff under DoSTE (province level representatives of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment), Province People's Committee, District People's Committee, DARD (province level representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), Cadastral department, Forest Development (at province level), commune head and villagers.

- The sixth step is to fulfill the necessary procedures, by reviewing comments from the workshop (held in step 5) and revise the Forest Protection Regulations and proposal as such. This step entails consulting the responsible agencies and authorities for approval, particularly at the district and commune levels, so it is possible that at this stage the Forest Protection Regulations and project proposal are reworked. Then the project proposal is submitted to the province level People's Committee for approval.

- As mentioned previously, the seventh step is when handovers of allocation of forests to communities and groups of households occur. This is actually a formal procedure and a major event in the villages, where the project proposal and Forest Protection Regulations are approved and formally adopted.

To allow allocation of existing forest (rather than bare land, as was the norm), a project proposal needs to be submitted to the Commune People's Committee, which is approved and forwarded on to the District People's Committee, which goes in turn to the Province People's Committee. Once the District People's Committee signs off on the Forest Protection regulations, the District Forest Protection unit and provincial level DARD (Forest Development Sub-division) work with the Province People's Committee to approve the Forest Protection Regulations.

While villagers develop the Forest Protection Regulations, they can create original ones, then discuss and adjust them with an agroforestry commune officer. The villagers can also work from a general template which looks at the relative rights, responsibility and obligations (including fines) and benefits.

Outcomes

There appeared to be two alternatives on devising the Forest Protection Regulations, to either do something to improve forest management or the forests in the area would disappear. Numerous village meetings with strong participation were convened to discuss the future. These meetings brought together villagers, local forest authorities and various mass organization members. Local people participated and actively put forward their ideas.

The Forest Protection sub-station staff decided to focus on the protection objectives with local people. In the case of Phu Loc, there was a level of trust already established between the sub-station staff and villagers, and this allowed the process of creation of Forest Protection Regulations to be relatively simple.

The piloting centered around defining the rights and responsibilities of those involved in the agreement. Essentially the villagers needed to follow the rules which they themselves helped to

establish and they would become forest owners, and thereby entitled to a portion of the forest value. Once these measures were put in place, the level of illegal logging decreased.

In Phu Loc, as a result of a series of meetings between Forest Protection, DARD began to view the villagers as owners of the forest. As forest owners, they were active in protecting against violations, by contributing to the labor force which is responsible for patrolling and looking for violators.

Achievements appeared on the social side as well, as this has brought jobs, and helped to stabilize living standards and incomes. There was income generation through protection (particularly since the fines are the property of the community), and as the people invested more in agricultural production and protecting forests, they were able to intensify agriculture in some areas. In addition, PROFOR helped to support natural regeneration, with enrichment planting, to improve forest quality. This has also improved social relations and has built social capital.

The results of allocating existing forests include a forest inventory (undertaken by a professional agency), Forest Protection Regulations formulated at the village level and an active role for Forest Protection staff at the district level. Additional results include three formal Decisions approved at the Province level, a Decision to approve the project proposal for allocating land with forest, and Decisions 3581 and 3582, which formally provide guidance on formulation of Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing. Most importantly, as of 2005, Thuy Yen Thuong was reported as managing the forest very well, according to provincial Forest Protection and Forest Development staff.

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

During an interview[183] the villagers of Thuy Yen Thuong, described the community forest protection labor force. This is a system where the vice head of the village is responsible for patrolling forests. This group helps to monitor the 2% per year growth rule, and works to uphold the forest protection regulations.

There are 10 different subgroups who identify people to patrol (generally seven to eight people per group) for forest protection every month. From each subgroup, there are two representatives from the three different subgroups. This helps both in monitoring and subverting any collusion within one group. These groups are responsible for two patrols per month in the forest. This entails one day of a general patrol and a second day of an intensive patrol. For each group, the intensive patrol can take three days. If violations are suspected, a rapid team patrol is deployed. The rapid team patrols on their own if there are no violations, and if there are violations, the team calls the Forest Protection Officer to accompany them.

Asked if this major shift of changing from forest violators to forest protectors was due to forest land allocation, the villagers responded that yes, forest land allocation was part of it, but they were also guided by the Forest Protection Officers on techniques for forest protection. Once people had rightful access to the forest, this transformed what was illegal into legitimate access to the forest. Former violators were trained and provided employment which severely decreased the incentive to cause future forest protection violations.

[183] Interview held on June 19, 2002.

Asked whether there were instances where a community wished not to organize, the villagers replied that in the past, particularly in the 1980s, people thought about their own benefits, and found that it was easier for them to harvest on an individual basis. There was open access to the forests (villagers called it "free harvest") and this situation generated a need for stronger law enforcement.

In the 1990s, Forest Protection staff worked extremely hard on dissemination of why people needed to protect forests. With the pilot to allocate forest land to communities, it is up to the people to manage the forest land, and individual households no longer can decide freely what to do. The villagers joined together to propose what is to be done and this proposal forms the basis for their community management plan. Similar to the situation in Son La, there is a great sense of local pride, as villagers facilitate their own process for management, and ultimately see public validation of this process when the head of the village signs the proposal and there is recognition of the value of this work at high levels of government.

Institutional Capacity

With land allocation to communities, it is easier work to protect the forests, with each household arriving at an allotted time per month for a patrol period. By rotating the patrol assignments, this helps to reduce the number of patrols. The villagers undertaking the patrols discover and fine the violators.

If this same forest area was carved up into individual household plots, conflicts would erupt that would not be easily resolved. By standardizing the same quality of forests -- both in terms of access and sharing of responsibilities -- for everyone, it reduces the conflict level. Both the Forest Protection staff and the villages themselves saw that the community can manage forests and benefit sharing can bring balance to former conflicts.

In the past local people only harvested the forest, and were not concerned with forest protection or management tasks. When the Forest Protection Units realized that if local people could protect the forests, it would support their own tasks of forest protection, they then helped to mobilize local people to receive land allocation. This transformed their relationship to one where they were to guide villagers about forest management techniques, create new local models and work to scale up forest land allocation and community forestry efforts.

During the interviews, the new role of Forest Protection Officers was discussed. The tasks include how to protect the forest if there are violators, how to manage and stop fires, and expanding extension services (e.g. planting and nursery management).[184] The planting is done with local people and Forest Protection typically provides the seedlings. The nursery acts as a service center with better quality seedlings at lower than market prices. Forest Protection officers admitted to using a "carrot and stick" approach – they provide access to good forest, but also act as the major enforcers on forest crimes.

Asked how the forest agents intervene when there is demand for forest products, and households have access to different quality of forest land and how the potential conflicts are solved, the Forest Protection Office's response was that it is good to let the community and households manage this issue amongst themselves, and in some cases there is need for consultations between villages and neighboring communities. The Forest Protection staff saw

[184] Running a nursery is an additional task, as there are no SFEs or extension groups available to provide seedlings. SARD has a small nursery. The budget from nurseries comes from various project funds.

its greater contribution as guiding how to do forest management, but the decisions on types of forest management should take place in a village meeting.

3. A. Benefit Sharing

It is clear that the Thua Thien Hue example was the most prominent of the three provinces on establishing a baseline for benefit sharing legislation. (In contrast, Son La was far more advanced in its use of LUPLA and forest management planning.) During my interview with a consultant to MARD and the UNDP PROFOR project,[185] he indicated that the driving factor for community forestry in Thua Thien Hue is benefit sharing.

Methods

As of 2000, in Vietnam, there were two ways to develop local forests to generate local income. One was by protecting forests for watershed values through the FPC payment scheme. The other was to build up a local system of benefit sharing. In Thua Thien Hue, this system would be based on the principle of increasing the benefits by increments over the years.

To create a draft on benefit sharing, the villagers worked with the District People's Committee and Province People's Committee to spell out clear conditions for benefit sharing. Forest management plans were written and used as a monitoring tool for benefit sharing. Similar to Son La, a village fund was established. Benefits were defined, as well as a procedure for harvesting and establishing the legality (by stamping the goods) to cut down on illegal logging.

Next, a forest inventory[186] (by Forest Protection Office professionals) was undertaken during the forest land handover. Then an annual increment was estimated for the total area, for example between a 400 or 600 cubic meters cut per year. (If this area is well protected, then each year, the benefit sharing amount for the village would come to 600 cubic meters per year.)

The villagers submit a paper on behalf of the Forest Protection Office and the District People's Committee has the responsibility to comment on whether forest management was well done and verified by an inventory, which serves as a monitoring tool. The Commune People's Committee, District People's Committee and Forest Protection were all involved in looking at management practices. They were responsible for grading, judging and approving proposals for communities.

During the interview with villagers,[187] when asked to explain about how to distribute and decide on benefits within the village and between households, they described that in the village, they discussed a proposal, then sent it to higher levels for comments where it was approved with minor modifications.

The villagers gave as an example the 50 cubic meters volume in a good forest site.[188] In order to distribute benefits from yield, the first priority was for funeral use,[189] the second priority was to establish agricultural holdings and decide who receives them, giving preference for the disadvantaged in village, while the third priority was for those veterans and citizens who were

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[185] Interview held on June 9 in Hanoi.

[186] The forest inventory is undertaken to provide a baseline against which to check increases in forest volume.

[187] Interview, dated June 19, 2002 in Thuy Yen Thuong.

[188] The point is to distinguish between different conditions in rich and poor forests.

[189] Timber is used to bury the dead.

wounded in the war. And if any of the 50 cubic meters remains, the next priority was to reward in kind to villagers providing examples of a good forest protection labor force.

Villagers look at types of forest products, their potential value, the quality and quantity of these products, and where they are located. 2% per year was the normal increment for volume on benefit sharing (but this increment could be higher). Where the volume is 75 cubic meters per hectare, and the increase is around 1.5 cubic meters per hectare per year. For an area of 600 cubic meters per year, benefit sharing breaks down to the state receiving 50% and the community receiving 50%.

If the standard is lower (if the forest is less productive, for example) then the communities receive 30%, while the state receives 70% of the timber offtake. The benefit system is tied to an incremental model, as for a volume increase of 0.5 to 1 cubic meter, the community receives 20% and for a volume increase of less than 0.5, the community receives 10% of the benefits. This is a clear and straightforward incentive to motivate villagers to practice good management. If there is no growth, the forest area is reclaimed by the state.

The village determines how to use the 50 cubic meters. The maximum is 10 to 50% of the increment for 600 (for example). The village rule is prepared by the villages, and then approved by the commune and then by the district, then sent on to the provincial level. Prior to a five year end, the amount of 50 cubic meters can be paid out as an "advance" for village usage. Each year an inventory is taken. After five years a larger inventory is taken. The community is to agree on use of the rest of the timber they are to receive.

The patrolling group helps to monitor the 2% per year growth rule. They also work to uphold the forest protection regulations and the benefit sharing is spelled out when labor days[190] are agreed upon and meetings are used to further negotiate the terms.

Outcomes

According to the UNDP PROFOR review:

> The principle behind the proposal for a management agreement for the forest is that the State should not pay any protection fee to the local people. Their compensation for protecting the forest should instead come in the form of a share in the growth of the forest. The faster the forest increases its volume, the higher the share that goes to the villagers... In addition to stem wood from the main tree crop, the villagers have the right to collect fuelwood and non-wood forest products and can also use wood obtained from thinning. (PROFOR, 2002a:31)

A major outcome of the benefit sharing proposal is that for each allocation, 20-25% of the area is set aside for agricultural purposes, including planting industrial trees (ranging from fruit trees to cash crops or plantations of style fast growing species).

As compared to the Forest Protection Contracting system, to keep this pilot running, the government only needed to provide a low budget, and the total earnings were seven times[191] higher. In addition, there were other benefits for villagers to realize, such as using non-timber

[190] The daily wage at the time in this district for forest protection duties was 20,000 Vietnamese Dong (about 1.50 USD).

[191] Interview with Mr. Son (Vice Head of Forest Protection), Phu Loc district.

forest products (NTFPs), access to fuelwood and the option of eco-tourism (for the Bach Ma National Park). The Forest Protection station in Phu Loc provided a number of seedlings to local people from their nurseries.

Another major outcome in Thua Thien Hue province is that the role of the communities is very similar to a State Forest Enterprise. There is a strong incentive for local people to have authority and if the households manage well, they get good payments (some paid in advance) throughout the life of their involvement in forest management.

The three year trial period proposed in the local regulations has yielded positive results. Forests are well protected, and as of mid- 2005, approvals were made and plans were underway to harvest 90 cubic meters of timber from allocated forests (Nguyen, 2005b).

Legitimacy of norms; Validity with outcomes and methods

It took quite some time and effort to convince people at the Province People's Committee level to approve a benefit sharing measure. It was approved late in the day on December 29, 2000 and signed on the 30th in a formal ceremony mentioned earlier. And given that at the time this was signed there was no legal basis for a "community," it proved to be a very progressive move.[192]

As of 2001, setting up benefit sharing arrangements spread to many other villages, for example Phu Hai and Thuy Duong, 2 villages in Loc Vinh commune and Loc Tun commune. The Province People's Committee agreed to shorten the length of the process with the next group of villages. A good deal of effort is made to ensure that the forests are protected and developed well. As of June 2002, an additional 15 cubic meters would be a bonus incentive for the villages.

Given the province's innovative on creating benefit sharing arrangements, when asked about the distinction between locally grown models of benefit sharing and those prescribed under the national Decision 178, the response was [193] that the ideas are more or less the same, but the approach is different. Decision 178 mentions households and mass organizations as the responsible parties based on land contracts or allocations. Decision 178 does not mention communities as an eligible party. The position taken by people working in the region stressed that local application matters, as this is about a community's role and responsibility in forest management.

A different question was posed to local authorities. With the local benefits already agreed as under the decree, do the authorities in Thua Thien Hue need to adjust to the new national measure (Decision 178). This is essentially asking which prevails – the national policy or local agreements – in the local context. The Vice Head of Forest Protection insisted there is no conflict between the local measures and those stated in Decision 178. He mentioned that a consultant from MARD came to learn about the local decisions taken, in order to also understand more about effectiveness of forest allocation models for communities.

In an interview with the previous Forest Protection unit chairman, his reply was that when the national decision went into practice, the local arrangements should carry the day on benefit sharing rules. He felt that the Thua Thien Hue benefit sharing arrangements were more

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[192] Although it took one year to prepare this process from start to finish, the national benefit sharing policy did not appear until November 2001, drawing heavily on the Thua Thien Hue example.
[193] Interview with Mr. Minh, June 8, 2002.

favorable, providing more benefits accrued to local communities, than under the national standard.

Institutional Capacity

The national benefit sharing legislation (Decision 178) was issued in November 2001, nearly one year after detailed legislation was developed in Thua Thien Hue. Banh suggests:

> The new policy has really paved [the] way for an economic driving force, which has made households and individuals more actively involved in forestry in the forms of forests and forestland hire, lease and allocation. Despite all that, the above mentioned policy has solved only the necessary condition, that is the specific capacity of each subject (households or individuals), and the characteristics of distribution of forest land and natural forest resources in each locality (Banh, 2003:38).

The villagers are responsible for establishing a labor force, and punishing violators according to the village rules. This case will be judged on impact – so if the forests are reduced (in quality and volume), the villagers suffer by receiving fewer benefits. There is a clear incentive to sound management, and the villagers want to work to prevent damage from outsiders.

Every one or two years, the villagers are responsible for monitoring forest growth. As villagers assume responsibility, the idea from the state forest authorities is not to interfere (or intervene from a higher level) but allow for the systems to develop locally.

Impact on National Policy

The experiments and pilots (described earlier in this chapter) at the local level have influenced the goals and implementation strategies for forest management at the national level. This section describes how the results of experimentation at the local level have helped to reframe the goals and implementation strategies for national forest management policy. I show how new national policy reflects learning from the provincial efforts over the past few years. I point out where there are obstacles to using what has been learned from local experimentation to change national policy.

I begin with a short description of the policy process and an overview of the major national legislation which provided a platform for policy experimentation. I review how learning had an influence on the three issues (Forest Land Allocation, Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing) in each province. I illustrate how new policies, like the recent Land Law 2004, Forest Law 2005, reflect experiences from the pilot experiments in key provinces.

National legislation that opened the stage for pilots

The policy process evolved from the National Assembly, the Prime Minister or the Ministries deciding on the priorities and schedule for the revision or development of key legal documents (like laws, decrees or decisions). Inter-department and mostly inter-ministerial drafting committees are established. The Committees present a work plan to the respective Ministry along with a list of major issues to be addressed in the revision or development process. The Chairman sends out each new draft version for comments to the members of the editorial groups -- in some cases in the form of a table comparing the original legal documents. Experts from the Ministry of Justice are consulted and their views integrated, before the legal document is sent out to other Ministries and Provinces for comments.

After the final revision, redrafted or new legal documents are then submitted to the Government for approval with the attached comments provided by other Ministries or the Provinces. The process varies depending on the relevance and status of the legal document.

National-province-national policy feedback loop

National policies provided the means to experiment, and these experiments led to development of new legislation. The pilot experiments (on Forest Land Allocation, Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing) allowed for experiences to be shared and lessons learned to inform policy. The idea behind allocating forest land[194] emanates from Decree 02 of 1994, which is based on the 1993 Land Law and provided the green light for the state to hand over land to households. When the Land Law was modified in 1998, a new decision (Decision 245[195] on the Implementation of State Management Responsibility on Forest and Forestry Land at all Levels) was adopted in late 1998. This decision paved the way for a decentralized approach, providing more power to the province level (and lower levels) in terms of the application of the FLA process and implementation.

Two other initiatives that helped set the scene for policy and institutional changes include the Public Administration Reform (PAR) effort – which included institutional reform, organizational changes and human resource development, all aiming to deliver services to people in a better and more efficient manner. Also important was Decree 29 – on Grassroots Democracy (1998), which outlined the means to improve people's participation in local planning. Table 3.3 lists all the major national legislation that impacted forest policy from 1991-2005.

[194] While Decree 01 from 1995, of Forest Protection and DARD established contracting out areas of agricultural land and forests.

[195] Decision 245 allowed for an identification of functions, tasks, roles, authorities and organizational structures at all levels from the province down to the commune in the management, protection and development of forest resources and identifying the roles, authority, benefit and obligations of the forest owners.

Table 3.3: National Level Legislation 1991-2005

Legal document	Date	Description
Law	12 August 1991	Law on Forest Protection and Development
Decree No. 17	17 January 1992	By the Council of Ministers on the implementation of forest protection and development
Decision No. 327	15 September 1992	By the Chairman of the Council of Ministers on Policies for the use of bare land, denuded hills, forests, alluvial flats and water bodies
Law	14 July 1993	Law on Land
Law	19 August 1993	Law on Environment Protection
Decree No. 02	15 January 1994	By the Prime Minister on the allocation of forest land to organizations and individuals for long-term forestry purposes
Decree No. 01	4 January 1995	By the Government on the allocation of forest and agricultural land to State-owned enterprises
Decree No.50	28 August 1996	Of the Government on establishment, reorganization, dissolving and bankrupt of State owned enterprises
Decree No. 163	16 November 1999	By the Government concerning on the allocation and lease of forest land to organizations, households and individuals for long-term forestry purposes
Decision No. 245	21 December 1998	By the Prime Minister on Implementation of State Management Responsibility on Forest and Forestry Land at all Levels
Decision No. 661	29 July 1998	Of the National Assembly on the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program by the year 2010
Decision No. 187	16 September 1999	Of the Prime Minister on Reform of Organization and Management Mechanism of State Forest Enterprises
Circular No. 56	30 March 1999	Guiding to develop Participatory Village Forest Protection Regulations
Decree No. 163	16 November 1999	Of the Government on Organizing and Leasing Forestry Land to Organizations, Households and Individuals for Stable and Long-term Use for Forestry Purposes
Circular notice issued by MARD 56	30 March 1999	Guide to the making of agreement on Forest Protection and Development among Communities
Decision No. 08	11 January 2001	By the Prime Minister issuing Regulation on Management of Special use, Protection, Production and Natural forests
Decision No. 178	12 November 2001	By the Prime Minister on benefits and obligations of households, and individuals who are allocated, leased and contracted with forest and forest land
New Land Law	Signed 26 November 2003, adopted July 2004	Law on Land
New Forest Law	Signed 14 December 2004, 1 April adopted 2005	Law on Forest Protection and Development
Decision No. 304	23 November 2005	On the pilot allocation of forests and contractual assignment of forests for protection to ethnic minority households and communities in hamlets and villages in the central highlands provinces

I cover the three main topics (Forest Land Allocation, Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing), by providing specific examples of how the three provinces contributed to advancing these agenda items on the national level, thereby allowing the new Land Law and Forest Law to provide the opening for greater scaling up of community forestry.

Forest Land Allocation

As of late 2001, major achievements in Forest Land Allocation were acknowledged by MARD (Phuong, 2001) in a number of provinces, including forests that were better managed and decreasing deforestation rates. However, there were still many problems to resolve, including better clarifying rights and benefits for households and communities receiving forest land and poorly defined regulations on benefits and responsibilities.

Dak Lak was the first pilot province to begin Forest Land Allocation. A good deal of the initial FLA went to individual households (as opposed to groups of households or communities (as was the case in Son La or Thua Thien Hue). Dak Lak was the province with the greatest amount of forested area of the three provinces. The FLA hand over in Dak Lak was all from SFE land -- similar to the case in Thua Thien Hue for the most part, but distinctly different from the Son La province.

Provincial pilots influenced the development of national legal text. One example which had significant input from province-led pilots was Decision No. 163 on Allocation and Lease of Forest Land for long term purposes. This decision drew particularly from the pilot work in Dak Lak, Thua Thien Hue and Son La. The 6 years review on FLA (2002) study in Dak Lak states that:

> Pilot applications[196] of the new [FLA] approach produced concrete methods and policies for devolving management, including participatory land use planning, forest land allocation, community forest management regulations, and on-farm trials with agro-forestry systems (Tran *et.al.,* 2002:1).

Great strides made from the Dak Lak pilots and the experiments elsewhere led to influence on how Decision 163 took shape. Ultimately, a more iterative process in developing forest legislation resulted.

In terms of advancing the central ideas around Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP)[197] and Forest Land Allocation (FLA), Dak Lak was truly one of the major stage setters. However, some of the implementation measures were better refined and applied in Son La. These measures provide the most significant example of uptake in the new Land Law (July 2004), which includes an elaborated new guideline for LUPLA.

SMRP began PLUP in Dak Phoi commune (Dak Lak province) in late 1997. The work was prompted by the rising incidence of land occupation by new migrants and conflicts between them and local people. The local authorities viewed land use planning as an appropriate tool to help rationalize land management. The SMRP team supported PLUP in the following ways:

> facilitating partnerships to address the multi-stakeholder situation: the team initiated and assisted steering committees and working groups for the joint planning and implementation of land use planning, organizing training: the team recruited consultants with suitable experience from other parts of Vietnam, then organized and conducted

[196] The pilots were conducted under a provincial program initiated in 1998 and received technical assistance from the Project on Sustainable Management of Resources in the Lower Mekong Basin (SMRP).

[197] PLUP was originally tested in Dak Lak, yet became more commonly practiced in other provinces (including Son La, where it was called LUPLA) particularly as a systematic planning aspect of undertaking FLA.

> training courses for working group members and village representatives, assisting field implementation: the project staff assisted the working groups in the field, with particular attention to local people's participation, equality and gender issues, assisting monitoring and evaluation: the team supported the working groups in conducting participatory monitoring and evaluation exercises, synthesizing experience[s]: the team documented experience[s] with implementation and summarized lessons learned on participatory land use planning, promoting dissemination: the team developed land use planning guidelines for application in Dak Lak (Tran *et.al.* 2002:4).

In 2000, Birner was a strong advocate of making information collected on the experiences of FLA available to potential users (project staff, government agencies involved, other consultants working on this issue). She also supported the development of an analytical framework for the analysis of FLA in order to gather lessons and make recommendations from the pilot cases in Ea Sol and Dak Phoi communes. This was seen as a way to draw conclusions for further research on FLA.

These recommendations were taken up by the local government and SMRP working together in partnerships. As mentioned in earlier in this chapter, a critical role was played by the Consultative Working Group on forestland allocation and forest management at the provincial level. This working group was in turn assisted by the establishment of steering committees and working groups at the district level.

In the process of assessing and synthesizing experiences and lessons learned from the experiments, DARD and SMRP developed technical guidelines for forest land allocation in Dak Lak. Through the
provision of training and technical assistance, the SMRP team trained State Forest Enterprise staff, prepared maps, and facilitated workshops involving the main actors in forest land allocation.

This paid off:

> the results and lessons learned from the first allocations found their way into provincial policy and programs. The provincial government officially recognized the guidelines prepared by DARD and continued to allocate funds to the program... District and commune authorities recognized the significance of forest land allocation and played important roles in coordinating local implementation... Local people got actively involved in the allocation process, with apparent benefits for the effectiveness and efficiency of allocation (Tran *et. al.*, 2002:7).

Major lessons learned were that institutional development and capacity building were critical to success. In Dak Lak, the province working group on FLA was serious in its quest for lesson learning. By engaging a strong team of university researchers (to support project staff and government officials) to monitor as well as to gauge field implementation and progress, this created a stronger sense of ownership of the process by local decision-makers. From this came a continued impetus for reform. FLA provided the key to dismiss in government officials minds the earlier assumptions about local people having use rights and managing forests.

Finally, by synthesizing experiences and information, the PPC (supported by DARD and SMRP) documented and disseminated the lessons learned throughout Vietnam.

Similarly, in Son La learning while experimenting was very important, and this provided the means for the field pilots to serve as a type of outreach to the province (facilitated by the forestry agencies and the SFDP project). Much care went into the process of developing a methodology (in this case, LUPLA) and carrying it through with institutional training to enhance the implementation phase. From Son La, much was gained by doing LUP first prior to allowing FLA. By contrast in Dak Lak, this process was not as systematically applied, and although PLUP had been done previously in some FLA areas, there was not the same degree of integration between the two activities (as occurred in Son La province).

Table 3.4 shows a wealth of legal documents generated at the province level, serving as the building blocks principally to support Forest Land Allocation (as well as Forest Protection Regulations), which in turn enhanced the development of new legislation at the national level.

Table 3.4: Summary of Son La's methodology and legislation development: Provincial legislation and supporting guidelines

Date	Title	
February 1994	PPC Decision No. 109	On promulgation of urgent solution to protect and develop forest
March 1995	PPC Guideline No. 91	To guide the land planning engaged with allocating land to households and individuals for forestry and individuals for forestry and agricultural production objectives
January 1997	PPC Decision No. 975	On the Establishment of Forest Development Sub-departments
May 1997	PPC Decision No. 131	On promulgation of Regulation on Forest Protection and Development
May 1997	PPC Resolution No. 10	On the strengthening of forest plantations
September 1997	PPC Decision No. 1196	On the consolidation of the agro-forestry extension system
December 1997	PPC Decision No. 2112	To approve the planning on Agriculture and Forestry in period 2001-2010
April 1998	PPC Decision No. 763	On the establishment of a steering committee to fulfill Decree 08 and Decree 10 and the 5MHRP
April 1999	Son La PPC issued	Guideline on Participatory Landuse Planning and Land Allocation Applied at Commune Level
September 1999	PPC Decision No. 1709	To promulgate Regulation on Forest Product Exploitation, Trading, Transportation and Utilization
March 2000	Son La PPC Decision 310	On issuing temporary guideline on Participatory Socio-economic Development Planning at the grassroot level
June 2000	Son La	Forest Protection Regulations
July 2000	Son La PPC Decision 1495	Issuing the temporary guidelines on "Forest protection and development regulations at village level applied in Son La province"
October 2000	Province level Memo 470	On contract of community forest establishment
October 2000	Province level Decision 2396	On the Approval of Allocation Schemes for the Forestry Land and Existing Forest in the Period 2001-2002
October 2000	Province level Decision 2397	Establishes a Steering Committee to Conduct Allocation of Existing Forest
October 2000	Province level Decision 2398	On the Division of Responsibility for Relating Institutions and Authorities [1]

October 2000	(Not a Decision, but a project proposal)	Project proposal for allocation of existing forests, based on the Decision 2396
December 2000	Directive 18	Implementation Guidelines on allocation of existing forests for the years 2000-2001 (linked to the division of responsibility).
December 2000	Decision 3011	Temporary Policy and Solution of allocation of existing forest (and within this policy there is Article 16, which considers benefit sharing arrangements
December 2000		Action Plan to allocate existing forests and forest land

i: this includes DARD, Forest Protection and cadastral department – establishing very clear tasks for all parties

Obstacles

In Dak Lak the implementation of FLA was by far more problematic than in Son La province. One reason for this was that the forest land was coming from SFEs. Further, as mentioned earlier,

> Dak Lak is confronting a big challenge of land invasion and conversion to other uses (mainly forestry land being converted to agricultural land) caused by the wave of free migrants and illegal land buying/selling. It is difficult to solve this problem because the government has not issued policies and guidelines (e.g. the government has not authorized the province to approve land conversion to other uses). This causes difficulties for the province interpreting and implementing government policies to solve the problem (Nguyen *et. al.*, 2001:6).

In Dak Lak, at times there were unclear roles and there was greater hesitancy to plow ahead without guidance from the central government (as compared to Son La and Thua Thien Hue). Many conflicting interests for the use of land, contributed to a slower pace for FLA piloting.

Other reasons for Dak Lak advancing less quickly than Son La on FLA were due to a combination of coffee price fluctuations, land riots and ethnic, religious and border disputes within the region. Dak Lak was a province with much more inherent conflict than in Son La or Thua Thien Hue.

Forest Protection Regulations

In Dak Lak, the Village Forest Protection Regulations were initiated with an emphasis on training and technical assistance to communities. The teams assisting the FPR process used simple documentation tools and record keeping for villagers. They facilitated village meetings to gather ideas for the regulations and to discuss draft regulations with villagers. In addition, they organized training in dispute resolution techniques. To monitor and evaluate the pilots, field activities were studied and results were brought to be discussed at an evaluation workshop. Following the workshop, SMRP and government authorities ensured that recommendations were disseminated for wider application. The project team helped the Forest Management Units to produce technical guidelines and summarized the results in brief information brochures (Tran *et. al.,* 2002). SMRP and the Provincial Forest Department produced technical guidelines for Forest Protection Regulations based on the work in 25 villages, between 2000 and 2002.

In Son La, there was also a strong emphasis on facilitation of Forest Protection Regulations, with a solid delivery system. Forest Protection Regulations, promoted a planning and monitoring system for better forest management. To support these regulations, a legal framework for community-based forest law was developed to regulate and enforce access rights and restrictions of a public goods resource (e.g. a village forest). In this process, community members developed site specific village Forest Protection Regulations, which were locally enforced. As a result, this process lead to fewer violations and increased local capacity, created new roles between government and community vis-à-vis forest management, and (in most cases) established a self-governing system.

By transferring knowledge of resource assessment, ideas were brought from Son La[198] to Dak Lak to improve the development of FPRs. Resource assessment was seen as a joint activity involving the commune forest management board as a technical resource, extension workers as facilitators and local forest users. This assessment was viewed as a means to support stakeholder's capacity to carry out future resource assessments, reduce the workload of Forest Protection Units and establish mutual trust and exchange of information between Forest Protection staff and local stakeholders (Wode, 2003).

Benefit Sharing

Input from province-led pilots on Benefit Sharing (particularly from Thua Thien Hue and Dak Lak) led to the development of the national Benefit sharing policy (Decision 178). In the process of assessing and synthesizing experiences and lessons learned from the experiments, DARD and SMRP developed a recommendation on benefit sharing of forest products as input into provincial policy-making. While Benefit Sharing was important in Dak Lak, it was perhaps not stressed as much as in Thua Thien Hue province. However, the research team in charge of monitoring FLA related progress suggested that

> The actors involved at various levels achieved consensus over the benefits of forest land allocation in several evaluation and consultation processes... The lessons learned in Dak Lak contributed to the formulation of national policy, in particular Decree 163 (1999) and Decision 178 (2001) (Tran *et.al.,* 2002:7).

In Thua Thien Hue province, pilot communes helped to define the necessary criteria which led to local legislation measures like 3581 and 3582 (spelling out conditions for FLA and benefit sharing). Central government officials acknowledged drawing heavily on the Thua Thien Hue experiences when drafting the text for Decision 178. To indicate the learning potential from this pilot, Banh suggested: "The models were developed based on the principles that later models [would thrive from] inheriting the achievements and experience from earlier ones [and] become better and better." (Banh, 2003:40).

Obstacles

Benefit sharing appears to be advancing slowly and remains ill defined in many cases. It is problematic for individual households who own forests to obtain a logging permit, and similarly

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[198] First field experiences in Son La and Lai Chau province confirmed sufficient capacity and a high interest of forest users in the process, and often villagers themselves emphasized the need for reliable data for improved forest management.

to convert forest land for agricultural purposes (Nguyen, 2005b). Unclear policies and poor guidance from forest agencies and extension workers account for some of difficulties in obtaining legal approval through permits. Further, Nguyen (2005a) finds that greater benefits are, on average, accruing to more advantaged households (those with more labor and capital).

Land Law 2004 and Forest Law 2005

Since 2004, a more conducive legal environment (established by the adoption of the new Land and Forest Laws[199]) exists to support community forestry. This section discusses the key contributions made by the pilot experiments in the provinces, as well as some outstanding issues.

With the passing of the new Law on Forest Protection and Development in December 2004, communities have been recognized as legal bodies for forest management and utilization and Red Book Certificates can be issued to communities (as the pilots in Son La province during the SFDP project period show). The Forest Law -- which spells out details on the management, protection, development and use of forests, and forest owner's rights and obligations -- under Section 3, Article 29 stipulates the assignment of forests to village population communities and Article 30 addresses rights and obligations of village population communities with assigned forests. Within these articles, references are made to the creation of Forest Protection Regulations and benefits available to communities.

The Land Law 2004 recognizes the legal status of communities as an owner of land resources. The Land Law refers to communities in Article 9 Land Users, which cites "Residential communities including communities of Vietnamese residing in the same village, hamlet or similar residence with the same tradition, customs or in the same extended family, to which land is allocated or who are using land and have been acknowledged by the State with regard to their land use rights." Yet according to the text in Articles 75 and 76 of the Land Law (production and protective forests, respectively), communities are not recognized explicitly as a forest land recipient.

In the Land Law, there is also the category of "domestic organizations" able to receive land. Domestic organizations include State agencies, political organizations, socio-political organizations, political-socio-professional organizations, social organizations, economic organizations, public service organizations, units of the armed forces and other organizations. This arrangement is made in accordance with provisions of the Government to which land is allocated, leased by the State or who are using land and have been acknowledged by the State with regard to their land use rights, such as economic organizations who receive the transfer of land use rights.

Long term use rules (as tested under the provincial pilots) are stipulated in Land Law, (Article 66) "Land users have the right to use land on a stable and long term basis in the following circumstances: Protective forestry land and specialized forestry land" and the distinction is as follows (Article 67) "Land users have the right to use land within a land use term in the following cases: 1. The term of allocation of land for cultivation of annual crops, aquaculture and salt production to households, individuals as stipulated in clause 1, Article 70 of this Law shall be

[199] The Forest Law is dated 14 December, 2004 and active as of 1 April 2005.

twenty years; term of allocation or lease of land for cultivation of long term crops and production forest to households, individuals as stipulated in clause 2 and clause 3, Article 70 of this Law shall be fifty years."

In the new Land Law, LUPLA (as was principally applied in Son La province) was fully adopted. References are found in Section 2 Land Use, Land Use Zoning and Planning, Article 21 Principles for Preparation of Land Use, Land Use Zoning and Planning, where many of the tenets of LUPLA and PLUP are articulated. These include a set of Principles for the Preparation of Land Use Land Use Zoning and Planning, including the following points

> 1. In compliance with strategies, master zoning, socio-economic development planning, national defense and security;
> 2. From general to details; land use zoning and planning of lower levels should be in accordance with the land use zoning and planning of higher levels; land use plans should be in accordance with land use zoning which has been decided or approved by the state authorized bodies; 3. Land use zoning and planning of higher levels should include the demand of land use of their immediate lower levels; 4. Using land economically and efficiently; 5. Exploiting natural resources reasonably, and protecting environment; 6. Protecting and maintaining cultural-historical relics and landscapes; and 7. Democratic and public.

Also in the Land Law, under Article 25 Land Use Zoning and Planning, the People's Committees (at all levels) are assigned the role of organizing the preparation of land use zoning.[200] According to Article 11 on Land Use Principles: "The use of the land shall comply with the following principles: 1) To be in accordance with land use zoning and land use plans and the purpose of land use; 2) To be economic, effective, to protect environment and not to damage other land users' legitimate benefits; and 3) Land users exercise their rights and obligations during the land use term in accordance with provisions of this Law and other provisions of the relevant laws."

Similarly, Article 13 of the Forest Law recommends integrating Forest Protection and Development planning with land use planning. Forest Protection Regulations figure prominently in Article 9 of the Forest Law 2005, where there is a commitment to ensure harmony between the State's and the forest owner's interests. Article 15 of the Forest Law ensures that Forest Protection and Development plans include study, synthesis and analysis and assessment of the socio-economic situation and current status of forest resources.

Article 38 of the Forest Law spells out the role for the district, namely to guide and direct implementation and legislation, while the commune has the role to inspect, and direct villages in formulating and observing rules of forest protection, organize forest management and protection, adopt plans to be adopted on rights and obligations of forest owners rights to be compensated, and to have use rights.

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[200] Article 26. Authority to Approve and Examine Land Use Zoning and Planning – it is the National Assembly that approves the national land use zoning and plan submitted by the Government; the Government examines land use zoning and plans for provinces, and cities under the central authority; the provincial and municipal People's Committees under the central authority shall examine land use zoning and plan of the management units at the immediately lower levels and the People's Committee of districts shall examine land use zoning and planning of villages stipulated in Clause 4 of Article 25 of the Land Law.

The Forest Law Article 47 addresses FPRs and benefits, cross-referencing Article 69 on the rights and obligations of households. Article 47 also discusses the benefit stream granted to households and communities, including the use of NTFPs, reflecting the outcomes from province pilots. Article 80 takes this a step further by specifying how forest rangers have the role of guiding forest owners in elaborating and implementing forest protection schemes, including measures for inspection and control.

A significant point (concerning benefits) in the new Land Law is found in Article 33: Land Allocation without Land Use Fees, where land use fees are dismissed for forestry purposes.[201]

Customary Titling

Perhaps the largest contribution from the provinces to the national level comes in the form of Decision 304 (adopted 23 November 2005) on the Pilot Allocation of Forests and Contractual Assignment of Forests for Protection to Ethnic Minority Households and Communities in Hamlets and Villages in the Central Highlands Provinces. This decision was influenced by the results of pilots in Son La and Dak Lak[202], much of which was succinctly communicated in a Customary Land Titling in Vietnam policy brief, produced by a team involving SFDP former staff members and World Bank Vietnam country office staff.

The policy brief suggests that customary land titling[203] is now possible given the scope of the revised Land Law. The policy brief provides key findings and recommendations arising from Government-donor discussions on the implementation of customary titling. It also highlights the fact that in Dak Lak, from 1999-2002, at least 16,000 hectares of forests were allocated to ethnic groups through Land Use Certificates, with nearly one-third of this land going to communities (Thanh *et. al,* 2003). Son La (from 2001-2003) allocated 685,000 hectares of forest land through Land Use Certificates (with more than half of this land granted to communities) (Son La PPC, 2004).The policy brief argues that there is substantial support for this type of land tenure arrangement throughout the world, providing examples from Papua New Guinea, China and Ghana.

As a matter of priority, customary titling is recommended

> [to] be carried out for those communities already seen to be managing forest or "unused" land in practice, before being attempted more widely. This needs to involve: first, drawing relevant lessons from ongoing pilot activities, based on a careful assessment of their impacts. Second, the necessary legal framework requires more complete elaboration, which may be addressed through the current revision of the Forest Protection and Development Law. And third, the institutional framework for implementation needs to be developed, along with "how to" guidelines and appropriate funding arrangements (World Bank, 2004a:7).

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[201] Article 33 states that" "The State shall allocate land and not collect land use fees in the following cases: 1. Households and individuals directly engaged in activities of agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, and salt production to which farm land is allocated within the limits stipulated in Article 70 of this Law; 2. Organizations using land for the purpose of experiment study, experiment of agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and salt production."

[202] Where statutory use rights were granted in the form of Land Use Certificates.

[203] In Vietnam, as elsewhere, customary titling largely concerns areas of forest land held or claimed by ethnic minority groups, and therefore needs to be approached with sensitivity (World Bank, 2004:1).

Decision 304 marks the first set of guidelines (after adoption of the new Land and Forest Laws) to explore community forestry models on a broader scale, expanding the pilot to the entire Central Highlands region of Vietnam. This decision allows for community forestry to occur in different forest types, ranging from special use forests to production and protection forests. Finally, the links between forests and poverty, as well as forest allocation and watershed values are suggested. Potential obstacles in this decision to advancing community forestry more fully include: a continued reliance on Forest Protection Contract payments, insufficient investment to develop productive (and economically viable, like for example in Mexico) community forestry systems and poorly specified Benefit Sharing arrangements[204]

The most critical type of implementation guideline for the Forest Law for the purposes of my study is the draft Community Forestry decree. This decree is under prepared by the Forest Department to be submitted to Office of the Government for approval. According to Nguyen

> At present, this [National Community Forest Management] working group is trying to put together related documents and manuals into a guideline to facilitate formation and operation of community forestry. Preparation of this guideline is, however, in an early stage. An outline of the guideline is still under discussion (Nguyen, 2005b:14).

As of December 30, 2005[205] the Forest Sector Support Program office stated that the Community Forestry decree is under preparation in Vietnamese and that the team preparing it has not yet shared their draft, thus it was not yet available (in English, let alone Vietnamese) for distribution or comment.

[204] The advantages and disadvantages of Decision 304 were presented by Edwin Shanks, a former MRDP project staff member, communicated in an email on 20 January, 2006.
[205] Email communication with the FSSP offices in Hanoi.

CHAPTER V: THEORY OF POLICY-ORIENTED LEARING

This chapter begins with a review of the conventional wisdom of the center-periphery model for a central planning country such as Vietnam. It builds on ideas of policy-oriented learning (as highlighted in the Introduction) and progresses to suggest a model on bottom up policy learning from local experimentation. It concludes with lessons from the provinces pilots and the Community Forest Management Working Group, which have contributed to the advancement of community forestry on a national scale.

Influential actors and policy reform

To briefly summarize what was initiated in the introduction, the basic forest management literature suggests that certain groups, particularly in developing countries, have a disproportionate affect on policy (important individuals, top committees with oversight for policy creation or important timber corporations) (Mayers and Bass, 1999; Schmidt, Berry and Gordon, 1999). Similarly, much of the policy making literature concentrates on the role of significant actors. Typically, policy is adopted and implemented by policy elites in bureaucracies and specialist agencies. The literature is instructive in that it states that only important people – with a certain title or status – have the capacity to inform, shape and reform national policy.

One conventional view of policy which might fit the situation in Vietnam is that policy is formed as a rational process at the central level and it is sent out to the periphery. Other views posit that an interactive process takes place, allowing for some stakeholder comment or input into the policy making process.

Policy innovation

Although the application of general stages theory[206] has been largely abandoned, the role of policy innovators, in my view, emerges as one of the most useful elements of the stages theory-based studies. Many of the implementation studies illustrate how policy innovators, typically based in local implementing agencies, use technical or local knowledge to alter the nature of policy implementation (Schon and Rein, 1994; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979). These policy innovators impact future policy formulation, by bringing to bear experiences which ground the policy in local realities and strengthen the case for local interpretation and adaptation.

Schon (1971) speaks about diffusion of innovation as the dominant model for transforming societies, thereby evoking a climate for reform. He stipulates that what precipitates change is a disruptive event or powerful sequence of events which sets up demand for ideas in good currency. A broad diffusion of these ideas depends upon the influence of the ideas, communication of ideas, and interpersonal networks – such as advocacy coalitions. Thus, reform is initiated in response to a crisis and disruptive evidence may surface that is incompatible with accepted theory. Often times, certain actors play vanguard roles, by making

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[206] In the 1950s, Lasswell introduced the influential stages theory, as a conceptual map or sequential progression through the various stages of policy making and/or the decision process. Lasswell (1956) categorized these stages as: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination and appraisal. This listing of stages was revised in the mid-1970s to become: initiation, estimation, selection, implementation, evaluation and termination (deLeon in Sabatier, 1999). Another common classification of stages includes: agenda setting, decision-making, implementation and evaluation) in the policy making process (Kingdon, 1994).

the public aware of new ideas. A creation of new awareness demands the diffusion of ideas. These new ideas need to be legitimized in order to be accepted into public policy and this requires the approval of administrators or other notable persons who confer authority (Schon, 1971).

My research illustrates the critical contribution of new actors (ranging from local government officials, district forest officers, to villagers and community forestry project staff members) and new ideas (on participatory planning for land use and allocation, community forest management planning). In Vietnam, advocates (armed with lessons from field testing), rather than the Party elite, clearly helped to reshape forest policy by bringing community forestry from a "pilot" experiment to a more mainstream alternative to state forest management. My case suggests that others besides key leaders can influence policy making. In the model suggested later in this chapter, I merge the idea of policy innovators with that of policy advocates to analyze my case of policy-oriented learning.

The role of advocates and policy communities

Experts, NGO advocates, interest groups and various policy networks are responsible for diffusing new ideas and concepts and influencing policy outcomes. There is much debate about the types of advocates (experts, NGO advocates or mobilized local people) and policy communities (epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions or change agents) active in environmental policy making processes (see Jasanoff, 1997; Wapner, 1996; Princen and Finger, 1994; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; and Haas, 1992).

Rather than dwelling on the debate as to who exactly is an expert or advocate or change agent for the purpose of my case, I draw initially on the advocacy networks theory put forward by Keck and Sikkink (1998). They concentrate on activists[207] who form transnational advocacy networks, emphasizing the role of advocacy networks in influencing policy change. Activists in networks try not only to influence policy outcomes, but also to transform the terms and nature of the policy debate. In such issue areas (like the environment or human rights) these networks make international resources available to new actors in domestic political and social struggles. Transnational advocacy networks are "networks of activists, distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation" (Keck and Sikkink 1998:1).

Advocates communicate their values into a central message to key decision makers. Keck and Sikkink assert that in the cases of human rights, environment and women's suffrage, transnational advocacy networks frequently work to promote the implementation of norms, by pressuring target actors to adopt new policies or by monitoring compliance with international standards. Further,

> In doing so they contribute to changing perceptions that both state and societal actors may have of their identities, interests and preferences, to transforming their discursive positions and ultimately to changing procedures, policies and behavior (Keck and Sikkink 1998:3).

[207] Activists are distinguishable by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

Policy evolution

In Vietnam, national actors (supported by some transnational actors involved in field projects) played a role in reformulating forest policy principles. My findings indicate that policy innovators joined forces with policy advocates to reform policy. This led me to further explore theories on policy evolution.

According to Sabatier (1991) policy evolution occurs when multiple actors work at the national level to form a new coalition to promote policy-oriented learning and ultimately, to seek policy reform. This evolution occurs over time (ranging from one to several decades) and it typically involves more than a few critical actors or a specific type of political behavior. Policy evolution may include hundreds of governmental institutions, dozens of important elections in various jurisdictions, and multiple "iron triangles"[208], at various levels of government. In addition to being multi-layered and multi-dimensional, policy evolution revolves around a wide range of behaviors – particularly technical debates[209] over critical policy issues.

As my point of departure, I draw on an analytical framework which might explain how advocates affected policy in Vietnam. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith generated a theory which suggests that advocacy coalitions can affect policy. Advocates do this in certain ways, particularly by promoting policy-oriented learning. They raise doubts about the validity of certain operating principles inherent in policy and seek to bring pressure to bear on the belief systems supported by policy makers.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) built the Advocacy Coalition Framework around the following four basic premises:

> 1) understanding the policy change process, and the role of policy-oriented learning therein, requires a time perspective of a decade or more,
> 2) the most useful way to think about policy change over such a time span is through the focus on "policy subsystems"[210] – that is the interaction of actors from different institutions who follow and seek to influence governmental decisions in a policy area,

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[208] Iron triangles are made up of administrative agencies, legislative committees and interest groups.

[209] Sabatier (1991, 1993) asserts that multiple behaviors and the use of technical information are typically ignored by the vast majority of political scientists. Schon and Rein (1994) and other proponents of the policy innovators idea (Jasanoff, 1997; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1979) concur.

[210] Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) outlined a necessary and sufficient set of criteria for a policy subsystem, including: a) The participants regard themselves as a semiautonomous community who share a domain of expertise. b) They have sought to influence public policy within the domain over a fairly long period of time (i.e. seven to ten years). This criterion stems from the ACF assumption that such an interval is necessary for doing meaningful policy analysis that can deal with learning and real-world impacts. c) There exist specialized subunits within agencies at all relevant levels of government to deal with this topic. This criterion follows from an assumption that without such units at all levels, implementation will be exceedingly problematic and coalitions will come to realize this. A persisting subsystem needs to have "organizational residue." d) There exist interest groups, or specialized subunits within interest groups, that regard this as a major policy topic (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; 1997).

Figure 7: Advocacy Coalition Framework (1997)

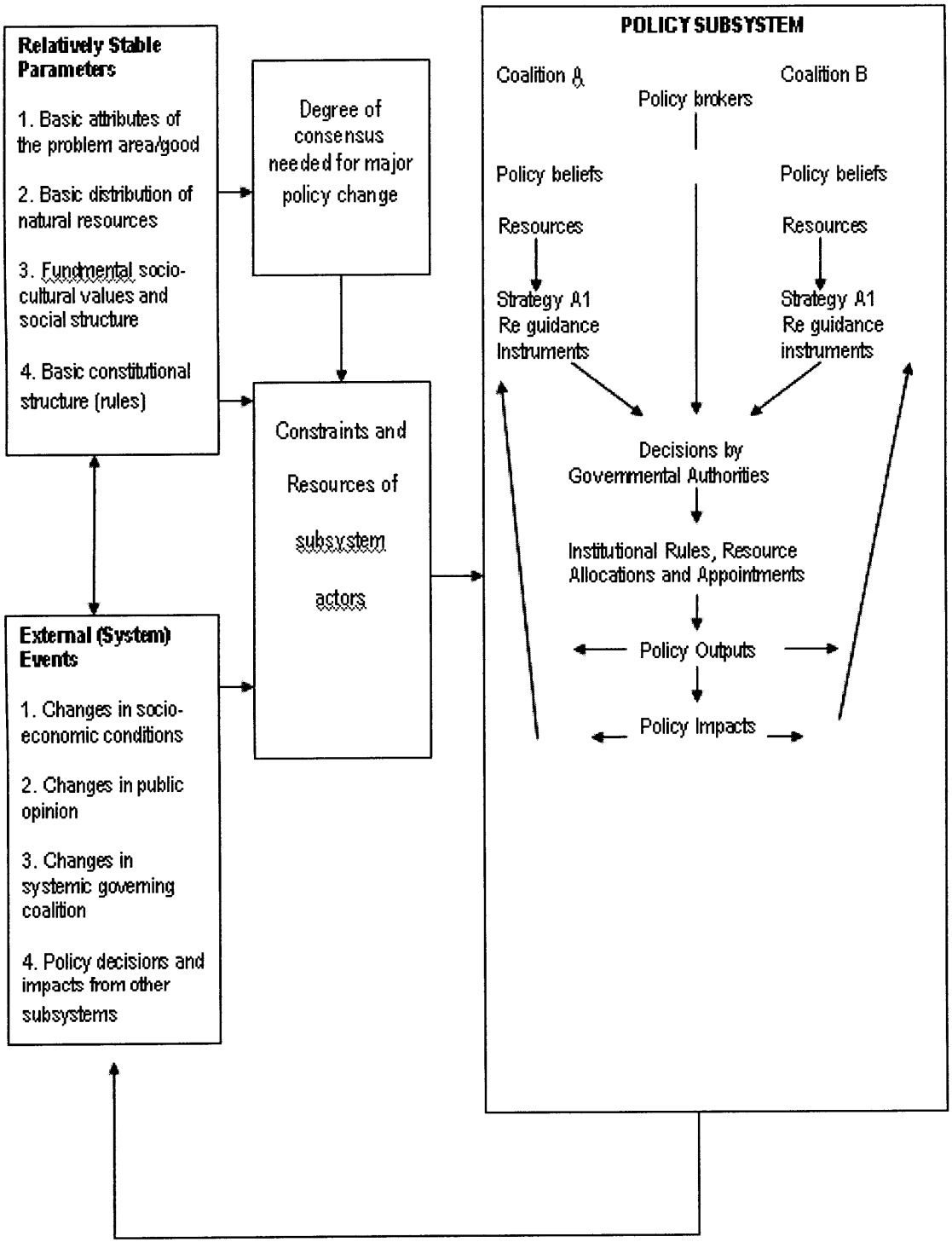

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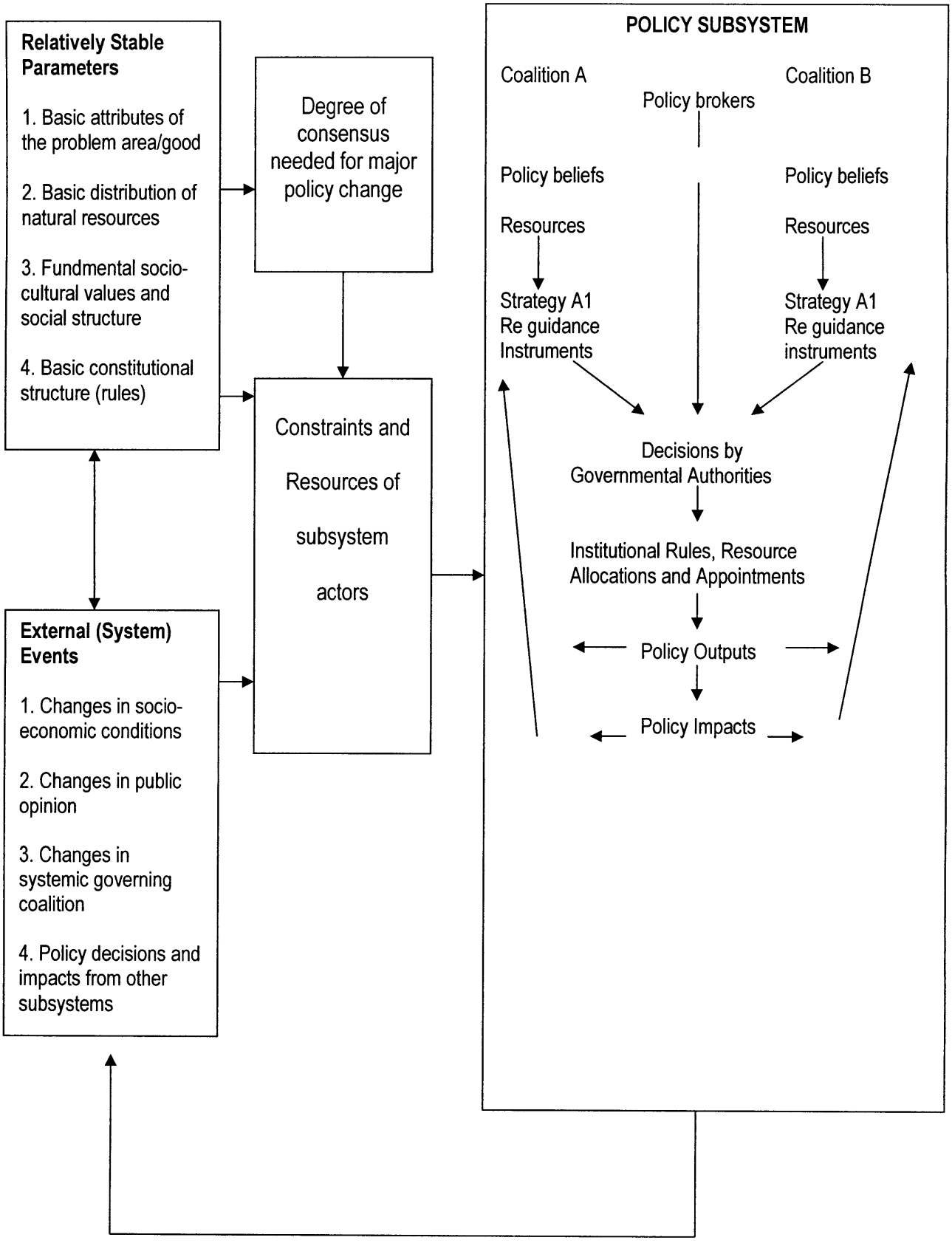
Figure 7: Advocacy Coalition Framework (1997)



> 3) those subsystems must include an intergovernmental dimension, that is, that they must involve all levels of government, and
> 4) public policies (or programs) can be conceptualized in the same manner as belief systems, that is, as sets of value priorities and causal assumptions about how to realize them (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993:16).

Keck and Sikkink's idea behind the promotion of norms and changing behavior is consistent with Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's analysis of belief systems in the policy subsystem. Figure 7 illustrates how these changes occur.

The policy subsystem that I have selected is the forest sector in Vietnam, which is influenced by a distinct advocacy coalition. This coalition began when a group of German-funded projects operating in Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia partnered with the Asia Forest Network[211] to establish a network for community forestry throughout the Mekong region. The Vietnamese national branch of this network expanded by incorporating members from important government forest agencies, universities, research institutes, as well as several bilateral aid forestry projects[212] and NGO projects to form the Community Forest Management Working Group. Many of the members of this working group became active in reformulating national forest policy between 1999 and late 2005.

Policy-oriented learning

Within the general process of policy change, the Advocacy Coalition Framework has a particular interest in policy-oriented learning. Following Heclo

> policy-oriented learning refers to relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and are concerned with the attainment (or revision) of policy objectives (1974:306).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework assumes that such learning is instrumental, that is, that members of various coalitions seek to better understand the world in order to further their policy objectives. They will resist information suggesting that their basic beliefs may be invalid or unattainable, and they will use formal policy analyses primarily to buttress and elaborate those beliefs (or attack their opponents' views).

Such learning comprises only one of the forces affecting policy change over time. In addition to this cognitive activity and in accordance with Heclo (1978), there are real world changes. These changes[213] happen in socio-economic conditions as well as in the governance structure of system-wide coalitions.

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[211] Based in Berkeley, AFN is a non-profit corporation dedicated to supporting the role of communities in protection and sustainable use of Asia's forests. AFN is comprised of a coalition of planners, policy makers, government foresters, scientists, researchers and NGOs. Since its founding in 1987, AFN has become affiliated with over thirty institutions and 700 individuals from Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, Canada and the U.S. AFN activities include community mediation and mapping, field research, publications, and participation in national, regional and international policy reform dialogues.

[212] Supported by the U.K., Swiss, Swedish, Dutch, German and Finnish governments.

[213] Two examples from Sabatier (1993) which impacted air pollution policies included the 1973 Arab oil embargo and the election of Reagan in 1980. Both changes dramatically altered the composition and the resources of various coalitions, and in turn, public policy within the subsystem. In addition, turnover in personnel, sometimes resulting from external conditions (death or retirement) constitutes a second noncognitive source of change that can

Just as vanguards seek reform by mobilizing information and shaping new policy, coalition advocates engage in policy debates designed to enhance the prospects for adoption of key elements of the coalition's beliefs and interests into governmental policy. They do this by challenging the data, challenging the causal model or asking whether the best policy has been put forward (Jenkins-Smith, 1988).

Learning and belief system modification are difficult when there is a high level of conflict between various coalitions. This is due to the fact that when fundamental beliefs underlie the conflict, there is a greater tendency for policy wars to be waged. With more moderate levels of conflict, when issues are more tractable and the core is not threatened, there is a greater possibility for change.

Bottom up Policy Learning Model

I propose the following diagram, Figure 8: Modifying the model of policy evolution to describe policy-oriented learning and reform in my case. The central message from Figure 8 (a,b,c) is that dynamic interaction between key actors produces a climate for reform and policy-oriented learning, which contributes to reform of policy content and institutions. This process has the potential to create an enabling environment for better policy.

Figure 8 begins with the role that joint efforts between policy innovators (aided by policy advocates and international support for pilot projects) play in applying pressure on key government officials to reform policies. This pressure is applied to acknowledge past failure and bring lessons from the field to bear on current implementation problems. Prodded by this pressure, key government officials legitimize new norms and bring these norms and new ideas into good currency. This act of legitimacy, paired with requesting participation by policy advocates/innovators creates a climate for reform and allows policy-oriented learning to unfold. Policy-oriented learning is due to the attention raised to failure of past practices. This attention to failure enables review studies to occur. These studies stimulate a set of initial stocktaking actions, which lead to an overarching framework for reform. This framework for reform is spelled out in greater detail in terms of policy content and institutional changes.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is instigated to monitor progress on policy content and institutional changes. A feedback loop between monitoring and the policy content exists to guide subsequent changes. These steps form the basis for policy-oriented learning, which contributes to reform of the policy content and actions undertaken by institutions. My case suggests that over time there is an increasing climate for reform. I assert that there is potential for these reforms to contribute to an enabling environment for realizing economic, environmental and social benefits from the reformed policy, namely in the advances made by Forest Land Allocation and LUPLA, the preparation of Forest Protection Regulations and community forestry planning.

The reform process began to question why reforestation (using top-down models) was not successful. When in several cases, there was evidence of poor survival rates of trees and an incentive structure which left farmers choosing between planting and protecting trees versus planting crops to feed their families, more and more government officials began questioning the

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substantially alter the political resources of various advocacy coalitions and thus the policy decisions at the collective choice and operational levels.

principles of the old reforestation models. Similarly, the sustainability of the Forest Protection Contracting system was called into question. By using LUPLA and allowing some agricultural conversion as part of the Forest Land Allocation process, this severe trade-off calculus begins to disappear.

The learning process (at the national scale) began with a large stocktaking exercise, which involved hundreds of Vietnamese consultants who conducted interviews in the field to look at implementation of reforestation and Forest Protection Contracting. The reports of these reports were consolidated and combined with the results of the Asian Development Bank study completed in 2001 (mentioned previously in Chapter 1). A draft report was made available and brainstorming sessions were scheduled to review the initial results. A small team (originally of 6 people, as mentioned in Chapter 3) gathered for five months to synthesize this information into a report (the Synthesis Report of the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Program) and propose recommendations for new way forward. This new way forward was building a broader coalition of actors together under the umbrella of the Forest Sector Support Program, and led to increased sharing of information on forest issues. Susskind and Perry (1979) report a similar trend of opening up debate on policy (following the recognition of a crisis) and fostering a bottom up learning exercise to contribute to and fortify the issues of the debate in their case of growth policy in Massachusetts.

My model looks explicitly at the contributions made by the field implementers of the policy experiments of Forest Land Allocation, LUPLA, Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing, partnered with the National Working Group on Community Forest Management to bring the field lessons to bear upon revisions to the new Land Law, Forest Law and future implementation guidelines.

The remaining sections of this chapter look at the successes achieved by this partnership of province advocates, policy innovators, Working Group members and government officials. These areas of success are marked by bringing the lessons to the attention of policy makers at national level. I then review progress made on community forestry by reviewing progress made against an analytical framework to assess the scope of Community Forestry in Vietnam.

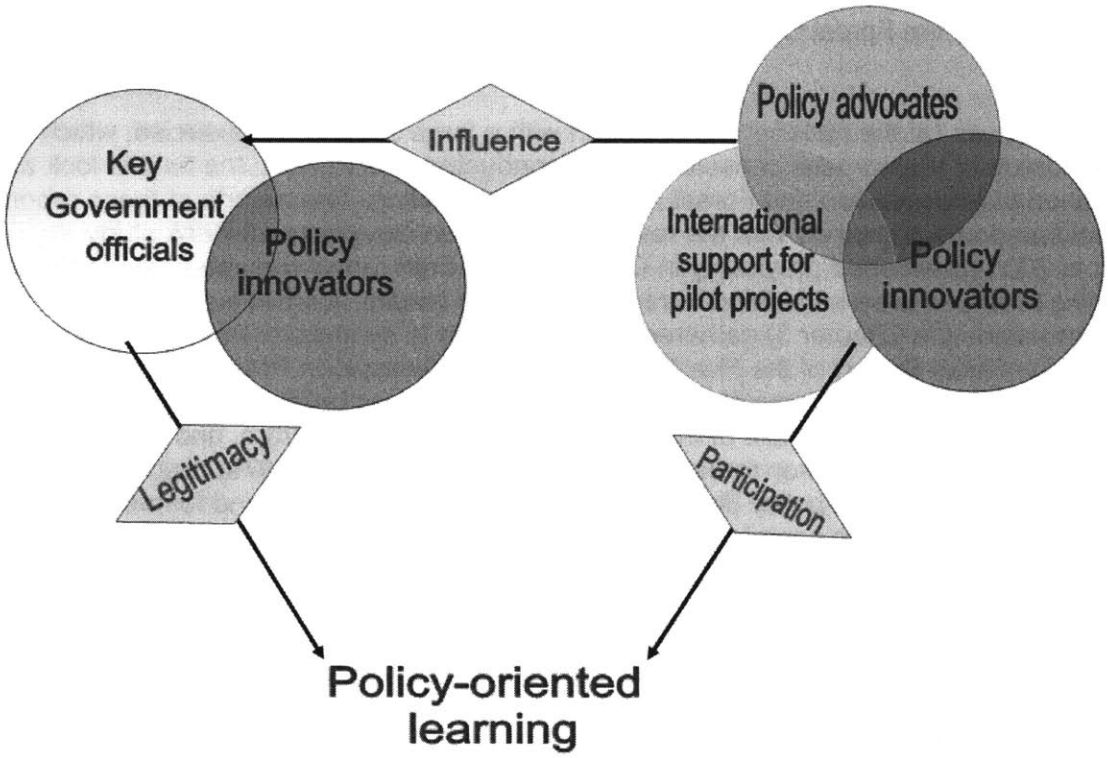

Figure 8a: Key actors in policy evolution

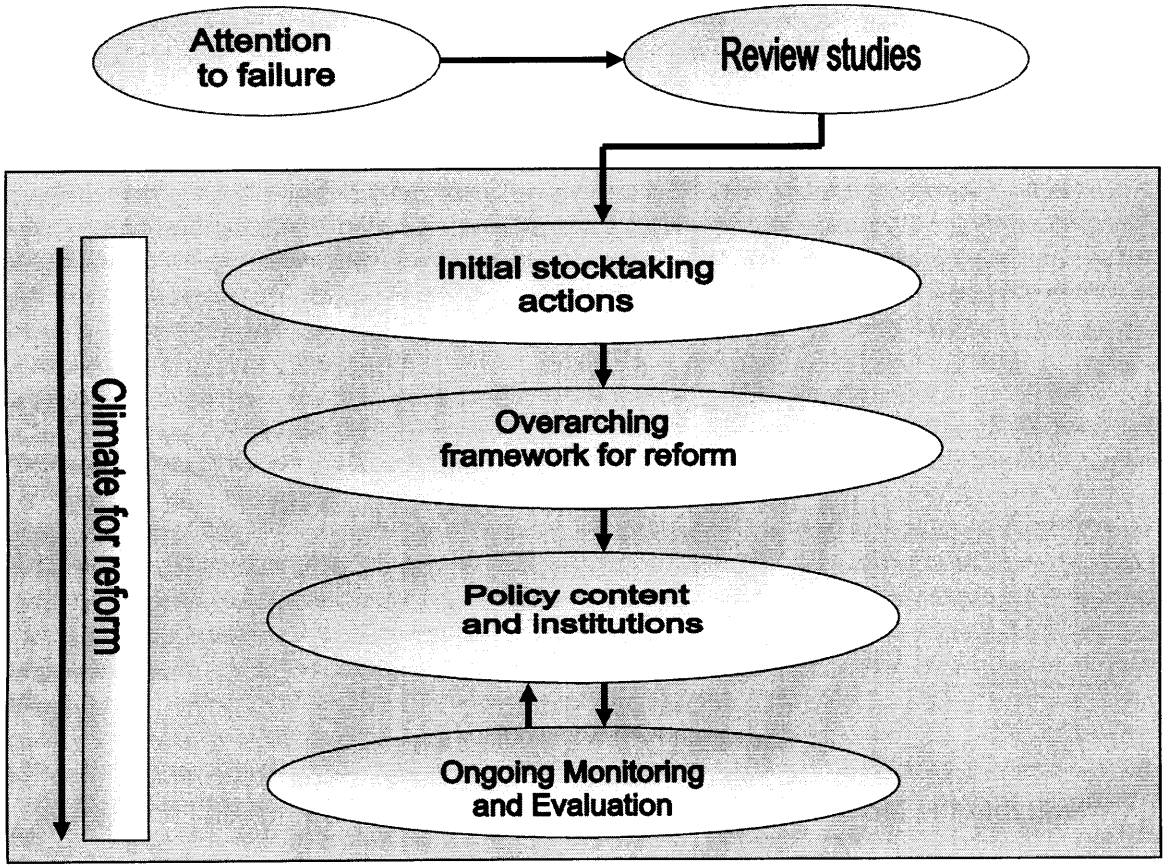

Figure 8b: Policy-oriented learning

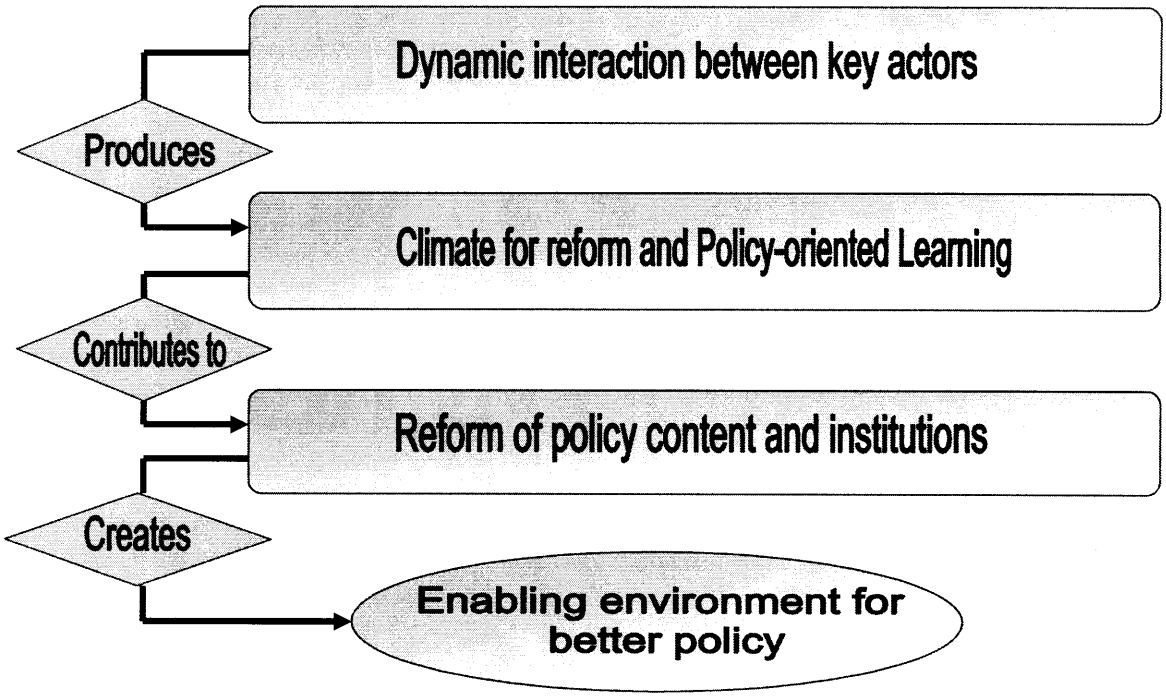

Figure 8c: Modifying the Model of Policy Evolution in Developing Countries

Contributions from the provinces

Three major achievements came from the pilots in the provinces. Advances were made in developing supporting legislation, fostering training and capacity building, and advancing networking through study tours and other tools of disseminating lessons learned.

Methodology to improve practice and support new legislation

One of the greatest strengths of the Son La case was in tying methodology development very closely to the application and development of legislation and active, hands-on learning by doing -- progressing through the experimentation phase onwards to the application phase. This was done as an iterative process, which was followed by training and wider adoption of the methods. Key examples of methodology that emanated from Son La and was used for translation elsewhere include the LUPLA and Forest Protection Regulation methodology – which was strengthened by linking it to methodologies on Participatory Forest Resource Assessment (PFRA) and Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) planning. The LUPLA methods assisted Thua Thien Hue in its FLA implementation and the PFRA and CBFM planning was brought to Dak Lak for application. These methodologies also contributed significantly to the adoption of community forestry at a national level.

Training and capacity

In Thua Thien Hue, officials felt that in order to move away from a top down approach, they would need to help farmers use new participatory approaches. In mid-2002, there were relatively few experiences with participatory approaches in the province. Forest Protection staff devoted significant time and energy to learning and improving training methods. To foster learning on this topic, Forest Protection staff (with support from SNV) established contact with the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC), based in Bangkok, Thailand. RECOFTC held a study tour (for Vietnamese to travel to Thailand, Nepal and Bangladesh), which was attended by people from the Thua Thien Hue community forestry network.

RECOFTC also assisted in organizing a short course and in starting a new phase for extension work in mid-2002 at Hue agroforestry college. The extension faculty upgraded their curriculum on theory and practice of community forestry in the field. The courses were supplemented by targeting areas where they lacked knowledge on these issues and filling this gap with extension and support for farmers. Training support was provided for developing LUPLA in two communes, for assessment techniques and for agroforestry techniques (including establishing fruit trees, pruning, budding and nursery for indigenous forest species).

In Son La, training and extension work was an integral part of seeing that the methodologies developed and legislation adopted were translated into daily routine. Training and extension work in the province was achieved in the following ways: through a capacity building focus on government forest officers, as well as with forests users (the learning-by-doing programs discussed in the Son La section of Chapter 3), training of trainer programs, internships, and a "farmers' field school."

Training and extension was also used to enhance capacity. One SFDP project staff member was recruited through a training program. Before joining the project staff, he enrolled in a course on forest management planning. It was a farmer field school style course for forest management planning, whereby students were led in the use of participatory learning with farmers groups to build or enhance their capacity to manage forests. SFDP staff worked with

RECOFTC to organize a 10 day training course, which brought in 14 foresters from different projects located in different regions of Vietnam. The aim of the workshop was to train participants by using non-formal adult education methods, facilitation techniques and skills building. The steps used included: selecting forest user group members, opening discussions around expectations, identifying interests for learning topics and selecting forest areas, identifying forest management practices, planning field experimentation and plot design, establishing experimental plots, holding periodic meetings and evaluating the process. This training experience in turn enhanced greatly the SFDP staff member's current work program which includes overseeing implementation of forest protection regulations, monitoring technical plots and undertaking village development planning.

The SFDP project supported a number of internships in both the office and the field. The project actively recruited young forestry graduates to gain their first work experience with field work, and supports studies in the project area to test out methodologies and new information.

Networks and information sharing/lesson learning

SFDP as a project served as a networking node in multiple ways. First, SFDP worked to liaising on policy matters directly with the government (at province, district and national levels) as well as with other projects throughout Vietnam. Second, this project facilitated study tours. Third, SFDP disseminated information on methodologies and legislation, as well as general project lessons.

The achievement of expanding the pilots to a sizable 600,000 hectares[214] in Forest Land Allocation was (according to a former SFDP staff member) only possible through intensive negotiation that went up to the Prime Minister's office to reach his consent. Once this was granted, this success bred future successes, e.g. contributing to a LUPLA section in the new Land Law, and the launch of the customary tenure pilots in the Central Highland provinces.

SFDP maintained excellent channels of communication between the project team and partners, to facilitate exchange of experiences and dissemination of project methodologies. This project team worked actively with other projects and programs in the sector, both within the broader Forest Sector Support Program and with the National Community Forestry Working Group. Further, the Social Forestry Development Project (along with other similar projects) contributed its experiences in several international, national and provincial workshops.

SFDP took its role seriously as a partner in a larger project community in Vietnam. There are several ways in which this manifested itself – in information sharing, study tours and actively shared experiences with other government officials and project staff. A large project information system was developed over the twelve year life of the project. This system included a library of project documents, project reports, legal documents, key references, technical documents, photos, CDs and video tapes. This amounted to a wealth of material not only for the project team, but was made available to the public through the SFDP website. Frequently, this material was provided in hard copy form to share with colleagues and visitors from other projects, government institutions and other external organizations. Further, the project team devoted time to organizing, attending and sharing working papers at many community forestry and forest land allocation related workshops in collaboration with the National Working Group on Community Forestry.

[214] As reached by end of 2004.

Another important networking tool was the organization of study tours and supporting visitors to SFDP sites in Son La province. The time invested in supporting this type of exchange was seen as invaluable as it fostered experience sharing between projects and allowed for information to flow to different management levels. Through facilitating hundreds of study tours to project sites for various projects, organizations and government institutions, SFDP shared lessons learned from: field work, methodology development and piloting, cooperation with project partners and stakeholders. Further, by sharing experiences,[215] the project saw the potential for expanding cooperation and institutionalizing their methodologies.

In a similar fashion, SNV (in the early days of FLA) also supported a group from Thua Thien Hue to travel to Dak Lak on a study tour. It was viewed that as Dak Lak was handing over SFE land, Thua Thien Hue would profit by learning from a comparable situation.

The National Community Forestry Working Group (covered extensively in the next section) was mutually beneficial for both those people experimenting with community forestry in Son La (as well as Dak Lak and Thua Thien Hue) and also for the chairman of the Working Group. This relationship has allowed a platform to evaluate and review community forestry policy and consult government about policy. In turn, it also created a link from the province to the national level, which was the conduit for vital information and lessons learned.

Contributions from national level networks and information sharing sources

Three catalytic groups (one working on an Asian regional basis and the other two working at the national level) are particularly instrumental in sharing lessons on community forestry related issues. They include the Sustainable Management of Resources Project (SMRP), Reform of the Forestry Administration project (REFAS), and the National Working Group on Community Forest Management (NWG-CFM). These groups work with project partners in different provinces and neighboring countries to develop methods, and disseminate information through publishing reports, sharing lessons, presenting papers at conferences, and maintaining websites.

Regional networks

GTZ (German Technical Cooperation Agency) supports a project called the Sustainable Management of Resources Project (commonly known as Mekong Info) which collects data and knowledge on participatory natural resource management in the uplands in the four Lower Mekong Delta countries (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam). This project serves as an information node for experience sharing on participatory natural resource management with practitioners and decision makers. Promising approaches in participatory natural resource management are tested in selected pilot sites[216] and these experiences are shared widely. A significant amount of the information sharing includes methodologies, concepts and best practices applied to ongoing natural resource management projects, as well as research results from scientific institutions in the region. Mekong Info is a regional website (with material in English and the four Asian languages) providing the platform for an exchange of ideas. Many of the projects active in the provinces (like SFDP and the Dak Lak Provinical Working Group on FLA) mentioned in Chapter 3 have links to this website and have posted results from the field and reports in the document library.

National information sharing projects

[215] "SFDP has been always open, supportive and willing to share its experience" was a direct quote from a survey on dissemination of project methodologies (SFDP website).

[216] Including field operations which occurred in Dak Lak province, as covered in sections of Chapter 3.

The REFAS (Reform of the Forestry Administration) project assists in the preparation of provincial forest strategies. It also serves as an information clearinghouse, maintaining more than 270 legal documents as of 2002. This project, also supported by GTZ, is co-located in the Forest Development Department. REFAS is in frequent contact with the Ministry of Justice, the legal database of the National Assembly, the Office of the Government and other legal assistance projects.

MARD initiated a process of legal reform and legal standardization,[217] which led to the creation of an Editorial Group to assist in revising the Law on Forest Protection and Development. REFAS played an active role in the early stages prior to revision of the Law on Forest Protection and Development process, by contributing to the development of Decree 02 on Allocation of forest land to organizations, households, and individuals for long-term forestry purposes and Decree 163 on Allocation, Lease of Forest land to organizations, households, and individuals for long-term forestry purposes and Decision 178 on benefit sharing. Much of the material used to contribute to these decrees was generated from the pilot activities in the provinces. REFAS also conducted a number of national and provincial workshops on decentralization (Decision 245) and the use of participatory techniques for land use planning.

A large part of the REFAS program involves working with (and through) other partners. For example, REFAS coordinated the Editorial Group for the new Forest Law and brings information from a number of external development aid projects to bear on the legal reform process. In revising the Forest Law, REFAS conveyed key information from ODA projects[218] on the revision, integration of new ideas concerning community forestry, forest areas to be allocated, and rights and responsibilities of forest owners.

Role of the National Working Group on Community Forest Management

Although a good deal of support came for advancing community forestry from donor funded (particularly the German, Swedish and ADB) projects with pilot experiments in the provinces, the role of the National Working Group on Community Forest Management (introduced in Chapter 1) was particularly instrumental in bringing the lessons to the attention of policy makers at national level. Established in 1998, this group sought to draw lessons out of community forestry project practitioners and local government initiatives in FLA. The working group is housed within the Policy Department of MARD. The group is comprised of policy makers and practitioners from different state organizations and national programs. State organizations participating in meetings include MARD, FPD, DFD and FIPI. National programs active in the working group include the Forest Sector Support Program (FSSP), Small Grants Program to Promote Tropical Forests, Song Da Social Forestry Development Project (SFDP), Asian Development Bank Forest Sector Project, Mountain Rural Development Project (MRDP), UNDP- Program on Forests (PROFOR), [219] Non-timber Forest Products Research Center, FAO, and the Sustainable Management of Resources in the Lower Mekong Basin Project (SMRP).

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[217] Deemed necessary due to i) conflicts with past laws, ii) the fact that implementation guidelines can sometimes have a very long gestation period and iii) the differences at various levels, where authorities at the operational level may be more restrictive in their enforcing than what was prescribed.

[218] REFAS works with several ODA forestry projects, but coordinates information management closely with the National Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management and Certification, the National Working Group on Community Forestry, the PROFOR/UNDP project and the Vietnam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Project.

[219] Note that SFDP, MRDP and PROFOR had closed in late 2004, 2002 and 2002, respectively. This list is not exhaustive, but indicative of the large participation.

There is a core group of the Working Group, meeting six times a year, while the general meetings for all members occur four times a year. Major national conferences focus on major topics related to community forestry and natural resource management, and occurred in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004. The conferences produce proceedings which are disseminated to a wider policy audience. In addition, a series of policy studies (e.g. reviewing community forestry practices, monitoring progress of Forest Land Allocation) allowed this group to collect the raw material (from the field) which informed the community forestry elements in the new Forest Law.

According to Poffenberger and Smith-Hanssen,

> One positive aspect of Vietnam's policy making process, as compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, is that policy makers are developing the policies gradually, in an iterative manner while Community Forest Management happens on the ground. Coordination with other ministries and coherence with other policies are given great importance, as can be observed from the National Working Group on Community Forest Management's process for developing the national framework to support CFM (Poffenberger and Smith-Hanssen, 2004:39-40).

Examples of material generated and synthesized for policy makers by the Working Group are many. For instance, in 2001 the Working Group generated case studies of community involvement in forest management, identified key elements that promote CFM, and defined the future role of the national and local working groups on CFM. In 2002, the Working Group sought to define the legal framework for village communities to participate in forest management and to conduct a series of provincial studies on forest policy implementation at the local level. In 2003, the major themes were benefit sharing agreements and other policies that encourage villages to get involved in forest protection and management, and how the draft Forest Law considers Community Forestry issues. From the discussions at the National Workshop convened by the Working Group in May 2003, the recommendation was that MARD propose to Parliament to amend the Land Law to allow for Forest Land Allocation to village communities.

The legal process requires for the drafting team to assure a broad stakeholder discussion and consensus (within the Department, with MARD, with the provinces, with other Ministries). However, financing for this is generally limited and information flow often imperfect. This is precisely where the work of REFAS (featured in the previous section) and the members of the Working Group (who in many cases include the pilot province project staff) work jointly to improve the outcome of a legal draft. They do this by directing policy makers to the relevant provinces and people (e.g. the provincial implementers and local practitioners) and showing them the impacts on the ground through field visits where community forestry ideas have been piloted. These visits tend to be focused on the substance of the legal text, because very often the provincial staff and practitioners have prepared by piloting the ideas before a field visit and by circulating and discussing the drafts in detail as to their interpretation and impact. With the pilot experience, Dak Lak and Son La (and to a certain extent Thua Thien Hue) had an increasingly important convening role in this process for all of the legal guidelines, decrees, laws that were passed. And in contrast to other locations, even the limited level of success reached prevented the need for window dressing and brought discussions to more realistic issues and ideas.[220]

Progress made in 2005 as compared to 1998

[220] Based on a email exchange with a long standing NWG-CFM member in March 2005.

To gauge progress made since 1998, I will first illustrate the nature of the type of activities undertaken by the Working Group, as an indication of two important measures – first, the increasing sophistication of the analysis and the operational nature of the work undertaken by the Working Group. I then point out some key advances which have occurred as a result of the November 2004 workshop.

Without shared learning (facilitated by the NWG-CFM and province policy innovators) among pilot provinces, much of this would have happened or the process would have been slower. One of the lessons to be learned on how best to work on a bottom up process revolves around the common value of shared learning. By sharing experiences broadly within the province and then with other provinces and the nation, new policies reflect this learning. Further, the Working Group provided the means to share experiences from field testing and community forestry training to a wider audience of national, province and district level officials. This often led to adopting new measures, such as when Dak Lak adopted CFM pilot training material from Son La. This process of information exchange was further fostered by the mandate of the provincial working groups (in Son La, Dak Lak, and Thua Thien Hue) that information exchange (both within and between provinces) was a vital part of piloting.

In 2000, an analytical framework was designed by the Working Group members (see Figure 9) indicating the type of analysis that was important with respect to the nature of forest management. The key questions that were posed at this time included: What was the influence of government? What is the nature of the benefits from the forest and where do they go? What type of forest do communities receive? What land use rights exist? What arrangements do communities have to manage forest resources? What level of community orientation existed (none, weak, medium or strong)? The level of analysis undertaken was straightforward and reasonably simple, with the understanding that you may have a system which showed a combination of elements from Scenario A, B and C, but that you could also have more pure examples of each scenario. Scenario A would indicate more advanced achievements in Community Forestry than Scenarios B or C.

As of 2004, the nature of the analysis was more sophisticated and certainly more aimed at putting sound Community Forestry pilots onto the ground. The Working Group members, along with reports from the provinces and governmental officials and villagers all worked to facilitate a process which went from the inquisitive and scoping of

Figure 9: Analytical framework developed by the Community Forest Management Working Group to assess Community Forestry activities throughout Vietnam

	Influence of Government	Benefits of forest	State of Natural Resources	Land use rights	Community management
Scenario A	The government initiating and supporting forest development, community investment and management	Communities decide on forest production cycle, harvest, get income and re-invest into forestry	Communities receive natural and dense forest; Communities receive forest in critical watershed area	Communities receive full land tenure certificate or long term contract and are allowed to make land use decisions	Organized community structures manage forest resources; Community regulations and procedures are practiced
Scenario B	Some government support, but no formal arrangements for management of forests by communities	Communities and households use firewood, NTFPs, timber (non-commercial)	Communities receive degraded or low value forest (bamboo)	Communities have temporary conditional land use rights and/or short-term contract	Official forest management by households, but tasks informally organized through community groups
Scenario C	Government control over management of forests, supported by government investment	Uncontrolled utilization of forest products by community	Communities receive bareland, grass or bush land. No assistance for forest production	Informal land use right partly tolerated by government; use considered illegal, e.g. shifting cultivation	No community organization to manage forest resource

(Source: National Working Group on Community Forest Management, 2000)

what existed to a process of operationalizing community forestry efforts and expanding pilots throughout the country. Evidence of this advance is found in two Excel spreadsheets (appearing at the end of this chapter). The first spreadsheet illustrates the practical procedure for establishing CFM at village and commune levels. This procedure was officially approved by the Forest Department during the National Workshop on Allocation and Management of Natural Forest in Community Forestry (in May 2003), sponsored by the Working Group. The second spreadsheet presents an overarching matrix of work to be undertaken by the NWG-CFM to explicitly see this through.

Three major advances have occurred since the November 2004 workshop. First, the tasks and responsibilities of different levels of government have been articulated. Second, the technical underpinnings of the Forest Resource Assessment have improved. Third, a new fund for financing community forestry schemes has been launched.

Tasks and responsibilities refined through pilots

By late 2004, after many years of ambiguity, tasks and responsibilities of respective administrative levels were well defined. For instance, at the provincial level, line agencies were made responsible to consult the Provincial People's Committee when developing provincial decisions on the adjustment of the national forest policy framework to the provincial context. In this function the province is not involved in the approval of separate applications for forest allocation or approval procedures involved in CBFM. However, the province is responsible for providing clear guidance for planning, appraisal, approval, implementation, and monitoring or community forestry implementation in the province.

The District People's Committee is given the mandate to approve applications for Forest Land Allocation, forest protection and development regulations and five-year community forest management plans. And Forest Protection Units and the Agriculture and Rural Development Sections are the main line agencies for commune and village level support during community forestry management.

The Commune is defined as the main body for coordination and supervision of the implementation of CBFM, and its main responsibilities lie in reporting and submitting applications or approval requests to the district level.

Villages are defined as the implementation level, responsible for the development of community forest management plans to be aggregated, coordinated and supervised by commune level authorities. Implementation of CBFM is carried out by the community under regulation of the commune administration and supported by respective line agencies from district level, mainly the Forest Protection Station and Agriculture and Rural Development.

Improvements to the technical aspects of Forest Resource Assessment

On the technical aspects of forest resource assessment, forest management is to be based on the use of forest resource assessments. These assessments will use sample plots of rectangular shape and a plot size of 200 to 300 m^2 consisting of sub-plots with a size of 10x10m each. Tree measurements are carried out by colored measuring tape, divided into diameter classes, however no height or volume calculations are to be carried out.

Silvicultural interventions are identified and quantified by the use of "forest standard models" representing a respective forest type in a stage with good increment, suitable to provide maximized benefits in terms of timber on a sustainable basis. Forest standard models are to be

developed for each agro-ecological zone in Vietnam. Within each zone, three or four standard models will be defined.

Silvicultural interventions in the form of thinning or utilization are defined by stem number per diameter class. Timber extraction can be spread over all diameter classes based on the results of the approved five-year forest management plan. The estimation of timber volume is only required for taxation of harvested timber and has to be carried out by specialized forest staff for the local forest user. These changes will help clarify on benefit sharing arrangements.

The National Working Group is the responsible body to further develop these standard models for different ecological regions (which is the precondition for community forestry management planning to happen). So far no clear technical guidelines for a national level framework are ready on which implementation guidelines could be developed for future capacity building and amendment of the current job description of forest and extension staff.

New funding available

Financial support can be sought through the trust fund for forests (managed by the FSSP) and any organization can apply for financial support for the implementation of community forestry models in their area. As of October 2005, at least 46 proposals were made for a small grant to support this initiative, but of those applying, approximately 5 will be approved in the first phase.

PROPOSED WORK SCHEDULE DURING CFM ESTABLISHMENT PHASE

Commune: **District:** **Province:**

	Task	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5				Responsible
		I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	Village Leaders
1	**Clarification of forest land allocation**																					
a	Overview over forest land (ha) and ownership categories																					
	- Unallocated forest land to be allocated to CFM system																					
	- Forest land already allocated to households to be included in CFM																					
	- Forest land allocated to organisations to be included in CFM system																					
b	Clarification of arrangements with households/organisations that have been allocated with forest land and agree to include this land in the CFM																					
c	Preparation of proposal for forest land allocation to villages communities/group of households that will participate in the CFM system																					
2	**Inventory of forest resources including classification of forest land (protection, production, special use)**																					
3	**Preparation of forest development and utilization planning base**																					
a	Long term forest development and utilization plan (50 years)																					
b	Five-year forest management and investment plan																					
c	Yearly Working and Harvesting Plan																					
d	Economic feasibility																					
e	Benefit sharing arrangements																					
4	**Establishment of community-based controlling and reporting**																					
5	**Implementation of training / coaching measures**																					
a	Inventory methods																					
b	Forest development and management planning																					
c	Economic feasibility and benefit sharing arrangements																					
d	Harvesting and Processing																					
e	Community organizations development																					
6	**Implementation of yearly work and harvesting plans**																					
a	Reforestation/Afforestation																					
b	Tending																					
c	Harvesting																					
7	**Evaluation of performance during establishment phase**																					
8	**Improvement / adjustment of technical, organizational and financial arrangements as requested by evaluation, if any**																					

National Working Group for Community Forestry Management
Matrix on Establishment of CFM Pilot Schemes in 2003 - 2004

Procedural Steps in Establishment of CFM Pilot Schemes		Supporting Action for Completion of Guidelines and Procedures				Involved Parties	
No	Task	No.	Task	Location	Timing	Leading	Supporting
0	**Formalized CFM Application by Communes**	1.	Preparation of an example of a CFM permit request	Hanoi	6/2003	MARD DFD (Ms. Van)	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
-	Name of commune, participating villages, forest land area	2.	Agreement with involved province and district PPCs on CFM pilot schemes	Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	7/2003	MARD NWG CFM DARDs province level	SFDP Song Da KfW 3 ADB FSP ETSP Helvetas RDDL Dak Lak
-	People, institutions that were involved in formulating the application						
-	Minutes of Meeting of respective meetings in participating village(s)						
-	Request to grant CFM permit and provide the necessary supporting systems	3.	Presentations to DARD senior level and FSSP; mobilization of additional funds to NWG CFM for CFM pilot schemes, if necessary	Hanoi	III-IV/ 2003	MARD NWG CFM MARD Management Board for Forestry Projects	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
1	**Clarification of forest land allocation**	1.	Review and simplification of forest classification criteria and guidelines for production and protection forests in view of integrated silviculture systems in CFM	Hanoi (based on existing materials from SFDP Song Da, KfW and ADB FSP)	6/2003	MARD DFD	SFDP Song Da KfW 3 ADB FSP ETSP Helvetas
a	Overview over forest land (ha) and ownership categories						
	- Unallocated forest land to be allocated to CFM system						
	- Forest land already allocated to households to be included in CFM system						
	- Forest land allocated to organisations to be included in CFM system	2.	Clarification of legal aspects of forest land allocation to village communities	Hanoi	6/2003	MARD Policy (Mr. Phuong)	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
b	Clarification of arrangements with households/organisations that agree to include their forest land in the CFM system						
c	Preparation of proposal for forest land allocation to villages communities/group of households that will participate in the CFM system						
2	**Inventory of forest resources including classification of forest land (protection, production, special use)**	1.	Preparation of draft guidelines for Participatory Forest Resource Inventory	Hanoi	7/2003	MARD DFD (Dr. Quan)	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
		2.	Test of inventory guidelines in selected CFM pilot schemes	Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	8-10/ 2003	MARD NWG CFM	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP Helvetas ETSP
		3	Review of field tests and preparation of final guidelines	Hanoi	11/2003	NWG CFM core group	VIFA
3	**Preparation of forest development and utilization planning base**	1	Preparation of draft guidelines for Participatory Forest Management Planning	Hanoi	7/2003	MARD DFD (Ms.Van)	SFDP Song Da KfW 3
a	Long term forest development and utilization vision (50 years)	2	Preparation of draft harvesting regulations for main forest types as guideline for province governments to issue respective regulations	Hanoi	9/2003	MARD DFD	ADB FSP
b	Five-year forest management and investment plan						
c	Yearly Working and Harvesting Plan						
d	Economic feasibility						
e	Benefit sharing arrangements	3.	Preparation of draft guidelines for benefit sharing	Hanoi	9/2003	MARD Policy (Mr. Phuong)	
		4.	Test of planning, harvesting and benefit sharing guidelines in selected CFM pilot schemes	Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	10/2003 9/2004	MARD NWG CFM	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
		5.	Review of field tests and preparation of final guidelines	Hanoi	10-11/ 2004	NWG CFM core group	Helvetas ETSP RDDL Dak Lak
4	**Establishment of community-based controlling and reporting systems**	1.	Preparation of draft guidelines for financial management and reporting at village/commune level	Hanoi	9/2003	MARD PD (Mr.Phuong MoF ??	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
		2.	Test of accounting and financial reporting guidelines in selected CFM pilot schemes	Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	10/2003- 9/2004		SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
		3.	Review of field tests and preparation of final guidelines	Hanoi	10-11/ 2004	NWG CFM core group	Helvetas ETSP RDDL Dak Lak
5	**Implementation of training / coaching measures**	1.	Preparation of training and extension materials and approaches for CFM development	Hanoi, based on pilot schemes in Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	7-11/ 2004	NWG CFM core group	SFDP Song Da KfW 3 ADB FSP Helvetas ETSP RDDL Dak Lak
a	Inventory methods						
b	Forest development and management planning	2	Development of curricula for training of trainers		Adjust to workplan Helvetas		
c	Economic feasibility and benefit sharing arrangements	3.	Determination of contents and costs for standard training courses eligible for financing out of government programmes		10-11/ 2004		
d	Harvesting and Processing						
e	Community organizations development						
6	**Implementation of yearly work and harvesting plans**	1.	Ongoing guidance and support of CFM pilot schemes in selected locations, regular exchange of information among pilot schemes via NWG CFM	Hanoi, based on pilot schemes in Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	10/2003 onwards	NWG CFM core group	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP Helvetas ETSP RDDL Dak Lak
a	Reforestation/Afforestation						
b	Tending						
c	Harvesting						
7	**Evaluation of performance during establishment phase**	1.	Preparation of draft guidelines for inspection and evaluation of CFM schemes by District	Hanoi	03/2004	MARD DFD + PD NWG CFM core group	SFDP Song Da ADB FSP
		2.	Test of inspection and evaluation guidelines in selected CFM pilot schemes	Son La, Hoa Binh, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Thanh Hoa	07-09/ 2004		Helvetas ETSP RDDL Dak Lak
		3.	Review of field tests and preparation of final guidelines	Hanoi	10-11/ 2004	NWG CFM core group	

CHAPTER VI: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED FUTURE RESEARCH

The first national Workshop on Experiences and Potential toward Community Forest Management was convened by the National Working Group on Community Forest Management in Hanoi in June 2000. This workshop had three aims. First, it sought to identify keys elements of Community Forest Management (as suggested in Figure 9 in Chapter 4). Second, it was to review, assess and share experiences in Community Forest Management. Third, it was to define the future role of the national and province based Working Groups on Community Forest Management.

The conclusions of the workshop were twofold. The positive message (coming from the existing experiences) was that local communities can manage and protect forests more effectively and with less state budgetary investment than under the state run forest management regime. Further, forests managed by communities can provide timber for public infrastructure needs in addition to other forest products, which supplement people's livelihoods. However, the biggest obstacles to Community Forestry's development were identified and the most significant one was the lack of legal recognition of communities to use forests. The next most significant obstacles were that the concept of Community Forest Management was poorly understood among authorities, policy makers, technical staff and farmers and that insufficient decision making responsibility and understanding of government policies existed at the local level.

A great deal unfolded between June 2000 and March 2004. In March 2004, a member of the National Working Group on Community Forest Management was asked to submit a report on the status of community forest management in Vietnam. This report was for a presentation in a meeting held with a number of important Ministries and Central Committees. This aim of the report was to clarify the current day situation, potential, trends and issues surrounding the community forest management process, to help the legal community and policy makers to gain a better understanding of community forest management. The intent behind improved understanding was to suggest proposals for the amendment and/or development of policies to provide a legal framework for communities to become full participants in forest resource protection and development in Vietnam.

Much has already been accomplished in terms of advancing community forestry in Vietnam. In Vietnam after the approval of the Forest Law – there is an enabling framework which allows for further developing Community Forestry Management and takes this model from pilot status to a national program.

From the previous two chapters, I shared experiences from pilot provinces where the application and testing/experimentation phase brought out new methodologies and lessons learned, which in turn helped in the development of an enabling legal framework for community forestry. I presented preliminary lessons learned from adaptation of methodologies on Forest Land Allocation, Forest Protection Regulations and Community Forest Management Planning. I suggested that the critical roles of networking and training helped to advance the sharing of lessons learned from the district and province level in two directions – first, sideways, with study tours between provinces and second, upwards, to the national level.

In this chapter, I reflect on the generic lessons that can be derived from my research. I then discuss what the directions for new research on this topic might be.

What are the prospects for generalizing across different natural resource sectors or across different parts of the world?

I believe that a number of my findings and lessons can be applied to other natural resource sectors and certainly to other developing countries.

My first finding is called "Beyond Communities," because it rejects the conventional wisdom that communities truly drive the process and are the key actors in implementing community forestry. I found that communities are an essential part of the equation, but it is equally critical to keep the local government, in this case, the People's Committee, abreast of and thoroughly involved in the policy learning and reform process. This strategy was used to great advantage in Dak Lak and Son La and used effectively in Thua Thien Hue. All three provinces had very strong support throughout the piloting process from the district and provincial level staff in the main key state forest agencies -- Forest Protection, Forest Development as well as the political apparatus -- the People's Committees at province, district and commune levels.

My second finding is about the value of "Muddling through experimentation." This was in good deal due to the government and other agencies and actors' willingness to remain open to making mistakes and seeking help and actively learning while doing. All the provinces in my study did this extremely well, and this work was fully supported by the National Working Group and other key networks. The province pilots used the topics of Forest Land Allocation, Forest Protection Regulations and Benefit Sharing to study different aspects of designing and regulating these processes. The pilots frequently worked to adjust and adapt techniques or methodologies while doing. They did this by adapting mid-stream, particularly if they were not achieving full results or achieving results in a timely manner. The Dak Lak province case was very strong in this respect, in that it was open to learning from its failures. This pilot used tools like workshops and reviews (particularly those undertaken by the university consortium mentioned in Chapter 3) to learn, undertake new approaches and improve implementation. This pilot had several examples of this, including revising the Forest Land Allocation process (to make the standard simpler) and Forest Protection Regulations (based on feedback from village consultations).

My third finding is that the "onus is on ownership." However, ownership in this sense is not simply tied to ownership of (or access rights to) forest resources. It is about what it takes to create the means for ownership in the process of implementing community forestry. Several "sense of pride" examples resulted from the pilot experiments, including from Son La province, where the villagers were extremely proud of working out their own Forest Protection Regulations, and from Thua Thien Hue, where the district level Forest Protection staff received the Labor Hero award. This sense of pride and ownership meant that these people truly felt they were contributing something of significance, and that these contributions would lead to meaningful changes.

In Phu Loc district (Thua Thien Hue), the sense of the commitment level by the Forest Protection staff was palpable. These staff members were willing to work and be responsive to local people. They saw that they could not only benefit by working to serve their needs, but also gain from handing over power to jointly manage forests. This generated a sense of shared accomplishment, achievement and sense of purpose. Son La province also seemed to exhibit examples of strong staff commitment, a shift in perception of local people's role in management and a history of transforming relationships (increasing trust and minimizing conflict) between Forest Protection staff and local people.

The fourth finding is that there is sideways as well as and upwards learning. I predicted that there would be upwards learning (from the province pilots to the national policy). I did not anticipate the power of sideways learning (sharing lessons between provinces). On the sideways front, Son La and Dak Lak provinces played a very strong role in imparting lessons and learning. They allowed for learning to be shared across province borders, like when the Son La experiences (e.g. CBFM model) were brought to Dak Lak to improve forest production and protection efforts, or when Thua Thien Hue learned from Dak Lak on Forest Land Allocation and Son La on LUPLA. Certainly, some donors (particularly the Germans, through their GTZ funded projects) worked diligently on advancing learning sideways (by providing logistical and funding support for some of the province visits), as well as upwards (often through the REFAS project or in coordination with the NWG-CFM. In effect, some examples of "mirroring" experiences were taking place when after the province visits, lessons learned on LUPLA or CBFM could be applied (sometimes adapted and applied) in the home province. On the upwards front, Thua Thien Hue provided an excellent example on benefit sharing, which promoted the formulation of the text for the national Decree 178 on Benefit Sharing. The level of commitment of the government was very important to use the pilots and to learn from them. Beginning in 1999 and 2000 with pilot provinces, there was genuine interest on the part of MARD to study and support these endeavors. The National Working Group solidified the upwards learning role.

The final finding is about defying blueprinting. This was significant in that in Vietnam, where a one-size-fits-all model had been the norm for decades, the community forestry pilots have advanced the thought that learning needs to be specific to the locale. Different approaches were uncovered, building on existing or emerging community efforts. The key is to use local efforts (where possible) and get them recognized and legitimated within the government structures and learn from this in the process. This also means that, although much can be gained by shared learning, one approach to community forest management is not meant for all.

The first lesson is the power of a good example, for instance, using a pilot to serve as inspiration. The power of one successful community pilot (e.g. Thuy Yen Thuong) setting an example, which inspires others, can go a long way to changing perspectives (of formerly skeptical government officials) about a community's ability to manage natural resources. This powerful example led to transferring ideas to surrounding communities (similar to a hub and spoke model). The lessons from this village were disseminated and adopted elsewhere. This particular example is also powerful because it came from a community that self-nominated to assume these duties, where motivation and initiative were strong. This caught the attention of the Vice Minister of MARD.

My second lesson is to fully engage in hands-on training to promote new ideas and techniques. Training is an integral part of this process, and in some villages, it has catalyzed the adoption of new methods and made community forestry a reality on the ground. As shown very powerfully in Son La, the use of training courses could advance application of new methodologies and generate further learning by fully using monitoring to further infuse these ideas. This idea was employed to an amazing degree in Son La province, where over a 2 ½ year time period over 150 training courses for 1500 people were given, principally on topics related to formulation of Forest Protection Regulations or Community Forest Management Planning.

What are the directions for new research on this topic?

There are several topics which should be considered for future research. Once the implementation guideline on community forestry is released, it would be important to gauge its

significance by looking at budget allocations and institutional capacity dedicated to its implementation. Another related topic would be to look at the specific implementation measures as they are defined in the upcoming national community forestry guideline/decree. Would there be a downside to adopting a national community forestry decree, would it for instance, stifle local initiatives?

Another range of important future research topics should look at the issues surrounding benefit sharing. This was a sticking point in many places, sometimes due to ambiguity or poor implementation (as noted in Dak Lak province). Tied to benefit sharing is the equally interesting topic of access to markets for forest products. How open will markets be to community forestry groups? Will it still be difficult to obtain permits? What means are there for expanding extension services to enable community groups to gain access to markets? There were a few examples in my research, such as the assistance in Thua Thien Hue from local nursery initiatives, but these examples were rare.

Another major challenge for implementing community forestry on a wider scale is that the extension services are insufficient. Decree 13 (1993)[221] provided the national legal framework on extension. From 1995, Son La passed various implementation guidelines regulating the staffing of the provincial extension center and district extension stations. Most of the staff were not newly recruited but moved from the provincial Agricultural Department and the Forestry Sub-Department to the newly created positions on provincial level (and similarly on district level). Temporarily new positions were created on the commune level, however these positions favored the urban periphery over more remote areas. When the objectives of reaching the poorer communes were not met through these postings, the positions were dropped.[222] Overall, a ceiling was in place as for creating further government positions (and consequently no additional funds were supplied by MARD), therefore forestry staff at lower levels was very limited. How can this challenge be met?

[221] This decree continues to do so, as an amendment in 2004 did not achieve agreement.

[222] Based on a email exchange with a long standing NWG-CFM member and former SFDP team member in March 2005

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