

## Chapter X

### Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 10.1 Main findings and discussion

The present local institution of forest management is the evolution of the traditional management practices. The primitive motivation of the villagers to protect is their spiritual belief. However, their presently main motivation to manage the forests is the protection of water source for cultivation. Under the present management regime, the forests were distinguished into two kinds, the village and open forests. The area of village forest is 330 hectare and the area of the open forest is over 2000 hectare. The village forest has been under the villagers' protection for a long time. The villagers have claimed their de facto rights on it and considered it as the common property. The open forests, under the village community's management nearly fifteen years, however, have been considered as the state rather than common forest.

Most of the forests under the village community's management are the poor and regenerating ones. Besides water sources for cultivation, other legitimate economic benefits the village obtained are ineligible from the forests. Most of the forests, particularly the open forest, have the low excludability. Moreover, they have the quite large size and locate far from the village's settlements. So their management is rather complicated and difficult, requiring high cost.

The village has the large cultivable hill land areas with over 300 hectare. However, this land is unequally distributed among villagers. Some households have so large areas of this land (as large as 10 hectares). But most of them have used this land ineffectively or left it unused in a part because of lacking of labor and investment capital and another part because lack of recognition by the government on their land that discourages them to invest in it. In the meanwhile, some other households have not had this land although they have enough condition to use it effectively and really

need it. Besides, the households in the village possess the large garden areas (69 ha) suitable with the perennial plant with high value such as the pepper. However, most of these households have used this land less effectively with low value and productive plants. This is because they lack capital to invest in production and technical knowledge. With such hill and garden land areas, the villagers have potentials to develop the agroforestry practices that partly create income for households and supply products that can substitute the forest-related products needed.

The income of the households in the village mainly comes from the agricultural production (accounting for 76.6 percent of total household income). This indicates that the agricultural production plays the important role in securing the villagers' livelihood, which in turn helps to reduce the pressure on the forests. The agricultural development in the locality has made most villagers increasingly more dependent on the water resources but less dependent on other forest resources. This is an advantage for the forest management of the village. In addition, the industrial development over the country has created a lot of opportunities for the villagers to obtain jobs to earn additional income. These alternatives play an important role as the safety valve for the sustainable use of the forests.

The serious conflict in using the forests is the one between the villagers and people who come from the neighboring communes and live nearby to the forests. With the advanced equipment such as chain machines and transportation means, these people's exploitation has made the forests drastically degraded. So far, the conflict has not been solved because it exceeds the local institution's capacity, and become the most serious threat to the village commune in managing the forests.

The local institution, particularly the Council, is the combination between the communal leaders and governmental officials. This has helped the decisions concerning the forest management to be congruent with both the community settings and the legislation. Moreover, this has helped the local institution to obtain great attention as well as supports from the government although it has not been officially recognized in accordance with the state law system. In other words, this is the

important condition for the viability and development of the community-based forest management in the context that the government has had not the completely legal framework for the community forestry.

The rules imposed on the forests are quite strict. They stipulated clearly the duties and rights of each level in the local institution and covered almost the scenario relating the forests, which can happen in practice of the village. Also, they have gone into the life of the villagers (92.3 percent of the villagers knowing the rules) and were accepted by the majority of the villagers (71.4 percent). However, their effectiveness was still very low in the open forest.

Monitoring is the very important task that determines the effectiveness of enforcing the rules. However, this task of the villagers was faced with many problems. The forest protectors for the open forest have worked with less responsibility and usually corrupted. The full-time protection force has been weak in number and specialized capacity. With the low payment, it has been difficult for the institution to recruit the protectors with needed characteristics. The rate of villagers who participate in monitoring was not so high (71 percent) and most of them have paid a little attention on the open forest. These problems are one of the causes making the rules be enforced less effectively in the open forest.

The existing community-based forest management has paid much attention in villagers' participation. Nevertheless, the rate of villagers who participated directly in decision-making process was still rather low (28.6 percent). The decisions made could not obtain the consensus of the majority of villagers. Moreover, the process of decision-making was more or less the top-down approach. The indication is that the draft of Regulation was made by the leaders and then brought down the villagers for taking their opinions. Such process could be able to results in ignoring the villagers' opinions and make the villagers consider the rules to be the state's rather than theirs.

Among eight principles for strong or robust CPR institutions set by Ostrom (1990), including clearly defined boundaries; congruence between appropriation and

provisions rules and local conditions; collective-choice arrangements; communal monitoring; graduated sanction for different degrees of offences; available conflict-resolution mechanisms; recognition of rights to manage the commons from the government; and no conflict between the operational rules and national legislation, the CBFM of the village satisfied last seven ones. However, the degree to which it satisfied was still low. For example, for communal monitoring, users participated in monitoring but with not high rate. Adequate satisfaction with all these principles is considered as necessary and sufficient condition for success of the CBFM.

Although the present forest management practices were evaluated to be better than the past ones, the percent of villagers who always defect to comply with the rules was high as 7 percent. Also, the rate of villagers who are ready to take opportunity if given to illegal exploit the forest was quite as high as 18 percent. These behaviors are obstacles to the reciprocal or cooperative relationship that determine the success of the commons management. There were some factors significantly affecting the choice of strategy the villagers make in using the forests. These include the income of the villagers from forest, their perception about the commons, their participation in the decision-making process, their participation in monitoring, their participation in collective action, their motivation to protect the forest as the water protection and the encouragement by the leaders, their participation in social affiliations and their secondary job. Most of these variables were the internal ones, this is, these variables were created by the village community itself rather than by outside. Therefore, in managing the forests, the village can make change of these variables in helpful manner to reach a better management.

Many problems happened when the villagers considered the forest as the state's rather than common property. These villagers had a little attention in protecting this forests. They were likely to ignore the rules imposed on it. The strategies they make choice in using these forests were unuseful to their sustainable use and management, such as defecting to comply with the rules, opportunism and free ridding. The village has legitimately managed the forests for a long time. However, it has not been recognized as the owners by the government. This is one of the reasons why as high

as 74 percent of the villagers interviewed considered the open forests as the state rather than their own village community.

The incomplete implementation of the forest-land and forest allocation policy left the serious consequence for the forest management by the village. Some forest areas that were allocated to households without any certificate from the government have become the forests without owners. This is because the villagers have paid less attention on these forest areas for they thought these forests had their owners while so did their owners since they had no certificate, thus having a little incentive to protect their allocated forests.

## **10.2 Recommendations**

### **10.2.1 For community-based forest management of the local**

The improved livelihood of the villagers through increased income from other sources other than forest resource is the safety valve for sustainable use of the forests. The development of agricultural production in the local brought about favorable results. However, the village still has the great potentials, such as cultivable large land, large garden areas and wealthy labor force, to further develop the production to improve the villagers' livelihood. In order to make use of these potentials, it needs to have the concerns of the government. A difficulty the villagers facing is lack of capital and technical knowledge to diversify and expand their production. Therefore, it needs the government's financial supports through its usufruct credit sources and technical supports through its extension service. Moreover, in order to help the villagers to use the cultivable hill land effectively, Necessarily, the government creates the stable legal environment for using this kind of land. This is, the government should reallocate this land to households with the certificate.

In order to promote the monitoring task, the village should consolidate the full-time protection force and create incentive for the villagers' participation in this task. The protectors, regardless for the village or open forests, should be selected publicly

by the villagers. The fund for protection fee should be assigned to the local institution to manage and distribute. Such is easy for it to balance its financial source. The institution need make additional rules concerning reward to attract the villagers' participation in monitoring.

The more the villager participate in decision making, the more they consider the decisions to be theirs rather than the outside and these decisions can be able to obtain the consensus of the whole community. This in turn affects the effectiveness of enforcing them. So, it is necessary to improve the role of the villagers as well as their participation in the process of decision-making related to the forest management of the village. In order to do that, the process of decision-making should start from the villagers instead from the leaders as previously. The decisions or rules on the forest should be made by the villagers and then are considered and adjusted by the leaders for being suitable with the legislation.

The serious threat by people from the neighbor communes is likely to exceed the local institution's capacity, really making the forests harmful. For this threat to be limited, it is essential to have the intervention of the high authorities, firstly the district authority. The district authority needs to give rise to solutions to help the local overcome this problem as soon as possible.

In the future, the 661 Program will be implemented in the village in particular and the commune in general. In order to avoid the problems faced by the Program 327, the implementation of forestland allocation should be a step earlier than the implementation of the activities of the Program. In addition, for more of participation of the villagers in the Program, the holder of projects of the Program should be assigned to the commune authority with the consultancy by relevant agencies.

Most of the forests managed by the village community are the poor forests. Beside water sources, the village has not yet obtained any considerably economic benefits from them. So it is difficult for the village to cover the cost for managing the large forest areas with many complicated characteristics. Therefore, in the period when the

forests are regenerating, the financial supports by the government are necessary for the village to manage the forests better.

Forest and forestland allocation gives incentive to people's participation in forest management. In the case of the village, in order to change the villagers' perception and behaviors toward the open forest, the commune authority has better to promote allocating the forest to the households or organized groups in the village and the village. Its task needs the help and support from the competent agencies. At the same time, the village boosts its management practices on this forest area to back the allocated households' management. As far as the village forest concerned, this is classified into the extreme protection forest that have to be placed the management-board of protection forest in accordance with the legal documents on forest. However, in practice, there is not this Board and this forest has the small area. Therefore, the government should review and devolve more rights to the village to manage and use for the long-term.

### **10.2.2 Feedback to policy-makers**

To some extent, the village is considered as an organized community. The village presently is not recognized as an administrative level in the Civil Code. It is however agreed that a village has many important roles. However, they are not specified in the "Democratic Regulation at local level" attached to Decree No. 29/1998/ND-CP dated 11 May 1998 by the Government. Therefore, the National Assembly is requested to review and determine the legal status of the village level in the Civil Code. In addition, the Government should promulgate a legal document identifying the specific position, roles and responsibilities of a village. This can help the village to become a unit of forest management with enough legal bases.

Community forestry tends to increasingly develop and proves its significant contribution in forest management over the Country. The community-based forest management by the village studied is an illustration. However, legal documents issued by central levels including Law on Forest Development and Protection (1991),

Decrees of the Government, Decision No 327, 661 on forestry development, have not stated the definition of community forestry. Community forest is not seen as an object of regulated forestry policies such as forestland contracts, allocation and benefits sharing. This shows that during the socio-economic renovation and forestry socialization there has not been an official recognition of the State on community forestry. In order to create a completely legal framework to encourage this management regime, the government should promulgate a legal code on community forestry.

It is necessary that the state forest enterprises cooperate with the local people to manage the forests because state forest enterprises' lack of staff and people's pressure on the forests. Nevertheless, in fact, the degree at which the local people cooperate with the enterprise is still low. In case of the village, the villagers just involve in managing the forest together with the forest enterprise as the employees and they almost have few responsibilities with the forests assigned on contract to them protect. The reason is that besides the payment for protection, the local people have not other benefits from the forest they protect. In order to reach the good co-management of forest between local people and state forest enterprises, the government should make legislation on the co-management of these two stakeholders concerning sharing benefits from the forests managed.