

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The problem statement

The Vietnam's economy is still heavily natural resource-based. Rural population represents 80% of the total population and most of it derives its subsistence directly from agriculture, including fisheries and forestry (FAO, 1997). Nevertheless, it has a high population density (over 220 inhabitants./ km²) and, as crop land covers only 20% of its territory, the density per hectare of crop land reaches 11 persons, the highest in southeast Asia (UNDP, 1995, cited in FAO, 1997). As a result, natural resources are heavily affected. Deforestation and degradation of natural resources (especially land resource) are serious problems in Vietnam. To overcome this problem, agroforestry could be one of best solutions, since it requires few capital-intensive technologies and is able to restore degraded land areas. Agroforestry can play an important role in sustainable land use and can help to reverse the deforestation trend.

Agroforestry is the deliberate keeping/ growing of woody plants, non-woody plants, and often animals for human purposes, simultaneously or in deliberate rotations on the same unit of land (Gordon and William, 1990). Integrated cultivation of trees and crops or/and animals in agroforestry production is able to meet needs for cash, firewood, and food for farmers' long term existence. Agroforestry systems have been practised by farmers in all regions of Vietnam, especially in the mountainous and hilly regions for many years. There are seven ecological regions in Vietnam of which the North Coastal Central is one of poorest regions compared to others in the country. This region is divided into three agroecological zones which are coastal, plain and hill and mountainous zone. The hill and mountainous zone's production system is based on the strategies of managing natural forest, planting trees, raise animals and cultivating crops to meet the needs of people. The forest in the region

plays an important role in terms of soil and water protection for lowland areas because the hill and mountainous region is the origin of rivers. At present, flood and drought, which are mainly due to deforestation, occur many times every year. They are important causes leading to poverty of the people. As a solution to these problems, there are many programs and projects which deal with natural resources management and are designed to improve agricultural and forestry production in Vietnam in general and in the North Coastal Central region in particular. However, the success of those programs and projects has generally been poor. The failure to understand the socio-economic aspects of the local people (including gender roles) has been one of the contributing factors in the poor success of these projects/ programs (TEW, 1995; Hoai, 1997). Kast (1974) said that planners may think only of the formal, economic, physical resources side when they develop a program, but if the human side is not attended to properly, then the chances are that planning will not be successful. According to Young (1993), because the planners' ignorance, although production did increase it was at the cost of almost all the economic benefit of the project going to the men and the loss of status and independence for the women.

As in many countries of Asia where agriculture and forestry still constitute the major source of economic activities, about 80% of the total population in Vietnam are dependent on agricultural and forestry production for their subsistence living (Cuc, N.S., 1995). To create effective agricultural and forestry programs, it is necessary to understand the different roles of each family member, particularly that of women whose roles are often underestimated both in their involvement in productive and non-productive activities. The effect of many factors such as rigidity in traditional and cultural norms in societies, or inadequate attention from the policy makers and development workers which quite often further aggravated the situation of rural women. Inadequate attention to gender differences and to women's roles in agricultural and forestry programs and projects have resulted in the failure of projects to achieve their development objectives. The recent gender concern therefore, can be viewed as an effort to understand women's roles and recognize them as farmers rather than the farmers' wives or sisters (Maria, 1983). Gender

concern is not an overstated attempt to change the place of women in relation to the men, but it is an effort to give equal attention to women in development activities.

At present, the concept of “ladies first” is still missing in the rural development plans in Vietnam, especially in the North Coastal Central region. Therefore, this study would like to concentrate on the issue of gender in agroforestry systems in upland areas of the North Coastal Central region of Vietnam.

1.2 Rationale

To improve an agroforestry system, it is necessary to understand the forms and functions of the system and analyze their relationships.

In a subsistence based agroforestry system, both male and female play their roles in maintaining, altering and promoting the system's forms. However, their different roles in agroforestry activities in Vietnam have not been studied so far. The investigation of gender participation in production activities will indicate problems, opportunities, and areas of concern which are able to contribute to the success of agroforestry activities.

Because increased productivity is related to management decisions, it is important to understand not only who is doing the work but also who is making the decision about cropping patterns, seed selection, use of inputs, use of family and hired labor. Unfortunately, the literature on farm management and farming systems has given scant attention to the issue of gender influence on intra-household decision-making and resource allocation. (Kathleen, C., 1988). Therefore, in order to make efficiency of on-farm research activities, it is necessary to understand gender roles in decision-making. According to Melissa (1993), it is not enough just looking at what women do, we must also examine their rights of access, control and decision making over resources. This helps to reveal the reasons for women's activities and decisions. The research on gender roles in decision making, access to and control

over resources can contribute to improved productivity of the system in general and of the household in particular.

Rural women play important roles not only in agricultural production but also in forest production activities and resource management. The sexual division of labor has led to women's particular roles in managing natural resources. This role is seen as a product of historical evolution. Women are depicted as "naturally" privileged environmental managers who over generations have accumulated specific knowledge about natural processes that is different and more appropriate than that of men in general (Braidotti, 1994). The differences in priorities between men and women justifies the need for specifically involving women in social forestry projects, not only for reasons of equity, but also because of their collection, use and distribution of fuelwood, their role in management of fuelwood resources and their role in income-generating activities (FAO, 1989). Therefore, the analysis of gender's involvement in collecting fuelwood, using forest products and forest land will help to make a success in designing the resource management programs and projects.

Because of close interaction with both the social and natural systems, the rural people have accumulated sufficient knowledge about utilization and management of their local resources. However, this knowledge of the men is different compared to the women due to their different responsibilities in their life. Indigenous knowledge is a product of many years of experience, and is a valuable resource for development activities, it may be equal or even superior to the know-how introduced by outsider. Therefore, research on indigenous knowledge will be very useful for managing resources.

Women's role in farming systems in the developing world is influenced mainly by their reproductive role, and socio-cultural factors (Saito, 1992). Therefore, study of household activities and factors which currently constrain more productive participation by women is also important for making their work are efficient and productive and increasing production efficiency of the household in term of

strengthening empowerment of all family members. Quantification of housework by women help the government having background information to issue suitable policies to support women (Binh, 1997). The first step towards women's empowerment and full participation in rural development and food security strategies is the collection and analysis of gender data in order to understand their role differences. (FAO, 1997).

There are many studies in the world which indicated different roles of gender in agroforestry production activities as well as the use and management of natural resources. Nevertheless, there is also a difference in gender roles among different regions and countries.

Given above mentioned importance of gender roles, it is essential to do studies on the roles of gender in farm, forestry and household task before effective planning of development programs and projects can take place. Up till now, very few or no studies have been conducted on gender roles in different production systems in Vietnam. There is a lack of information, knowledge and statistical data on gender issue which contributes to the poor success of development programs/ projects, especially when it comes to different economic groups. So, a current study on the roles of gender in agroforestry systems is necessary and useful for agricultural and natural resource planning in Vietnam.

1.3 Objectives of the study

Given the above background, this study focused on following objectives:

1. To describe the forms and functions of the agroforestry systems in Thua Thien Hue province of the North Central Coastal region of Vietnam.
2. To identify and quantify the roles of gender in agricultural production activities at household level; in forestry production activities; and in housework.

2. To examine the roles of gender in decision making, use of, and management of forest products as well as their indigenous knowledge.
3. To compare and contrast gender roles among economic groups in the Northern Coast of Central Vietnam.
5. To find out constraints to women's improved productivity and welfare.

1.4 Usefulness of the study

At micro level, the research on gender roles can contribute to improved household status, because it strengthens empowerment of all family members.

At macro level, the information and knowledge of rural women and men in this study is useful for the preparation of various action programs in forestry and agricultural production systems (including forest and land management and use). Having identified the different interests of women it is possible to translate them into planning needs, in other words, the means by which their concerns may be satisfied. (Moser, 1993) Furthermore, this study can be used for other purposes such as policy making, planning, program formulation, evaluation and training.

1.5 Literature review

The word gender does not relate to women. Gender refers to the socially or culturally established roles of women and men (Feldstein, 1994).

Gender roles are the "social definition" of women and men, and vary among different societies and cultures, classes and ages, and during different periods in history. Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions (FAO, 1997).

Gender analysis seeks answers to fundamental questions such as who does or uses what, how and why. The purpose of gender analysis is not to create a separate body of social knowledge about women, but to rethink current processes - such as natural resource use and management, economic adjustment and transformation, or demographic changes to better understand the gender factors and realities within them. Armed with this knowledge, it should be possible to avoid the mistakes of the past and tailor interventions to better meet women's and men's specific gender-based constraints, needs and opportunities (FAO, 1997). Agricultural research and technology development programs can assure responsiveness to gender equality issues by recognizing women farmers as forming a constituency for agricultural research; giving due attention to the multiple use of plants for food and other uses, and recording from women the husbandry and utilization information on indigenous plant varieties (FAO, 1997).

Many studies in different countries indicated the roles of women in agricultural and forestry production as well as household work. The empirical studies on women in different countries have pointed to the importance of the roles of women in agriculture and the rural economy (Cleave, J., 1976). Region by region, country by country, ethnic group by ethnic group, detailed studies have documented that women's labor and women's decision-making are absolutely crucial to agricultural production and development (FAO, 1982). Rural women are major caretakers and users of forests. They are main gatherers of fodder and fuelwood, and they seek out fruits and nuts to provide food for their families. In addition, they use bark, roots, and herbs for medicines. They play a key role in agroforestry system that incorporate trees, crops and livestock production (FAO, 1997). For thousands of years women have played important roles in using and managing forest resources. Women are often the most knowledgeable members of the community regarding forest ecosystems. Frequently, women are responsible for minor forest product collection, nurturing, and regenerating productive species, and processing and marketing forest products. Women often spend more time in the forest and are more dependent on its products, they may have stronger incentives to manage it sustainably (Mark, P., 1990). Women

and children provide nearly all the water for the household in rural areas. Women make multiple and maximum use of water sources, and attempt to ensure that these sources do not become polluted. (FAO, 1997).

In Thailand, it is found that women participate almost as equally as men in labor exchange, planting and harvesting of most crops. Women engage less than men in land preparation for crop production and in the raising of large animals such as cows and buffaloes. On the other hand, they take more responsibility than men in the feeding of pigs and poultry. Women work fewer hours than men in crop production. They work hard not only in the fields and in the workplace but also at home (Benchaphun, S., *et al.*, 1987). A study on wild plant food in agricultural environments in Northern Thailand concluded that women are the primary selectors, gatherers, propagators and marketers of wild food resources. Their on-farm conservation of plant food resources is important for ensuring continuation and survival of the diversity of food supply as well as the biological diversity of the planet. (Price, L. L., 1997).

A study on the roles of women in irrigated agriculture and irrigation development in Lao shows that men often do ploughing but in all other operations, women and grown-up girls do the greater share. Decisions on food and daily expenses are exclusively the domain of the women. Because of the daily domestic water use, it is self-evident that women are highly interested in the planning, design and maintenance of water resources (Loes, S.S, and Outhaki Ch. Kh., 1995).

In agroforestry systems in the hills of Nepal, on average, women worked in various activities for 12 hours 49 minutes in a day while men worked 8 hours 5 minutes. The degree of their involvement, however, varied among socio-economic groups (Bajracharya, 1993).

The role of women is not only in agricultural production systems and housework but also in cultivating trees, collecting fuelwood, and using non-timber

forest products as well as environment protection through their indigenous knowledge. In most regions of the world, women are intimately acquainted with nature and many of them are to a large extent dependent upon it for their own and their families' existence. This makes women strong allies in the process of protecting and rehabilitating nature (Oever P. V., 1992). In Africa, women have historically managed resources on the basis of knowledge that is indigenous (Jommo, R. B., 1992). In every region of the developing world, but perhaps most of in Africa, millions of women work as farmers, farm workers, and natural resource managers (Agnes, R. et. al., 1995). Wickramasinghe (1991) reported that women in Sri-Lanka are at the forefront of tree farming because of their knowledge, experience and ability. Almost 88 percent of elderly women in rural households know which locations are most desirable for growing trees. Their knowledge enables them to identify specific locations like fences, hedges, homegardens, farmlands and common area along with specific ideotypes and priority products.

In Kenya, where the environment is degraded, a large number of women are involved in tree planting and soil conservation (Theresa, C., 1989).

The role of women in agroforestry activities is influenced by many social and cultural factors. Understanding the interaction between women and forests is vital for comprehensive view of forest use (Williams, 1985). When approaching local residents, foresters and extension workers often speak only to community leaders and village councils, most of whom are men (Hoskin, 1979). The women in rural areas are directly dependent on forestry-related resources, many forestry projects are designed without mentioning women and without any recognition of the impact the proposed activity will have on them (FAO, 1983). In order to make any technology appropriate to women, a study should assess the differentiating roles of male and female farmers (Timsina et al., 1989). Different cultural values, beliefs and norms of different social groups have so pervasive influence on the behavior of the people, that it is necessary to understand them well before setting up projects in the rural area (Khan, 1992, cite in Thesis by Bajracharya, B., 1993).

In Vietnam, although no detail studies were conducted on gender roles in production systems, but some surveys and observations indicated the important roles of rural women in productive and housework activities. A survey in the Mekong delta in Vietnam showed that 72% of women's labor was in agricultural work, 82% were chiefly responsible for housework. Their educational level was rather low, and they did not receive the technical guidance (Luat, and Son, 1992). The research on the real situation of the women labor force in household economy in the Red River delta found that the total man-day of women is approximately 293 days per year while that of men is approximately 279.2 days. The time used for housework by per woman who are married is 4.17 hours per day. The total value of products, which produced by the women, occupy 61.05% of household income but their private expenditure is about only from 60 % to 80% of that of the men. (Trong, 1994). According to Ha (1997), rural women in Vietnam join in many activities of crop cultivating, livestock raising and agricultural processing. In addition, they also do various housework such as cooking, washing, shopping, etc. It was found that traditional labor divisions have closely linked women to such activities as rice transplantation, harvesting, tending, fertilizing, food processing and marketing. Meanwhile, men often do the ploughing and harrowing. In a paper presented in the Third International Workshop on Crop-animal Farming System Research in Bangladet in 1990, Thanh reported that in the Mekong delta region of Vietnam, farm operations such as weeding, harvesting, and transplanting were undertaken by women. Besides working on the fields, women must take care of the house and their children and they were also the money keeper of the family. A survey undertaken in Hai Phong shows that 90% of weeding, transplanting and harvesting activities but only 10 % of seed sowing in wet rice production were done by women. Total working hours per day of men are 7.5-7.9 hours while that of women is 10.25-12.5 hours. For the most important matters, the decision was made by both husband and wife. There is inequity between men and women in the fields of training, education and giving credit. It was found that 90 % of people who have borrowed money from the Vietnamese Agricultural Bank are men. The number of women who have access to extension staff is only about 3.5%. In the South, there are possibilities that women have no land or are not entitled to inherit

land and in the North, men mostly have their names written on land documents. As a result, women are more dependent on men (National Committee for advancement of Women, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, and FAO, 1995). In a rural area at Ha Tay province, it was found that income which comes from women's work occupies 82.7% of the total family's income. At present in Vietnam, 80% of housework is done by the women. This work is considered as non-wage labor. In rural areas, about 25.2 % of women never listen to radio, two fold that of men. The rate of women who never read newspapers is about 53.7 %. In many cases when a couple divorce, the wife has to go away without anything because the husband is entitled to the main assets (National Committee for Advancement of Vietnamese Women, 1997). Normally, rural women have to work 12-16 hours per day undertaking both production activities and household work, while men work normally 9-10 hours per day. The men usually do work such as ploughing and spraying pesticide while women are often responsible for planting seedlings, and weeding (CRD of Hue University, 1997). According to Monica S. F., Vietnamese women traditionally work longer hours than men. The average number of working hours for wife and husband were 9.5 and 7.5 hours a day respectively. Land Tenure Certificates are always issued to the household head who is by definition usually the man. In the formal financial market, credit, in particular agricultural credit, is given to the men. It was estimated that about 90 percent of all borrowers in the Agricultural Bank of Vietnam are men. The result of a survey in Mekong river delta show that women mainly make decisions with regard to changing crops and cropping systems (67% of respondents while for men it is only 7.5%), in selling animal products (50.5 %, more than four fold compared to the men (12.5%)). The men often make decisions in changing the crop variety (60% of respondents while for women it is only 12 %), and in spraying chemicals (90.5% of respondents, nearly 20 fold compared to women (5 % only)). In rice production, about 90 % of women participated in weeding and storage activity. For land preparation, percentage of participated women is only 21 %. It was found that women work more hours than man. In some cropping seasons, women work 12-15 hours/ day while the men work 8-10 hours/ day (Du, et al, 1994). In a survey for planning the project of upland development in Xuan Loc commune of

Phu Loc district, Thua Thien Hue province, it was concluded that women of Van Kieu ethnic often are responsible for collection of fuelwood, foodstuffs, and pig and poultry raising, while hunting and cattle raising are responsibility of the men. The women have to work much harder than the men. The women are not entitled to inherit the assets of their parents. In social-cultural life, only men are allowed to participate in village governing tasks (The working team of the upland development project office of Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, 1997).

มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่
Chiang Mai University