Reports

ASEAN Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC)

Activity Report for Phase 1 (2012-2013)

Vietnam

CIFOR ASFCC Team (Vietnam)

The report is based on several project documents that are not yet published, as well as author's interpretations.

Reports

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background, review and scientific justification: Swiddeners and REDD+ in Southeast Asia

Throughout much of Southeast Asia, what remains of forests is found in areas where shifting cultivation or swiddening is practiced and where shifting cultivators -- frequently disadvantaged minority peoples -- have traditional rights to land and resources (Mertz et al. 2009; Padoch et al. 2007). However, misconceptions about shifting cultivation are common, mainly attributed to almost universal condemnation by both governments and non-governmental institutions (whether devoted to conservation or development). The vulnerable status of shifting cultivator populations (Cramb et al. 2009; Dove 1983; Fox et al. 2000; 2009) makes it imperative that REDD+ projects in the region incorporate an understanding of swiddening, including the various forms of forest and fallow management it commonly comprises, as well as of the communities themselves (Mertz 2009). Viengthong District in the northeast Province of Huaphan, Lao PDR, where swidden agriculture is widely practiced and REDD+ projects are planned, under study or in initial stages of activity, is an excellent site to focus on these important, linked issues.

One essential issue that tends to be missed or misinterpreted by both governments and non-governmental institutions is the mobility of swiddeners and the dynamism of their resource use. Despite the often dramatic histories of migration and change of many swiddening communities, they are frequently viewed as essentially “traditional”, static, and locally bounded. The many economic and political changes that have frequently occurred throughout Southeast Asia have, however, embedded even seemingly remote rural households and communities in multiple social networks. These networks link people and places, including rural to urban settlements, individuals to organizations, peripheries to centers, yet often remain essentially invisible to outsiders.

For the implementation of a REDD+ project, information and resource networks are essential. First of all, the actual reduction in deforestation and forest degradation needs to be measured and reported within a REDD+ MRV system. An MRV system must also ensure that information gathered is fed into a carbon accounting system, and that it can be verified. The verified performance information will need to be further translated into a financial transaction inside a larger REDD+ system, and cost and benefit sharing mechanisms need to be in place to provide incentives to people, communities and institutions at different levels.

Hence, identifying and using the existing networks is key to helping communities access information and marshal resources to participate more effectively in REDD+ and other climate change-related activities. The existing networks could potentially serve as channels where the information related to carbon stocks in the swidden system is gathered and shared; through which monitoring data is reported to other levels; or where financial resources or other benefits are exchanged. However, the existing networks in shifting cultivation communities for information and resource exchange are not yet well understood, and knowledge gaps continue to exist.

2. Objectives and research approach

2.1. Objectives

This project has sought to fill the above mentioned gaps in knowledge by understanding how local communities that rely at least partially on shifting cultivation can participate more meaningfully in programs focused on promoting REDD+. The project has two principal objectives:

1. To understand how existing horizontal and vertical social network structures can serve to enhance opportunities and diminish obstacles for forest communities and their members to:
   a. Participate meaningfully in and benefit from REDD+ projects
   b. Participate in and influence national and subnational REDD+ decision-making
2. To understand how local knowledge, practice, institutions, and landscape patterns of resource use, especially in communities of shifting cultivators:
   a. Can be employed to harmonize REDD+ objectives with local practice and thus enhance REDD+ project outcomes, including the effectiveness and efficiency of MRV activities
   b. Can be enhanced in economic value and in social and political value by REDD+ project activities.

The project has worked towards these objectives through collaboration with communities of shifting cultivators, research groups and actors who are involved in forest management and land use issues.

2.2. Research Approach

The project used a comparative approach to study existing social structures and embedded networks (including rural-urban ties) in shifting cultivation communities and beyond, in two sites in two provinces in Vietnam: Son La and Nghe An (see figure 1). The research focused on networks in which information and financial resources were shared. Information and financial networks were selected because they are core elements in the institutional architecture of a REDD+ mechanism, and will need to be understood across different levels and scales if the aim is to implement a functioning REDD+ project.

The assumptions were that most networks, including rural-urban ties, are of an informal nature, even though in most cases formalized network structures would be needed for a transparent, accountable and legitimized REDD+ mechanism. The hypotheses were that a) transaction costs would be lower if the establishment of REDD+ builds upon existing mechanisms, and b) existing networks and social foci are currently dominated by power asymmetries, thus information flows and financial streams can be monopolized or influenced by powerful actors. It was argued that there is a need to assess in which situations a mechanism such as REDD+ could build upon existing network structures, would need to be modified, or new structures should be created to ensure equitable outcomes.

In addition, organizations that are relevant to decision-making about forests and forested land, and which affect deforestation and forest degradation in the research area were studied, particularly in relation to: (1) their positions and perceptions on REDD+ and on deforestation and shifting cultivation; (2) their location in discursive structures and involvement in activities related to REDD+ and forests; (3) their networks of information and collaboration with regard to decisions over

deforestation and forest degradation. This information is expected to provide a deeper understanding of cross-level or "vertical" influence and information flows.

Mixed and participatory methods were used. Observations, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and interviews with qualitative and quantitative questionnaires were conducted at the local (community) level, subnational (district, province) and national levels. Three levels of research were used which are described in section 4 of this document, as well as in a more detailed internal methods document.

Figure 1. ASFCC research sites location in Vietnam

2.3. Research questions

The following initial research questions guided the research:

1. What networks exist through which resources, and information are exchanged? When, with whom, how and why are the resources and information exchanged?
2. Can these networks (as identified under question 1) be related to the need for multi-dimensional information and financial flows of a REDD+ system (specifically for reporting (R) and benefit sharing (B))?
3. Who in the community has access to resources and information shared through the selected networks?
4. How do the socio-economic factors, migration patterns and personal relationships influence access to information and resources?
5. What are the current shifting cultivation practices of the farmers, and how have they changed over time?
6. What level of knowledge on REDD+/PES is present in the shifting cultivation communities?
7. What are the organizational perceptions of challenges and opportunities for reducing emissions through avoided deforestation and forest degradation at a subnational level?
8. What are the horizontal and vertical information, financial and influence networks related to existing and planned measures to reduce deforestation and forest degradation?
9. To what degree do formal and informal hierarchy, power constellations, discursive practices, and new (financial) incentives, influence and shape the implementation of a mechanism such as REDD+?

3. Research team, partners and schedule

3.1. Research team and key partners

The ASFCC research team in Vietnam is the smallest team of the 3 countries and included a CIFOR senior associate, A CIFOR scientist and research assistant and two consultants, one of which also represents the government. The team was assisted in the field by several local officials, the head of the villages and translators (see table 1)

Figure 2. ASFCC research team in Vietnam

Table 1. ASFCC research team in Vietnam

Mr. Nguyen Dinh Tien	Consultant, FGD facilitator and interviewer
Mr. Le Manh Thang	Staff DARD, FGD facilitator and interviewer
Mr. Le Ngoc Dung	CIFOR
Mr. Giang A Lau	Commune extension officer, translator Kinh-Hmong
Mr. Song A Xao	Head of the Lay village, translator for some ego-network interviews
Mr. Song A Chua	Police man, translator for some of the ego-network interviews
Mr. Luong Thai Hung	Provided organization support and help interviewing
Dr. Pham Thu Thuy	CIFOR
Dr. Moira Moeliono	CIFOR
Dr. Maarit Kallio	CIFOR
Dr Maria Brockhaus	CIFOR

3.2. Schedule of the work

Table 2. ASFCC research activities in Vietnam 2012-2013

No	Activity	Place	Date	Participant	Output
1	Selection of the field sites and partner development	Hanoi and Nghe An province, Vietnam	Dec 2012 – Feb 2013	Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung	Meeting potential research partners in Vietnam. Initial site selection.
2	Partnership development in Vietnam	Hanoi, Vietnam	February - March 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Christine Padoch	Terms of reference, consultancy contracts, partnership established between CIFOR & Hanoi University of Agriculture (HAU), partnerships strengthened between CIFOR and Son La Forest Protection and Development Fund (Son La FPDF) and Son La Department of Forestry Meeting with Vietnam focal point and RECOFTC for ASEAN/ASFN network to inform about the scope of project + partnership was conducted
3	Data management for Vietnam	Vietnam	March and April 2013	Moira Moeliono, Maarit Kallio, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung, Le Manh Thang (Son La FPDF), Nguyen Dinh Tien (HAU)	Questionnaires and survey were translated from English to Vietnamese. Team building and training on research methods and interview skills were provided for local consultants and local interpreters The systems/networks for the ego-network study selected, designing data entry form
4	Partnership development, field preparation, Focus Group Discussions in Moc Chau district, Son La province, Vietnam	Moc Chau town and Lay village, Tan Xuan commune (now under Van Ho district), Moc Chau district, Son La province	March 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung, Nguyen Dinh Tien (HAU), Le Manh Thang (Son La FPDF) and Giang A Lau (Tan Xuan agriculture extension officer – Hmong translator)	Trip report, 3 FGDs conducted in Lay village, background information collected, key informant interviews and transect walks Local consultants and interpreters are trained on interview skills

No	Activity	Place	Date	Participant	Output
5	Partnership development, field preparation, Focus Group Discussion in Con Cuong district, Nghe An province, Vietnam	Con Cuong town and Que village, Binh Chuan commune, Con Cuong district, Nghe An province	April 2013	Moira Moeliono, Le Ngoc Dung, Nguyen Dinh Tien (HAU)	Trip report, 3 FGDs conducted in Que village, background information collected, key informant interviews and transect walks
6	Organizational surveys conducted in Vietnam	Moc Chau district, Son La province and Con Cuong district, Nghe An province	March, April and August 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung, Le Manh Thang (Son La FPDF), Nguyen Dinh Tien (HAU)	Organizational questionnaires conducted
7	Ego-network interviews in Vietnam	Moc Chau district, Son La province and Con Cuong district, Nghe An province	March and April 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung, Le Manh Thang (Son La FPDF), Nguyen Dinh Tien (HAU)	Ego-network questionnaires conducted in Lay village, Son La province and Que village, Nghe An province
8	Database development	Hanoi, Vietnam	April 2013 onwards	Le Ngoc Dung, Le Manh Thang (Son La FPDF), Nguyen Dinh Tien (HAU)	Transcription, translation, data entry and management for FGDs, ego-network interviews and organizational survey
9	Finalize Focus Group Discussion reports	Bogor, Indonesia and Hanoi, Vietnam	August 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung	Focus Group Discussions Report in Vietnam
10	Meeting and discussing with partners for the ASFCC Phase 2	Hanoi, Vietnam	August 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung	Meeting Vietnam Academy of Forest Science, Vietnam Forest Inventory and Planning Institute, and ICRAF
11	Disseminate information on project	Bogor, Indonesia and Vietnam	June – August 2013	Moira Moeliono, Pham Thu Thuy, Le Ngoc Dung, Maarit Kallio, Cynthia Maharani	ASFN flyers are translated and printed in Vietnamese Projects objectives and expected outcomes were distributed to national stakeholders including government agencies, donors and research institutes and other INGOs
12	Disseminate information	Son La and Nghe Ann	17 – 31 March 2014	Moira Moeliono, Le Ngoc Dung, Aneesh Anandas, Le Manh Thang	Knowledge sharing workshops at district and commune level

4. Methods and tools

4.1. Site selection

Site selection was based on the following criteria:

1. Shifting cultivation is a dominant land use in the community
2. Significant forest cover is present in the village area (including mature forest)
3. There are other specific characteristics of interest (e.g. presence of maize plantations as an external driver of change, proximity of a natural park etc.)
4. Village is a study site of the I-REDD and GCS projects, or in the same area as the I-REDD Project sites and GCS, which allows for improved synergies between the two projects, minimizing double work done, and strengthening the use of data collected by the two projects.
5. Accessibility to the site and willingness of local authorities and local people to participate in the study
6. High poverty rate

Figure 3. Hmong, dominant ethnic group in Lay village, Son La

In addition, we also considered ethnic diversity in our selection, with a preference for villages that were multi-ethnic or consisted of ethnic minorities. In Vietnam the sites selected were Ban Lay, Moc Chau district, Son La province dominated by Hmong and Ban Que , Con Cuong district, Nghe An province dominated by the Thai group (see section 5 for full description of study sites).

4.2. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) (Level I)

In total 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGD), differentiated by gender and age (women, men and young people), were conducted in the two selected villages. The FGDs were conducted in order to get a basic understanding on:

1. The environmental, economic and social characteristics of each site.
2. The existing resource and information exchange systems and embedded networks (within the community and beyond), including when, with whom, how and why the resources are exchanged.

Figure 4. Focus Group Discussions in the villages

A 'system' in this in this study was defined along the following dimensions: (a) resources that are exchanged (money, information, skills, material); (b) actors (who is exchanging resources); (c) purpose (why are the resources exchanged); (d) social foci and tools facilitating the exchange (where, when and how the exchange is done). As such systems can be identified also through the identification of institutions with their structure or rules, actors, resources, relations and exchanges. These systems and the embedded networks were the bases for the follow-up ego-network surveys as described in section (4.3).

A participatory approach and a set of tools were used during each FGD. The specific steps followed were:

1. Historical axis was used to understand what main past events in the community's history have influenced and altered their economic situation, well-being (economic and social), and land-use; and what main impacts resulted from these events.
2. Discussion and visualization on what resources (information, financial, material and skills) are exchanged within the community and with outside actors. What tools, events, social foci facilitated this exchange? When and how often do these interactions take place, and for which main purpose(s)?
3. Identification based on these concrete examples of what resource exchange "systems" exists in the community.
4. Ranking the importance of each system identified (using visualization and verbalization techniques) for the community's social and economic wellbeing. (Ordinal ranking is used, but more than one system can have the same importance.)
5. Discussion and visualization of some of the selected networks more in detail.

Each FGD took approximately two hours to conduct. Material used included: flip charts and meta plan, stickers, tape, markers, snacks & tea & coffee. In addition to extensive note taking, each FGD was recorded in order to be able to check unclear points. The process and results of the FGDs have been presented in a separate more detailed report.

4.3. Ego-network questionnaires (Level II)

Drawing from the information gained from the FGDs, the household level ego-network survey sought to gather data aimed at answering the following questions:

1. How are resources and information exchanged within and beyond shifting cultivation communities?
2. Who in the community has access to resources and information shared through the selected networks?
3. How do socio-economic factors, migration patterns and personal relationships influence access to information and resources?
4. Can the selected networks (see below) be related to the needs for multi-dimensional information and financial flows in a REDD+ system (specifically for reporting and benefit sharing of REDD+)?
5. What are the current shifting cultivation practices of the farmers, and how have they changed over time?
6. What level of knowledge on REDD+/PES is present in the shifting cultivation communities?

Based on the FGDs, the three most strongly related and/or strongly influential networks over potential REDD+ activity in the study villages were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Within the system/network there are links to different actor groups that would be/are relevant for the implementation of REDD+ (e.g. GOs, NGOs, donor agencies, etc.).
2. The system/network includes benefit or finance sharing elements, as benefit sharing (monetary and non-monetary) will be part of a REDD+ design.
3. The system/network has a link to government agencies or other actors that conduct monitoring or reporting activities such as collection of statistical information, since an MRV mechanism for REDD+ will have reporting structures.
4. The system is related to land use change (especially related to changes in forest cover). The similarity with a REDD+ mechanism would be that REDD+ intends to influence forest related land use change.

Ego-network questionnaires were conducted with the household heads of at least 40 randomly selected households per community. In Ban Lay, Son La, a total of 48 interviews were done and 40 interviews were conducted in Que village, Nghe An.

The survey questionnaire included the following distinct sections:

1. Basic socio-economic attributes of the informant and household, including any formal roles and organizational memberships that the respondent may have
2. Household ties related to each selected system/network
3. Household links to urban centers and other migration destinations
4. Experiences related to REDD+ and PES (Payments for Ecosystem Services)
5. Shifting cultivation practices.

The main hypothesis tested was that specific socio-economic factors and migration experiences, as well as kin ties to specific people determine actors' access to existing informal and formal structures across communities, between them and in rural-urban interactions. This access to informal and formal structures and networks influences the community member's access to information and resources.

The field team digitally recorded all household interviews for transcription and translation, as well as taking detailed notes during the process. Key informant interviews were also carried out in addition

to the household sample, including village leaders, farmers and traders. These were also recorded where possible, while in some cases notes were taken instead.

4.4. Organizational network survey (Level III)

The organizational network survey was carried out in Moc Chau district, Son La on the 18 and 19th of March right before the FGDs in the villages. In Con Cuong district, Nghe An; the organizational survey was done after the FGDs on 2-3 April 2013. The survey is intended to study the following initial research questions:

1. What are the organizational perceptions of challenges and opportunities for reducing emissions through avoided deforestation and forest degradation at national and subnational levels?
2. What are the horizontal and vertical information, financial and influence networks related to existing and planned measures to reduce deforestation and forest degradation?
3. To what degree do formal and informal hierarchy, power constellations, discursive practices, and new (financial) incentives, influence and shape the implementation of a mechanism such as REDD+?

The survey was administered to high-ranking representatives of pre-identified organizations and actors at district and commune level. After interviewing the initial set of pre-defined actors, snowball sampling was used. The relevant actors and organizations selected for the study were those who: (a) were most influential in making decisions and implementing activities that affect forests or forested areas; or (b) distributed information relevant to forests and forested land in the research area. The actors were defined by a review of project reports, administrative hierarchies etc. and verified during an initial scoping trip in the research area. At provincial level one actor (extension officer) and 4 forestry officials at district level were interviewed. The private sector was represented by a trader in Chieng Xuan commune. While no NGOs working on land use or environmental issues is active in this region.

The organizational questionnaire had three distinct sections. The first section identified the type and some specific characteristics of the organization, including their major organizational interests. The second section identified actors' positions regarding policy challenges and opportunities. The third section focused on networking among the identified organizations. In the third section, the questions referred to the influence of other organizations, exchange of information, sources of scientific information, and organizations with opposing positions, and organizations with whom there is collaboration. Most interviews were recorded and are in the process of transcription and translation. Several respondents would not permit interviews to be recorded, in which case detailed notes were also taken. The data will be analyzed using qualitative methods and social network analysis, while some initial observations are presented in section 6.

5. Description of study sites

5.1. Final selection and locations of ego-networks study sites

The Provinces of Son La and Nghe An (see figure 1) were selected primarily as both are forested areas where large areas of protected forest are considered important in the government's PES program (Son La) and REDD+ program in Son La. The area was also the site of CIFOR's research on policy aspects of REDD+ (GCS Component 1) and I-REDD project. In Vietnam, shifting cultivation is perceived as backwards and destructive and the government has attempted to halt this practice. In an effort to constrain the practice, the government has allocated 130 ha of land for swidden for Que village, with strict prohibitions to expand. In Son La, swidden is still practiced widely although the cycles have been much shortened and in many cases there is no fallow period at all.

Within these provinces a district was selected (Moc Chau[1] in Son La and Con Cuong in Nghe An), both having significant areas of shifting cultivation. In consultations with the provincial forest protection unit, the district agriculture and rural development division and the commune, we selected Ban Lay (Lay village) in Moc Chau and Ban Que (Que village) in Con Cuong.

Table 3. Basic information on the selected study sites

Village name	Number of households	Main Ethnic group	Poverty rate	Area (km) that still has active swidden and their % in the total land
Ban Lay	79	Hmong	90%	Not available
Ban Que	84	Thai	78%	130 hectare (65%)

5.2. Ban Lay in Tan Xuan commune

Ban Lay was selected for the following reasons:

1. It has the largest area of shifting cultivation in the district, while actual figure is not available, swiddening is the main source of livelihood for its population
2. It is a Hmong village only some 20-30 km from the border from Laos. The village lies in the core zone of the Xuan Nha protected area, which was established in 2002 with forest within walking distance.
3. It is one of five Hmong villages in a commune of 9 villages and is one of the poorest and most isolated villages (the poverty rate of Tan Xuan commune is 39.2% of which Lay village is one of the highest poverty rate with more than 90% of household in the village is supporting maize seedling and salt from 135 Program (program for poverty alleviation). In addition, many houses in Lay village were built with the support of Program 134 (another support program by Vietnam government).
4. The village has high poverty rate, little development support and high risk of environmental degradation

1 In early 2014, Moc Chau district was divided into two districts, our research site is now located in the new Van Ho district.

Figure 5. Life in Lay Village

The village is part of the Tan Xuan commune, one of 29 communes of the district of Van Ho (previously Moc Chau). It has a total area of 15,855 ha with 847 HHs (total population 4174) distributed in 9 villages. Most of these belong to 3 ethnic groups: Hmong, Thai and Muong. H'mong people are not original from this area but moved from other district (mainly from Ta Xua commune and Hong Ngai commune in Bac Yen district)

The commune lies within a protected area close to a national park. No Forest Land Allocation was therefore carried out here and people have no rights to the land. The government has tried to resettle people outside the protected area but not all attempts were successful as the allocated area was not as fertile as land in the current village and the government does not want to create social conflict. Thus, at the time the government tried to move people to another village, there were 5 Thai Households who stayed. The Hmong people in Lay were promised that if the 5 Thai HHs would move, they could occupy the abandoned land. However, in the end the government did not move the Thai households to avoid social conflicts.

Deforestation and forest degradation rates in the area are high. Although people are forbidden to expand their swidden in the forest areas, with unclear boundaries, people continue their shifting cultivation practices. Around the village and along the road, barren slopes of swidden dominate the landscape. Fallows seem quite short with people reporting no fallow to five years.

The government (Ministry of Defense) has constructed a road through the protected area towards the border with Laos. Though the road is build for security reasons, people are happy as access is greatly improved.

5.3. Ban Que in Nghe An Province

Que village was selected for ASFCC because:

- It is inhabited by Thai people practicing shifting cultivation, in fact having the largest area of shifting cultivation area in Con Cuong district, 130 hectare out of 200 hectare, of shifting cultivation in the district
- High poverty rate of 78 percent
- Between 1998 and 2002 the village was part of the Forest Land Allocation program
- Some earlier research activities were conducted in Que village under I-REDD+ project
- There is still some 80% forest cover, part of which is buffer zone to national park and comprises a buffer zone
- There is an increasing rate of migration from Que village to places outside Nghe An province

Figure 6. Land in Que Village

Within Nghe An province the district of Con Cuong is the most forested with a cover of a little under 70 percent, partly as it is home to a national park. The Pu Mat National Park has a total area of 94,000 hectare and is located across several districts: Tuong Duong, Con Cuong and Anh Son. As well there is the Pu Huong Protected Area with a total area of 49,000 hectare located across the districts of Quy Hop, Quy Chau, Que Phong, Tuong Duong and Con Cuong districts. Con Cuong is also the site of the I-REDD program, and is inhabited by a variety of ethnicities including the Thai who still practice shifting cultivation. Con Cuong has 12 communes of which only three are said to still have shifting cultivation with a total of 200 ha shifting cultivation (i.e. Binh Chuan, Chau Khe and Thach Ngan communes).

There have been several studies on shifting cultivation in this area for different projects, a.o in 2003 and 2010, a.o. a research project on shifting cultivation and livelihoods of local people in Que village (Binh Chuan commune and Chau Khe commune) funded by EU; the i-REDD project also carried out in Chau Khe and Luc Da communes.

The area is also the recipient of several government programs, e.g. Program 134 and 135 (on poverty alleviation and hunger eradication for poor communes and ethnic minorities funded by GoV) were carried out in almost communes of district. In 2008, Program 147 (Decision 147/2007/QD-TTg by Vietnam Prime Minister) encouraged local people to plant forest in the shifting cultivation areas. In compensation for the planting of trees, the government through this program provided each household head with 10kg of rice. Two other tree-planting programs were implemented in the period of 1998-2005, i.e. Program 661 of the 5 million ha forest rehabilitation and Program 163 (forest land allocation to households).

Con Cuong is known as an illegal logging hotspot in Vietnam and is the gateway of illegal logging from Laos. In March 2013, there was a serious case of illegal logging and smuggling, which involved the head of forest protection units. The Binh Chuan commune has a total area of 18,221 ha; of which 15,240 ha is forest including 6,687 ha national park (Pu Huong National Protected Area, with Que village located in the buffer zone), and 2,615 ha are protected forest. The remaining 8,400 ha has been allocated to HHs and groups of household. As well the commune has 97 ha of paddy fields.

The mostly Thai people in the commune are poor; poverty rate is 64.4% and contains large areas of forest. The commune receives government subsidies and programs aimed to alleviate poverty. Program 135 and program 147 provides HHs with acacia seedlings, bamboo seedlings and fertilizer. Program 134 and program 167 provides them with money (or in kind) subsidies for house construction. Another program provides twice a year rice subsidies. However, people in Que village said they rarely eat rice from government subsidies due to its low quality; instead the rice is often used for to make rice wine or feeding pigs and chickens. The Western Nghe An Rural Development Program by LUX-DEV provided cattle and training. Many households in the commune have registered to join the acacia-planning project but the project has been delayed and there has been no implementation yet.

Most of the people in Que practice swidden, although the area is constrained to 130 ha for 84 HHs. Average yields is 950 kg/ha of rice in a season. Rice is the main staple crop, but maize and cassava are important supplements. Some farmers also plant pumpkins, beans, and sweet potatoes in their upland rice fields, but only to a limited extent. Most upland rice fields are located in the allocated area, a 30 min walk southeast of the village, while the current cassava fields are located closer to the village.

6. Initial results and discussion

6.1. Progress of the research

The fieldwork in Vietnam was completed as planned with data management and initial analysis done in 2013. The knowledge sharing workshops, communication, and data management took place between January-March 2014 in the period of no cost extension. ~~Further more detailed data analyses and preparation of the scientific publications was also delayed and will be done between April-December 2014.~~

The first phase data collection consisted of 6 FGDs in two communities followed immediately by the ego-network surveys and organizational surveys. The FGDs provided the input to select the networks through which people exchange resources and information. Identified systems and the ranking in each village are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Systems identified from the focus group discussions

	Son La			Nghe An		
	Male group	**Female group**	**Youth group**	**Male group**	**Female group**	**Youth group**
Agriculture system	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st
Infrastructure development	2nd	2nd	2nd (men)		3rd	
Social network/mass organizations	4th		2nd(women)		4th	2nd
Migration	3rd		3rd	3rd		3rd
Public health	5th		3rd			
Education					2nd	
Trading network				2nd		

After the focus group discussions in Lay village on 20th March 2013, we reviewed the content and information we got from these FGDs. After selecting two of the systems as a basis, ego-network interviews were carried out in Lay from 21-24th of March and in Que between 4th April and 7th April. A total of 40 interviews in each village were conducted.

The second phase of the ASFCC project ~~starts in April~~started in January 2014 and will continue for 3 years (until December 2016). In the second phase more detailed research will be conducted on food security, migration and carbon stocks in shifting cultivation communities and beyond.

6.2. Tentative findings

6.2.1 The Focus Group Discussions

The process of defining systems was not easy. While, the time line worked well, extracting systems using meta-plan was less successful. In the end, the process was changed. Working from the village as the center, components were extracted and then elaborated on. The systems defined are as follows:

Men FGD-Lay Village

Network	Importance Ranking	Explanations
Agriculture production	1	Agriculture production system is most important as it determines the social and financial wellbeing of the people.
Infrastructure development (roads)	2	Infrastructure such as roads, hydropower plant and water system are critical for the local people because it connects them with the outside world and provides enabling conditions for agriculture development and expansion
Social Network/mass organizations	4	This system is not that important to participants as they play a very minor role such as helping the poor with labour and organize festival only
Migration	3	Migration is an important third priority as a vehicle to learn, get work or get married
Public Health	5	Least important as not many people get sick

Women FGD-Lay Village

Event/system	Ranking	Reason	Exchange information
Public health	3	Before clinic: • It is hard to access medical service After clinic: • Easy to buy medicines • Can go to district hospital if necessary Public health system was considered as an important system because villagers had to experience malaria outbreak in 1992. They found that the access to public health system is very important. Commune clinic was established in 2008 and people can buy medicines. In the past, medical service is very poor.	Exchange information on maternity, vaccination for the kids and the medication In the village clinic, commune clinic, during trainings
Road system	2	• More convenience for transportation • Easy to trade and easy to access market They thought that the road is big change in the village. More outside traders come here, people can easily go out of village and visit their friends	Exchange information on house building materials and furniture costs with road builders

Event/system	Ranking	Reason	Exchange information
		and relatives and it is easier to access school and clinic.	
Agricultural system	1	The agriculture system should be the most important because it is the basis of life, the only known way to improve life and the main source of income to people.	• Selling maize and increase income of family, exchange information on market price with traders • Info on seeds, techniques and management through the extension service (training, visits) • Traders come to the village (village head house; local eating shops; people's houses). Shops in the village; markets in town

Youth FGD-Lay Village

System	Ranking	Reason	Exchanges
Agricultural system	1	Maize and rice cultivation is the most important employment. During the first years of settlement in Lay, people lived from swidden and collecting forest products. In 2005, the government implemented resettlements program, which included extension service. Gradually, swidden is being replaced with more intensive cultivation of rise and maize. People have now more income. Agricultural produce is sold to traders as well as to the shops in the village. Today there is sufficient food and cash income.	• Exchange seedling • Borrowed seedling from Laos people • Introduced new maize seedling • Learnt about intensive farming • Sell NTFPs to the shops in the village • Women can participate in farmer association and learn about new techniques but only if the women know to speak and listen in Kinh
Migration system	3	The Hmongs were traditionally a highly mobile people and they remember migration as an important part of live. Today, however they say they intend to stay (also their movement is constrained by the government).	• Started migration in 1983 • All the village came here in 1986 • Some people got married and settled down here so most information exchange is about their family members social well-beings
Road system	2 (men)	The road was built already, people can sell agricultural products easily and visit their friends and relatives in other places School system is in the commune so children can easily access to education services	• Villagers built a road in 2003. People exchange information on how urban communities leave, how to select good materials for house building and furniture • Compensation to villagers when government built the road so

System	Ranking	Reason	Exchanges
		In 2007-2008, commune clinic was built so medical services is better and cheaper	people exchange information about government policies and compensation level • Selling agricultural products. People exchange about the price and techniques of agriculture productions
Social network	2 (women)	• More interaction	• Interact with other village to learn about their culture and daily lives and to find future partner • Participate in entertainment events or singing contest • Visit friends in other village and exchange information about entertainments activities, agriculture products and government policies on providing loans with low interests for the poor

Men FGD, Que

Systems	Ranking	Reasons	Network
Agricultural development and change	1	Agriculture is the single most important source of livelihood.	• Farmers to farmers exchange of seeds and other goods. Farmers and traders exchange of goods, money and information. • Government extension agents and foreign agencies involved in development projects (Programs 147,135,167, Luxemburg in 2005). • (Provincial, district, commune and village officials monitoring and verifying forestland border for each household during the FLA.
Migration and off-farm job	3	• Source of additional money from remittances. • Risks (uncertain and insecure jobs, sickness) • Only households surplus labor can afford letting members go	• The migration was starting from 2002. • Local people get information from their relative and outsider, brokers. • Local people in village have relative in other communes, so they have network. • Expanding knowledge/ • Send money back to help parents • Getting married and live in the other place
Trading flows	2	Accessibility, more traders come to villages, selling goods.	• 2006 road build, many traders came to buy agricultural products. • Payment for road constructing (50000/day)

	• Government subsidize Information exchange

Women FGD-Que village

Systems	Ranking	Reasons
Rural and agricultural development	1	Main source of livelihood
Education development	2	• Education can change the life of children if they can enter university. Currently, people rely on the clinic in commune centre and hospital in Moc Chau town for health issues
Migration	5	• Lack of labour • Causing more debts • Causing worries for parents
Infrastructural system (electricity, road, school, clinic)	3	Well transportation, life is more convenience
Union (Youth, women) to help overcome poverty	4	Help other people to overcome illness.

Youth FGD-Que village

Systems	Ranking	Reasons	Networks
Agricultural development Mechanism	1	Main source of food and income	• The FLA of 1998 introduced government officials from different levels • Other project came in 2000, 2012 involving local commune and NGOs
Settle life in other places	3	• Support a part of household economics • Make more friends • More chance to find other jobs	• Introduced by outsider (relatives, friends, and brokers) • Low education/unskilled labor → low payment
Solidarity	2	Better neighborhood, help each other in the problems facing	• Social groups (Youths, women, farmer group) help each other • Sharing experience in the life and production

Strong presence of the state (national park)

Vietnam village life is structured by the hierarchical political system of the state. The village head is the key actor linking the village to the commune; the commune leaders link the commune to the

district etc. In all discussions this political system is mentioned first, with other matters taking second place.

The head of the village is thus the most important actor and people expect this leader to advance and protect their interest. In Lay, the H'mong had arrived under the leadership of a strong person who managed to secure the right to settle in the village. Commune and higher-level bureaucrats, however, consider the current leader, weak and too awed.

In Que the previous village leader has become the secretary of the communist party at village level. Although a new leader has been elected, he still plays an important part in managing village affairs and when his term is over in 2 years, he will take over village leadership again.

In both Lay and Que, located near protected areas, the most visible arm of the state is represented by the forest protection and national park agencies. Staff from these agencies provides information to the villagers on forest protection and regulations concerning swidden. As a result, village people are quite aware of regulations constraining swidden. Nevertheless, having little alternatives, people continue their traditional way of life. When asked they foresee that in swidden remains their main occupation for the unforeseeable future. The government realizes that despite prohibitions swidden is generally practices, often ignores the fact because they understand the need of the people, but they are also unable to enforce the rules limiting swidden in protected areas.

Lay lies very close to the border with Laos and therefore is also under scrutiny of the border police.

Access

Both Lay and Que are relatively isolated with Lay more isolated than Que. In both villages there is roadwork going on which will improve access. Access is, however, two ways. Improved access to Que has brought not only traders but also gold miners.

In Lay, most people own mobile phones, although usable only in a few spots with access to the network. Despite the availability of phones and motorbikes, communication with the outside world is limited. In fact people appear to have little interest in life outside the village although they have strong connection with Laos and Thai H'mong groups across the border. When we organized the group discussions, the kids listened to Laos and Thai DVD (in H'mong language) and movie, obtained from Moc Chau town. Thus, contrary to what they claim, there must be quite frequent visits to town.

Que village has also limited access for use of mobile phones. However, Que villagers are more active in term of accessing the outside world in comparison with Lay villagers. One explanation could be the issue of language where the Que people speak more Vietnamese (Kinh language) in comparison to the Lay villagers who generally speak only H'mong.

Education and socio-economic development

In both villages there is little education. Children do go to school but often leave at second-third grade. In Lay, there is little interest to gain further education. Although most of the young people frequently visit other villages, this is mostly to look for wives. Women generally leave their family on getting married and move to the husband's village. In Lay, women get married at very young age (11-14 years old) and become farmers like their mothers and grandmothers.

In Que village, there is more interest in getting an education and some young people have entered colleges or universities. However, few succeed and most quit their study to look for off-farm job.

Environmental issues

Swidden and logging are considered to be the main deforestation drivers. However, the building and upgrading of roads has also a visible impact. Waterways have been disturbed and in some cases, agricultural fields are converted to roads.

In Que village, gold mining is creating even more environmental problems. Villagers complain that gold mining seriously pollute the water resources and cause other negative effects. Gold mining has also created conflicts between investors, miners (mostly from other places) and villagers. Gold miners receive a working permit from commune office and feel they have the rights to search for and exploit gold sources anywhere in the area. In fact, some villagers have been involved in gold mining, but feel that, gold mining at larger scale put higher risks on the livelihood of people.

Water shortage is already affecting paddy rice and clean water supplies are disturbed. Villagers have send complaints to higher level but no one has responded. There is no interaction between gold miners and villagers on food trade or anything due to serious conflicts.

Table 3. Description of the selected systems for the ego-network study in Vietnam

Name of system	Criteria 1 Actors (potential)	Criteria 2 Benefit sharing	Criteria 3 Monitoring & reporting	Criteria 4 Land use change
1. Agriculture production	Local people/farmers, government extension agents, traders, leaders and members of the forest management board, leaders of village mass organizations, forest protection unit, commune and village leaders.	Government subsidies in the form of seeds and agricultural inputs, training; and special subsidies for the poor; trade and exchange of information; benefits from involvement in the forest protection programs	Potential monitoring via village committee, residents and project visits	Contribution to strengthening permanent agriculture/alternative livelihoods to reduce overharvesting/conversion of forest
2. Social organizations	Cross-border, provincial and district traders, provincial and district government, community leaders, residents, mass organizations, national park	Information and production inputs, support for trading and harvesting, credit, repayments and income, labour exchange, social and community support for poor and marginalized groups	Subnational government agricultural data, traders' accounting, mass organizations reports, national park report	Conversion of upland rice and available redundant land (e.g. boundary forest between neighbouring cultivated areas) to maize, marketization of lands that were previously partially (or in some cases wholly) for subsistence. But the mass organizations + local authorities + national parks with their reforestation programs also convert a small area of bare land to reforested area

6.2.2 Ego-networks survey

In depth interviews were conducted in Lay on 21-24 March 2013 and in Que on 4-7 April 2013. As explained above, the ego-network survey referred to two of the systems identified in the FGDs.

In Lay village, the mostly H'mong people were unable to speak Kinh language (official language in Vietnam), and we had to ask the help of Mr. Giang A Lau (commune extension officer), Mr. Song A Xao (village headman) and Mr. Song A Chua (village police man) to interpreter.

On the first day, each team member selected a household randomly and interviewed the people who were home. This might have caused a bias for people unable to go to the field (old people, women with small children). Thus, a more systematic random sampling was conducted, selecting HHs randomly from the HH list provided by the village leaders. Also interviews went in pairs to allowed one person to take the lead in interviewing while the other could take notes and observe.

In Que village, the people are mostly from Thai ethnic group and are able to speak Kinh language fluently. However, in a few cases we still needed an interpreter. Mr Vi Van Huan, communist secretary in the village, Mr Lo Van Thanh, police man and Mr Hop, Head of Farmer Association in the village helped us a lot.

After intensive discussion, 2 of the several networks identified in the FGD were selected (see table 3). As in both villages, agriculture is the main source of livelihood and all people are involved in agriculture, this network was considered most important. Interestingly, while mass organizations are not considered to play a significant role in socio-economic development, they are seen the most important system after agriculture. Almost everybody is member of one or more of the organizations and is involved in the various activities.

Although said to be only useful for organizing public events and parties, apparently mass organizations structure the political life, which in turns determines access to government program and subsidies as well as emergency support and labour exchange.

Livelihoods

In both Lay and Que, swidden farming is the main activity. People supplement rice production with maize for commercial purposes and livestock. Traditionally, for the H'mong and Thai, wealth is defined by ownership of cattle. Almost all people are involved in raising cattle. However, disease and shortage of fodder has kept numbers low.

Limited land, prohibitions to expand and no irrigation makes life very hard. In Que, people were allocated land through the 1998 Forest Allocation Program. However, only 130 hectares was designated for swidden area for its 84 HHs. To fulfil the shortage they rely on income from seeking NTFPs.

In Lay, although the H'mong were allowed to settle, legally the area is within the core zone of the park. Therefore no land allocation was implemented. People have cleared forest for swidden but have been forced to promise not to expand further in the park. In a few low-lying areas they have started to establish paddy fields but only few places are suitable. Thus, despite restrictions from the government, people continue to practice swidden (see figure 5). The restrictions, however, have lead to shortages with some people unable to make swidden every year.

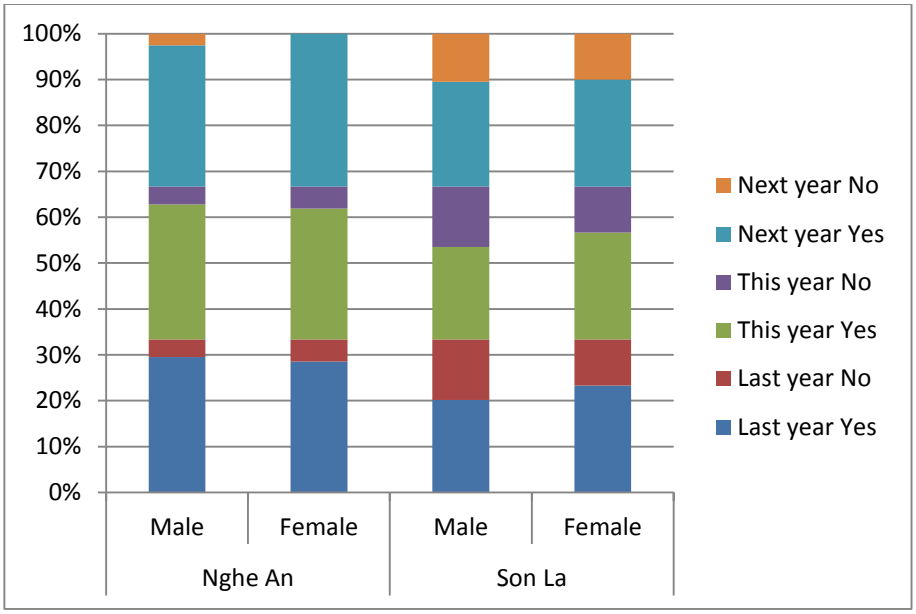

Figure 5. Swidden activities

The only alternative or additional source of income is getting a government job, village headman, police man, Head of Farmer Association and or party official. While the pay is low, it is secure.

The FGDs showed that because of the overarching importance of agriculture, the agriculture extension officers are often perceived as the most influential actor. Extension officers appear to be the liaison between government and people; they are seen as the bringers of training courses and agricultural subsidies. In practice, the extension officer collaborates with the village headman and the village leader is the second most influential actor in the village. As the villages are classified as poor, they are eligible to receive subsidies of salt and rice under program 134 and 135 by government. The salt and rice is distributed by the village headman, increasing his perceived influence.

Contrary to the results of the FGDs, the ego-network survey showed the most influential actor in Lay village people to be the trader (see figure 6). Lay village is located in an isolated area, with very limited access to the market. As it is also the core area of the national park, the government is not providing much development aid. People are thus forced to rely on maize production and outside traders are the sole bridge to connect villagers to agriculture market. Moreover, traders also invest in fertilizer and seedling for galangal plantation while the training and seedling from agriculture extension officer is relatively limited.

There are a few traders. Lay has two shops both belonging to Kinh people who have migrated to the village. In Que there is one shop, which belongs to a local. Nevertheless, the traders are very influential actors, as they not only facilitate the exchange of goods for money, providing villagers with everything from shoes to television. They are also sources of information, especially on markets and thus influence land use.

In Que village, on the other hand, the choice of most important actors in the agriculture network is dispersed with no one actor standing out.

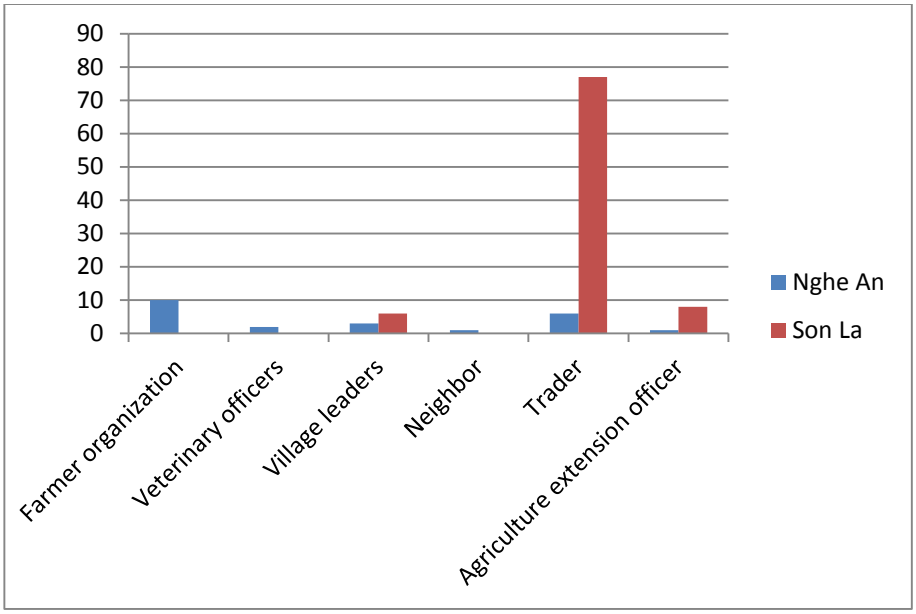

Figure 6. Most important actor in the Agriculture network

Social/mass organizations

With no alternatives, all people in the village are involved in agriculture as it is the main source of livelihood.

Participation in mass organizations, however, is in theory voluntary. As shown in figure 5 the H'mong of Lay are less involved than the Thai of Que. In Que, mass organizations play a role in the disbursement of micro-credit and are thus seen as more important. In Lay on the other hand, mass organizations are mainly seen as organizers of public events such as football matches, singing contest, and celebration. Considering the isolation of Lay and the few opportunities to access the outside world, these events play an important role in Lay social life.

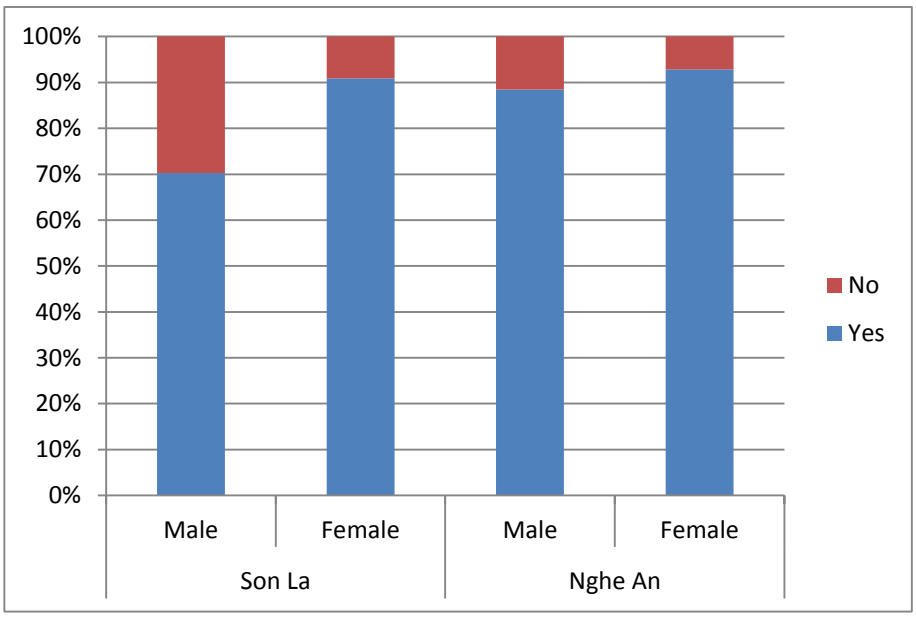

Figure 7. Participation in the mass organization network by gender

The relative importance of different actors in the mass organization network is perceived differently in Lay and Que. In Lay, located in the core area of a national park and close to the border with Laos, forest ranger and border police are much present and play a significant role in propaganda, monitoring the forest and involving people in protection. Thus, the interaction with these actors is more regular than other mass organizations.

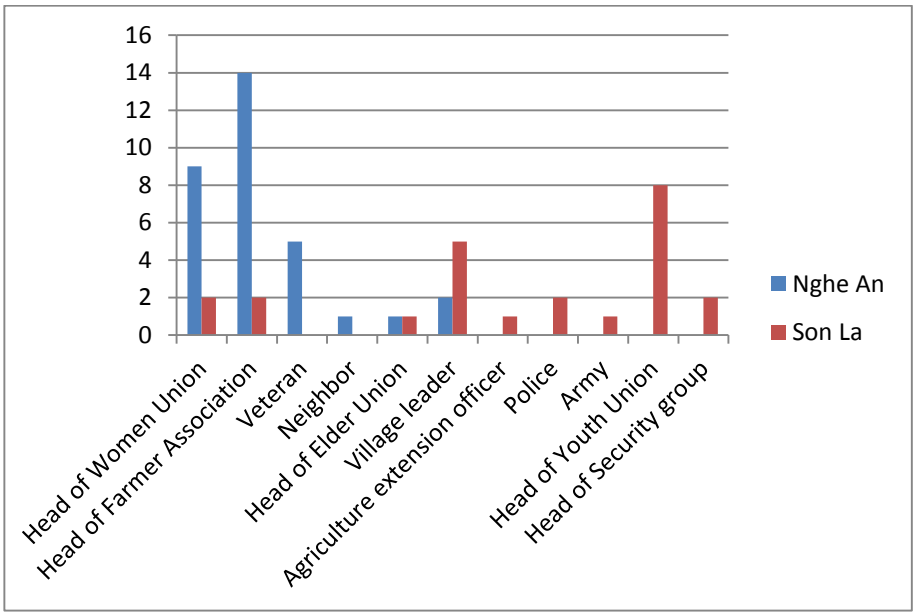

Figure 8. Most influential actor in the mass-organization network

On the other hand, most information is obtained through village meetings called by the village leader. Friends and relatives from outside the village rank second as source of information (see figure 8).

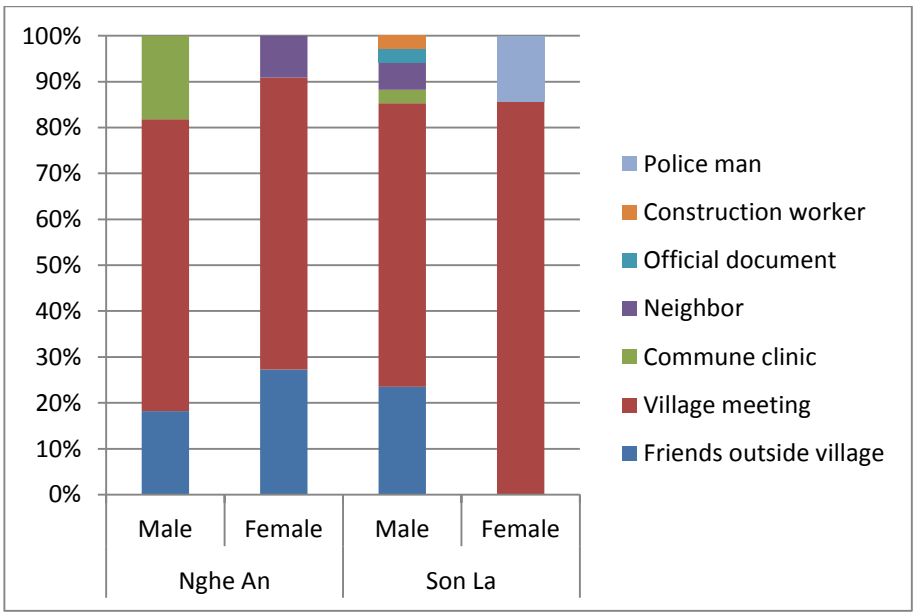

Figure 9. Sources of Information

Interestingly when considering the position of female respondents in Lay, where language, social and cultural barriers limit H'mong women involvement in social events, women in Lay village only

access information through village meeting and border police. Furthermore, the frequency of attendant to village meeting of women in Lay village is extremely low compared to the men. Often, women receive any information only second hand from the men attending social events and meetings.

Knowledge about REDD+ and PES

Most of the Lay villagers do not know anything about forestry program such as PES or REDD+. Only few people heard about Program 661 (5 million hectare reforestation – a government program). Que on the other hand was a site of SNV-Hanoi Agriculture University research on REDD+ in 2010, although there is no actual REDD+ project in Que village to date.

With little other external support, Lay villagers state their willingness to participate in PES or REDD+ if such programs were introduced. They really hope that they can have additional income from forestry programs; although it is unsure to what extent they can and will give up swidden. As Lay village is close to border and located in core zone of Xuan Nha national park, they are required to participate in forest protection strictly by forest rangers and border police, thus, they is more willing to involve in REDD+/PES as it promises direct additional income.

However, it should be noted that some people are not interested in participating in forest protection activities or join forest protection groups mainly because they are unable to enforce the regulations on their fellow villagers. Kinship makes it impossible to punish illegal activities, as this will disrupt relationships.

Young people, on the other hand, feel that without rights over land, PES/REDD+ schemes might not be beneficial.

In Que, while REDD+ research has informed local people, people are skeptical on its benefits. Forestland is also quite a distance from the village and people question whether the benefits outweigh the expense of transportation and operational costs to protect the forest.

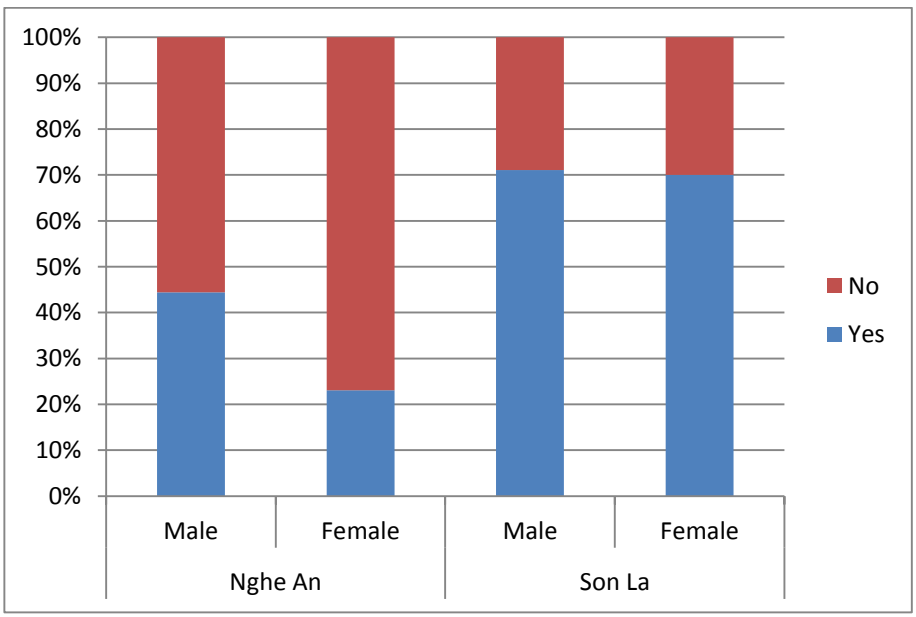

Figure 10. Willingness to participate in REDD+/PES

Education

Most of the men in both villages are quite fluent in Kinh language because many of them attended school or they have regular interaction with Kinh people (mainly through trading). Women however often only know their own ethnic language.

In Lay, most of women over 30 years old are illiterate and have never attended school. They do most and often only farm work and housework. After getting married, H'mong women rarely appear in public events. Only few Lay youngsters are enrolled in high school, and one person is studying in Son La Pedagogy College. The government education program is focused on improving elementary education. Tuition for elementary school is free and government gives each student 60,000-80,000 VND per month. However, if they want to study in high school or university, they have to pay tuition fee and pay for accommodation and living costs.

In Que the literacy rate is much higher. Most of interviewees attended school. There are even 5-6 youngsters who are studying in universities in Ha Noi, Vinh city (capital of Nghe An province) and Thai Binh province.

Migration

Getting information on migration and mobility is not easy as officially one is not supposed and or encouraged to migrate. Historically, however, migration was part of the H'mong (and probably also of the Thai) tradition. The H'mong of Lay arrived in 1986 from from Bac Yen district (Ta Xua commune and Hong Ngai commune), Yen Bai province or Hoa Binh province in 1990s. Since settling in Lay, they have not moved again although probably more people have high mobility than is acknowledged. In Que on the other hand, all the households reported to have at least one member or one relative working outside the village (in Hanoi, Hai Phong province, Ho Chi Minh city, Da Nang province, Lam Dong province or even Laos or Thailand).

Women's mobility is higher as people look for wives in other villages. Thus the Hmong women in Lay village came from many places: Bac Yen district, Moc Chau district (Chieng Xuan, Chieng Ve, Chieng Son commune) or other villages in Tan Xuan commune. On the other hand, many women were born in Lay village and settle down in other districts, other commune and even Thanh Hoa province. Similarly, men in Que are mostly born in Que while the women come from many different places.

In the local perception, the effects of migration are very minor with little change in livelihood opportunities. In the case of Lay village, after their migration from Bac Yen district in 1986, they do not see significant increase in term of their livelihood, although some 30% think that the soil is more fertile and the conditions for agricultural development is better. In Lay village, people often receive the support from their friends and relatives after migration, while people in Que village only expect that their relatives could send back some money when they migrate and look for off-farm jobs.

Lack of labor was mentioned as main disadvantage of migration. In Que village, after people left the village and looking for jobs, their parents even borrow money to support for their life at the time of looking for jobs.

6.2.3 Organizational Survey

In total, in Son La province, we conducted the organization interviews with 5 informants.
Our informants were really nice and willing to participate in interview. However, being government staff they refused to use the recorder.

Some key points from the interviews:

1. None of the informants know much about REDD+. Moc Chau district has no activity related to REDD+ although Mr. Luong Thai Hung – representative of Son La Forest Protection and Development Unit – was highly interested.
2. However, as Son La province is selected as a pilot for the government Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes, all informants know about PES. However, there are still 4 communes in Moc Chau district, including Tan Xuan commune, which still do not receive payment for Payment for Ecosystem Services.
3. They main drivers of deforestation and degradation identified are: illegal logging, forest fire, demand of local people
4. At local level, it seems that only forest rangers and commune officer are involved in forest protection and development. The respondents highlighted the strong collaboration between Xuan Nha National Park, forest rangers and District Office and Commune Office. However, local people still help fight forest fire if necessary. In Lay village, the security group was considered to also act as forest protection group.
5. Currently, in Moc Chau there is only one external project, i.e. KfW 7 project funded by German Development Bank. Government funds other forestry and economic development projects and programs in place.

In Con Cuong district, interviews were held 5 organizations. As in Son La, all respondents refused the use of the recorder but were quite willing to answer questions.

The main driver of deforestation and degradation in Con Cuong district as identified through the survey, is poverty. Respondents emphasized that in order to stop deforestation and degradation, improving livelihoods of local people should be priority.

Forest fire is another important driver and its effects are exacerbated by the lack of forest rangers. On average, there is only one forest ranger who is in charge of 1,000 hectares forest area. There is no PES and REDD+ activities in Con Cuong district though there has been research on REDD+ (research on REDD+ conducted by SNV and Hanoi Agriculture University for I-REDD project). PES is implemented in Nghe An province but not Con Cuong district. There are several government forestry programs as 147 and 661 program and poverty alleviation programs as 134 and 135 programs.

6.3. Conclusion

All research activities (FGD, organizational survey and ego-network surveys) have been finished. Data has been collected and collated ~~but not yet analyzed thoroughly~~. Preliminary findings show that dependence on swidden remains high. While in some areas such as Que the forestland allocation program designated a fixed area for swidden, in other areas, which as the case of Lay are located within protected areas, swidden is practiced nonetheless.

Swidden agriculture, and some additional activities in keeping livestock, and collecting non-timber forest products, occupies all people in the two villages. The agriculture extension official is thus an important actor, providing information and agricultural inputs. However, people in Lay especially,

consider the trader the most influential actor in relation to land use. Traders provide access to market and information on crops and commodities. Traders also bring necessary goods to the village and invest in land use. In Que, which is less isolated, no single actor stands out as being most influential.

While kinship remains strong, social or mass organizations are seen as most important networks. Although membership is voluntary, there seems to be some pressure to be a member. Nevertheless, in Lay, people are not that much interested, seeing these organizations more as organizing social events. In Que, on the other hand, the mass organizations provide protection against risks. Micro-credit, emergency support, labour exchange and other services are obtained through mass organizations.

With regard to REDD+ and PES, the national park and forestry staff are often the only sources of information. The organizational survey showed that government staffs are not all that well informed and as a result are unable to inform the people properly. In Son La, PES is known as a government program but its implementation is not without problems.

Monitoring and reporting systems do exist for the different government programs, i.e. the government poverty alleviation program and the national park contracting system for forest protection. In all cases, the village headman is the key actor. Even where customary practices remain strong, the village headman will be the most important bridge to the government.

In this regard it should also be noted that the importance of networks differ significantly between male and female. Among traditional H'mong people, for example, married women have few opportunities for networking beyond the communal labour exchange activities and any information is passed on to them by their husbands.