

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

The majority of the inhabitants at the study site belong to the Da Bac Tay group. Their farming system is diverse, however, most have not developed yet. It included wet rice, swidden rice, cassava, canna, and livestock. Very few opportunities exist for people to involve in non-farm activities, therefore, NTFPs play important role in the Tay livelihood. The infrastructure in the area is better nowadays but still difficult for access to the market and transportation (the nearest market is about 12km away).

Forests are likely to be important to the local economy of Tat hamlet as elsewhere in Vietnam. Forest products like NTFPs are used for household subsistence, income and welfare. Protecting and gathering NTFPs from forests and creating rural economic opportunities, then, will maintain the rural household subsistence base, while enabling household members to expand their source of income.

The Tay people in the study area have not yet developed other income or livelihood activities to replace products and income from forest.

Forests are largely perceived as the sources of NTFPs and TFPs by the Tay and most of the households collect common NTFPs, such as wild vegetables and bamboo shoots. These findings support previous research which has shown that rural communities living near forest resources highly utilize these resources both for use and sale (Lan and Ziegler, 2002).

In the village, most of the types or species of NTFPs were collected for household consumption and therefore they contributed to subsistence at the household level. Some products such as bamboo shoots, *Culy* and *Khuc khac* were harvested for both household consumption and trade. There are some specific products that collectors intended to collect. However, many NTFPs were harvested indirectly whilst the collectors were doing other activities e.g. cultivating their fields and traveling to and from the fields.

The main species harvested for consumption within the household included bamboo shoots, wild vegetables and fruits, yams and medicinal plants. Some small animals were also caught. NTFPs were also collected for use as raw materials e.g. construction purposes, tool handles, poles and fencing. Most of the households in Tat hamlet collected palm leaves for construction, such as, making roofing materials.

The main species collected for trading were bamboo shoots and bamboo products, broom grass, medicinal plants, etc. The study also showed that most of the households in Tat were involved in collecting NTFPs for trade.

The study also found that poorer families are more reliant upon NTFPs than richer families. The importance of NTFPs lies both in their contribution to the non-cash household economy and the cash economy, however, the total cash income derived from NTFPs was 42%, higher than the total non-cash income (34%). Thus, we can conclude that the local people rely more on NTFPs for cash rather than non-cash. However, as it was mentioned earlier, the economy of Tay in Tat hamlet is mainly subsistence and trade in commodities is limited. So, cash income from NTFPs is considered as the major cash source in this area. Regarding economic status, there was a tendency for NTFPs to be proportionately more important to households with low cash incomes than those with high cash incomes.

The collecting and use of NTFPs is influenced by a variety of factors such as available natural resources, land access, market values for NTFPs, labor availability, etc. The data analysis shows that among three factors (paddy size, swidden size and labor availability) only two factors were found statistically significant at 0.5 level. From the results, we only could suggest that there seems no clear relationship with labor availability and that the access to agricultural land bears relationship with the income originated from NTFPs. Moreover, these findings suggest that most landless households utilize NTFPs to a higher degree than households with access to land. The results are in agreement with those of Sharp et al. (1999). They also found that villagers with less agricultural land were more likely to harvest NTFPs.

8.2 Recommendations

The collections of NTFPs have long been practiced by the locals in Tat hamlet and have been considered as one of the important sources of income in the livelihood system of the Tay. Currently, the diversity and quantities of NTFPs are decreasing because of over collection and habitat destruction. Forest destruction is the main reason for habitat destruction of NTFPs. The following policy recommendations are made for the forest conservation and further research:

1. Government and non-government organizations should encourage the local people to conserve forests by promoting education. Leading groups in the community should have the responsibility to take care of forest resources.

2. Any development planning in the area should not overlook the traditional role of NTFPs, both in providing cash income and non-cash income to the local household's economy.

3. Income generation and job creation should be diversified in accordance with the socio-economic and geographical conditions of the area. Non-timber forest products development is one income source.

4. The access to agricultural land is considered very important to the livelihood of the locals and it directly contributes to the sustainability of forests. So the Department of Agricultural Extension should promote alternative cash cropping or fruit tree planting, which can give benefits (food supply and income) to the local

people in the short run. Crop diversification is also an important issue because it can reduce market risks for farmers.

5. Community forestry is another way to use and conserve forest resources managed by local people. With the community's sense of belonging, people will use forest resources more efficiently and prevent outsiders from exploiting their forest resource.

6. Sustainable non-timber forest conservation and use should be promoted and subject to more research.