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Poverty, Environment and Freedom: A Case of Minority People in Vietnam

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Summary

Ethnic minority people living in mountainous areas are often considered poor, even if they do not think so for themselves. The policies to alleviate poverty will make them dependent on the government. The dependents will be easily sacrificed for the benefit of the majority. The ethnic minority people in Ca Lon, Central Vietnam, have been forced to resettle by the government many times since the Vietnamese War. Now they are faced with another resettlement because their villages will be submerged in an irrigation project. They were offered with land in the irrigated lowland area but they rejected it and decided to move towards the forest. Though they may be benefited from the dam in the irrigated area, they are afraid of being exploited and losing land. Their life is secured in the forest. They may lose land but retain freedom and independence. Because their life is secured in the forest, they are very much afraid of deforestation. For developmentalists who want to “develop the forest are, the ethnic minority people are just obstacles which must be removed before “development. Poverty alleviation policies can be and are often used for this purpose. This is against the freedom of the minority people. We need “development as freedom.”

I. Research Site

Our research site is called *Ca Lon* basin, which is located in two communes, namely *Phan Son* and *Phan Lam*, in the southern part of Vietnam. *Ca Lon* basin will be submerged in a dam called *Song Luy* which is needed to irrigate lower land.

This area including both *Ca Lon* basin and lowland in the costal area is dry but on the top of mountain the rain fall is more than enough. Unfortunately the water flows to the other side of the mountain and this side is suffering from insufficient water. The idea of using the sufficient water to irrigate this side was born about 30 years ago (see Figure 1). The water is used first to generate electricity and then to irrigate the lowland costal area. It is insisted that a dam is needed in order to make full use the water. And the dam site chosen was *Ca Lon* basin where the ethnic minority people live.

Figure 1. Watershed area map of Vietnam

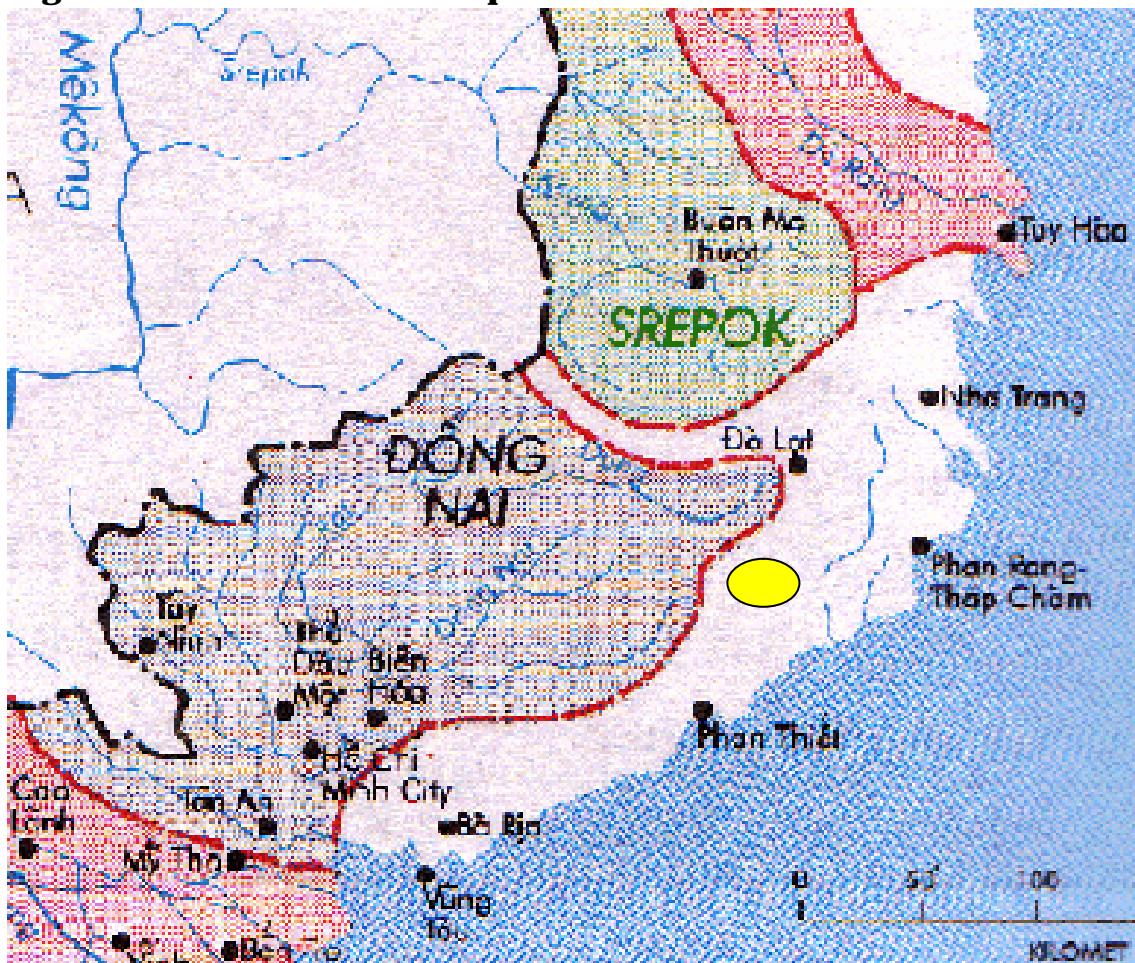
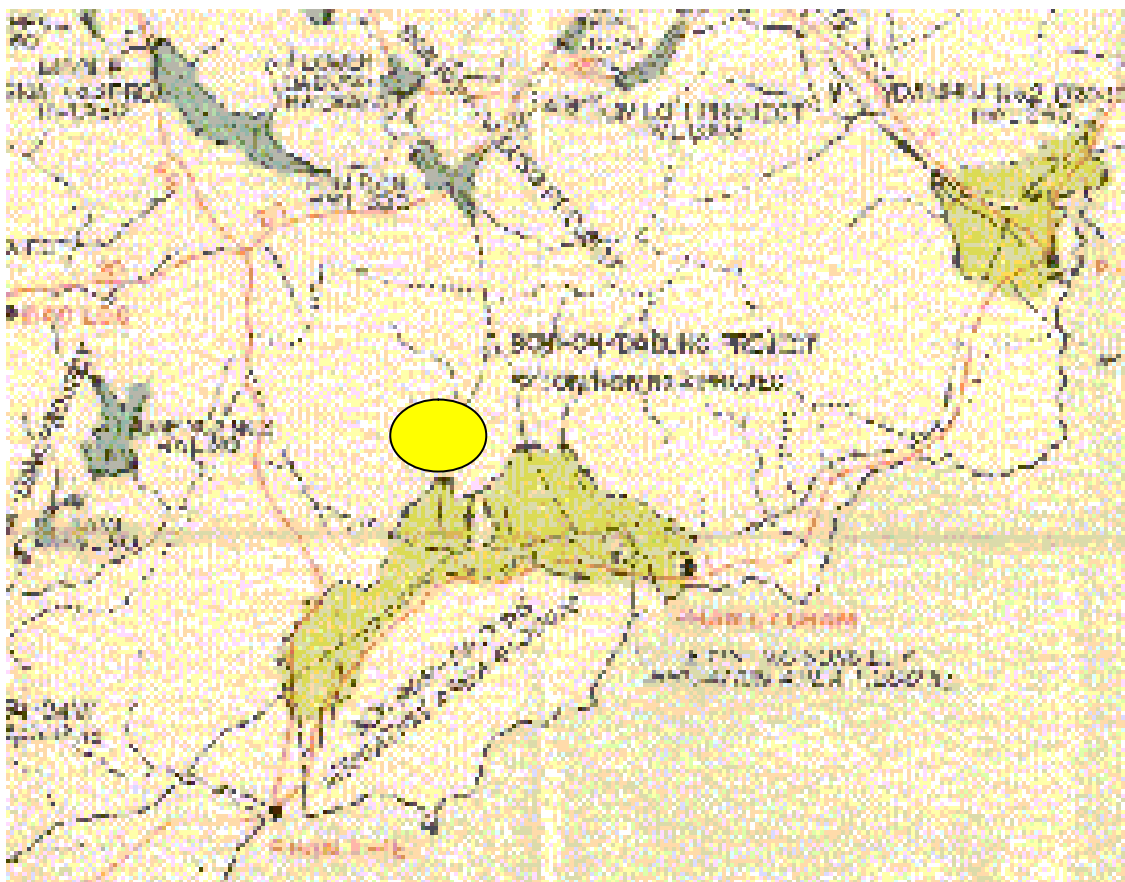


Figure 2. Map of Potential Water Resources Projects in 1973.



Source) Mekong River Committee, Vietnam Power Company, 1973.

II. Main Ethnic Groups in the Area

Pham Son and Phan Lam communes are belonging to Bac Binh district, Binh Thuan province and classified as mountainous and remote communes. People living in these communes are mainly ethnic minorities such as *Koho* and *Raglai*. Population of these communes is about 3,500 in total (see Table 1).

Table 1 Population Statistics in 2000

| Commune | villages | Number of households | Population |
|----------|----------|----------------------|------------|
| Phan son | 4 | 471 | 2751 |
| Phan Lam | 1 | 160 | 825 |

Source) People's Committee of Phan Son and Phan Lam Communes.

Phan Son is larger than Phan Lam and composed of four villages while Phan Lam is composed of only one village. Phan Lam is established about twenty years ago while Phan Son is established only ten years ago. Therefore the living condition of Phan Son is much better than Phan Lam. One of the four villages of Phan Son is not flooded by the reservoir because it is located lower than the dam. Some of the Phan son people are planned to resettle to this village.

There are three major indigenous ethnic groups in this area, namely Koho and Raglai. Koho and a part of Raglai moved from the highland, namely Di Linh and Duc Trong districts in Lam Dong province down to Ca Lon in the 1960s, which was then belong to the Cham royal family that governed the costal area. And the other part of Raglai came up from the coastal area. Raglai was subordinate to Cham and Raglai means “the people in the mountain.” Therefore Raglai people do not prefer to be called “Raglai” but prefer to be called “Cham.” However, their preference was not accepted and they are usually called “Raglai.”

The distribution of households by ethnic group is shown in Table 2. The majority of these two communes are Raglai, which accounts for 62.4%, and the second largest group is Koho, accounting for 33.7%. Thus both Raglai and Koho account for 96.1 % of the total population. However, the ethnic composition is different between the communes. Most of the Koho is living in Phan Son and only 12 households of Koho are living in Phan Lam. Therefore, Phan Lam is a commune of Raglai while Phan Son is a commune mixed of Raglai and Koho.

Table 2. Number of Household by Ethnic Group in 2002

| Ethnic groups | Total | | Phan Lam commune | | Phan Son commune | |
|---------------|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | Number of HHs | % | Number of HHs | % | Number of HHs | % |
| Raglai | 396 | 62.4 | 108 | 75.00 | 288 | 58.65 |
| Koho | 214 | 33.7 | 12 | 8.30 | 202 | 41.14 |
| Cham | 16 | 2.5 | 15 | 10.41 | 1 | |
| Hoa/Nung | 7 | 1.1 | 7 | | | |
| Kinh | 2 | 0.3 | 2 | | | |
| Total | 635 | 100.0 | 144 | 100 | 491 | 100 |

Source) People's Committee of Phan Son and Phan Lam communes

II-1. Koho

Ethnic Koho is one of the *montagnards* (indigenous mountainous ethnic groups) in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam. Their language belongs to Mon-Khmer group and their society is matrilineal. They believe animism which has relationship with other ethnic minorities such as M⁷, Raglai, Churu and Cham. In Koho and M⁷ territories, there are some big brick ruins of Hindu temples such as Proh ruin (Đ⁷c Trong district), Lingkha Batau ruin (Cát Tiên district). Now some of them are converted to Roman Catholic and Protestant under the French colonial influence. In the past they conducted slash and burn cultivation, shifting in a certain area but now stopped.

II-2. Raglai

Ethnic Raglai is also one of the *montagnards* in the Central Highlands. Their language belongs to Malay-Polynesian group and they believe animism which is also related to other ethnic minorities such as Koho, Churu and Cham. Their society is also matrilineal. In the past they also conducted slash and burn cultivation but now stopped.

II-3. Cham

Ethnic Cham is one of Hinduized indigenous people in Central Coastal Area and they built the kingdom of Panduranga-Champa and constructed many big brick Hindu temples. Their society is matrilineal. Their language belongs to Malay-Polynesian group. Now they are converted to Muslim but retain some of Hindu and animistic elements. They depend on paddy rice cultivation. They mainly live in southern part of Central Coasts.

II-4. Kinh

Kinh is the majority in Vietnam.

II-5. Ethnic Nùng

Ethnic Nùng migrated from the southern part of China to the Northern region in Vietnam during the 17th-20th centuries. They form patriarchal society. They are mainly Tai-Kadai (Thai) speakers and some groups are Chinese (Cantonese) speakers. Their religion is a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Taibing-Tiangguoism. They depend on both paddy rice cultivation and slash and burn cultivation. They mainly lived in mountainous areas of Vietnam-China border. Some of them migrated from Vietnam-China border to Vietnamese Central Coast region during the war after 1954,

and also migrated to Central Highlands after 1975 when the South and the North was unified. However, many Chinese are included in this group because they came to Vietnam, disguising themselves as ethnic Nung.

III. History of Forced Resettlement

Indigenous people of Phan Son and Phan Lam communes have a long and hard history of migration and resettlement. They have been repeatedly forced to move by the South Vietnamese Army and the US Army because they fought on the side of the North Vietnam. Some people say that resettlement amounts to nearly twenty times since the Vietnamese War (Major resettlement is shown in Table 3.). When they returned to Ca Lon basin after years of evacuation and wandering in the region, it was a deserted land. Many years of efforts and hard working were needed to make the land fertile as it is now. Phan Son people could achieve higher living standard because they settled at the present place much earlier than Phan Lam people who had much longer and much harder time of resettlement than Phan Son people. It was only about ten years ago that they settled at the present place in Phan Lam. Now they just began to achieve modest life. Their poor living conditions are attributable mainly to this hardship rather than their “inferior intellectual level” or “inferior agricultural technology” as some people may implicitly or explicitly consider.

Taking into accounts their hardship and efforts, it is not difficult to imagine how cruel it is to ask them to abandon their land to which they have devoted their efforts. Generally speaking, everybody will feel desperate if she/he realized that her/his efforts were in vain. It is a negation of their history or even their existence. Their land is their history and the proof of their existence. To abandon the land means to lose their proof of existence. Therefore, people in Ca Lon have a very strong feeling against to lose their present land. It cannot be compensated by any alternative land or any amount of money, though in reality it has to be compensated by cash or in kind. Even though the economic condition of Phan Lam is worse than that in Phan Son, Phan Lam people also have a very strong feeling against resettlement. Even the younger generations of Phan Lam have an attachment to their present village where they grew up, though they sometimes confess the hardship of their life. It is undeniable that people in Phan Lam are materially poor and need assistance to improve their life but we should not neglect their non-material life, which is an indispensable factor for their well-being.

Table 3. Major Migration since Entering Concentration Camp

| | name | encouraged concentration | forced concentration | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th |
|---|----------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | K'San | (before birth) | (before birth) | HamaNaiGwar | | | |
| 1 | K'Ke | PaleiKalong (TrinhHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaNaiGwar | | | |
| 1 | Ja Phien | PaleiKalong (TrinhHoa commune) | SongLuy | HamaKalong | | | |
| 2 | Ja Boc | PaleiKalup (HoaThuan hamlet) | SongLuy | KaLup (south) | KaLup (north) | | |
| 3 | M'Ja | PaleiGlwak Ge (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | RamTanang | |
| 3 | K'Hanh | ? (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | RamTanang | |
| 3 | M'Soi | ? (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | RamTanang | |
| 3 | Ja Do | ? (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | RamTanang | |
| 3 | M'Lo | ? | SongMao | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | RamTanang | |
| 3 | M'Nhoai | PaleiGlwak Ge (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | HamaO | |
| 3 | Ja Kai | ? (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaHwa | ChokKajang | RamTanang | |
| 4 | M'Chai | (before birth) | (before birth) | GlwakGe | HamaKatip | ChokKajang | RamTanang |
| 5 | M'Kai | PaleiGlwak Ge (GiaHoa commune) | SongMao | HamaHwa | HamaKatip | HamaBirawSa | RamTanang |

III-1. Ms. M'Kai's case:

Ms. M'Kai is a retired woman living in Phan Lam commune. In 1933, the year of cock, she was born in Raglai village of *Palei Lakun*. Probably it was located in the eastern part of Phan Lam - Phan Dien commune or the southern end of Da Loan – Ninh Loan commune in Lam Dong province. Her maternal family name is Harrwar. She grew up at Palei Lakun. When she was 5 years old, she migrated from Palei Lakun to Palei Hama Hwa in Cai Gia Canton and stayed there for 10 years. During 1960-61 the center of Gia Hoa commune was in Kinh Tre area. During 1960-62 she migrated from Kinh Tre to Palei Glwak Ge (presently Ba Ghe area, Kinh village of An Thai in Binh An commune in the Ca Giay irrigation area). During 1964-66 she was forced by Diem government to move to lower Song Mao basin from Palei Glwak Ge. In 1975, the year of reunification, she migrated from Song Mao to Palei Hama Hwa and stayed there for 3 years. In 1978 she migrated to Ca Tip valley and stayed there for 2 years, in 1981 migrated to Hama Biraw Sa, the northern end of Ca Lon valley, and in 1991 she migrated to Ram Tanang. And there she has been living and working until now.

She said that she migrated 15 times in her life. And she stayed there for about 12 years. Although she registered at Ram Tanang but she has no place to live there. Her home is at Apuh M'Kai, which means “Ms M'Kai's field” because there was only her

house in those days. In 1954, she married Ja Ba (Mang Ba). He was from Raglai village of Palei Chok Broop (or Palei Voop) in Oan Talip commune (presently Phan Son commune). His maternal family name is Tapuh. He did not belong to the orthodox Palei Jhop (Sop Rai) families. Only two families, namely Katar and the Harrwar are orthodox indigenous families in Palei Jhop. When the French War began to affect their life in Palei Chok Broop, her husband came to Palei Jhop and she followed him. In those days, in Palei Jhop there were three rice fields known as Hama Jhop, Hama Rawin, and Hama Tagalau, two waterways (rabooh), two waterpond (binak), one waterfall known as Jraai Sit Ia Gru. Hama Rawin was then already abandoned. Po Dam king and Po Le Sit king received people's worship at this Jraai Sit Ia Gru. The land of Sop Rai and Ca Lon belonged to princess M^{Them} of Cham royal family. All gods who received worship there were Cham's gods like Po Dam, Po Ong, Po Patau In, Po Slingpar (Po Saninmpar), and Po Chay Sawat. Po Patau In made a big stone dam at Ca Giay River. She said her origin is also Cham. She said that some Raglai families like Batau Asah came from Ninh Phuoc district in Ninh Thuan province and until now their relationship continues. In Ca Lon there are some Akap (herbs and trees for the medical treatment) but people do not know yet how to make use of it like Quina. They said the origin of the name of Ram Tanang is Binak Ram Tanang, an irrigation waterpond built by Po Klong Kasat king. She told another story. Once upon a time, two soldiers made an excursion to Ca Lon Mountain. They made a stitch joint of a rope to promise the date of meeting. The day came but only one of them appeared. He called his colleague's name but only tigers answered him and ate him. The origin of the name Ram Tanang is "the forest land call people."

IV. Present Living Conditions

IV-1. Poverty

Living standard of Phan Son and Phan Lam communes has been improving. Some programs and development projects for poverty alleviation have been implemented in these communes by the provincial and central governments. Price support programs for some kinds of trees, animal, and agricultural materials had been carried out for farmers. Thanks to the national program No. 135, poor farmers could access to electricity, and canals and irrigation systems were constructed and upgraded, and equipment of schools and health stations also had been upgraded. Moreover, the program No. 327 provided farmer with capital to raise cattle, goat, and to open up land for planting new industrial and fruit trees, and to improve and upgrade transportation

connecting between villages. NGOs such as World Vision supported to dig wells for supplying fresh water to use in daily life.

Table 4. Sources of Income by Household Economic Status (Unit: VND)

| Indicators | Households with rather average economic condition | | Poor households | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| | Per HH | % | Per HH | % |
| Value of production | 18,989,750 | 100.0% | 16,859,750 | 100.0% |
| Value of cultivation | 11,607,500 | 61.1% | 9,140,000 | 54.0% |
| Value of cultivation from hill land | 7,232,500 | 38.1% | 5,640,000 | 33.5% |
| Hill rice | 25,000 | 0.1% | | |
| Maize | 3,282,500 | 17.2% | 3,152,500 | 18.7% |
| Green bean | 3,825,000 | 20.1% | 2,475,000 | 14.7% |
| Cashew nut | 87,500 | 0.5% | 12,500 | 0.1% |
| Banana | 12,500 | 0.1% | | |
| Water rice | 4,375,000 | 23.0% | 3,500,000 | 20.8% |
| Livestock | 5,545,000 | 29.2% | 1,381,250 | 8.0% |
| Cattle | 4,987,500 | 26.3% | 1,100,000 | 6.5% |
| Pig | 345,000 | 1.8% | | |
| Poultry | | | 281,250 | 1.7% |
| Goat | 212,500 | 1.1% | | |
| Forestry | 1,370,000 | 7.2% | 972,500 | 5.8% |
| Exploitation | 1,370,000 | 7.2% | 972,500 | 5.8% |
| Timber | 375,000 | 2.0% | | |
| Firewood | 375,000 | 2.0% | | |
| Bamboo shoots | 38,750 | 0.2% | 342,500 | 2.0% |
| Bamboo | 281,250 | 1.5% | 630,000 | 3.7% |
| Other forest products | 300,000 | 1.6% | | |
| Services | | | 3,000,000 | 17.8% |
| Other revenues | 467,250 | 2.5% | 2,366,000 | 14.0% |

Source) UTCE, Baseline Survey.

The official statistics reveal that the living condition of Phan Son is better than the national average. That is, the poverty incidence, or the percentage of the poor in Phan Son is only 12.2 percent in terms of population, which is much lower than the national average of 17.7 percent. Though the poverty incidence in terms of household is higher than that of the national average, the welfare level of household is measured better by the population share. The difference is due to the difference in the household size. The statistics show that the household size of the poor in Phan Son and Phan Lam is much smaller than that of the national average. Therefore the poverty in Phan Son and Phan Lam is not related to large household size.

Table 5. Poor Households in Bac Binh District (1999)

| | Total poor population | Total poor population | Poor population (%) | Poor household (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Phan Lam Commune | 803 | 241 | 30.0 | 34.4 |
| Phan Son Commune | 2,787 | 340 | 12.2 | 23.8 |
| Bac Binh District | 109,989 | 20,458 | 18.6 | 20.1 |
| Vietnam | --- | --- | 17.7 | 17.7 |

Source) SAPROF, p.25.

Note) Decision No.1143/2000/QĐ-LĐTBXH in November 1, 2000 by the Ministry of Labor and Society set the poverty standards as follows;

Rural and mountainous area: 80,000VND/Month
 Rural area of the plains: 100,000VND/Month
 Urban areas: 150,000VND/Month

Households whose per capita income is lower than the poverty line are called poor. This modified standard meets the minimum standard not only for food but also for health care, education and so on for poor.

IV-2. Education

At present, schools in Phan Son and Phan Lam have enough capacity for all of the pupils in the communes so that there is no need for three shifts a day. Schools have adequate numbers of classes, teachers and teaching equipments. The education departments of Binh Thuan province and Bac Binh district periodically provide ethnic pupils with rice, clothes, papers and pens and books.

However, the dropout rate of Phan Lam commune is still high. In the school year 2002/03 there were about 40 out of 216 pupils stopped coming to school because children have to work for the family.

Table 5. Number of Pupils, Teachers, and Dropouts in 2002-2003

| Grade | Phan Son commune | | | Phan Lam commune | | |
|--------|------------------|----------|--------------------|------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | Pupils | Teachers | Number of dropouts | Pupils | Teachers | Number of dropouts |
| First | 136 | 5 | Non | 49 | 2 | 5 |
| Second | 143 | 5 | Non | 49 | 2 | 3 |
| Third | 163 | 5 | Non | 53 | 2 | 3 |
| Fourth | 118 | 4 | Non | 39 | 1 | 9 |
| Fifth | 81 | 3 | Non | 26 | 1 | 14 |
| Total | 641 | 22 | Non | 216 | 8 | 34 |

Both communes have schools only at primary level. Higher education is available at boarding-ethnic school in Bac Binh district and Phan Thiet city. In 2002-2003, Phan Lam commune has 23 students of higher level, including a student of Hue University. In Phan Son, 137 are studying at secondary school and 18 are at high school pupils.

IV-3. Health

Like the other mountainous and remote communes of Bac Binh district, Phan Lam and Phan Son had constructed health stations equipped with necessary health equipment so as to treat diseases for local farmers. A doctor and a few nurses are working at each of the health stations and they all come from lowland plain. For many years, health programs and projects supported capital and current expenditures for mountainous communes to prevent, examine and treat diseases and to take care of the health of ethnic minority people. Thanks to their efforts, remarkable reductions of malaria, infectious diseases and goiter could be achieved. Courses of wide vaccination for children from 2 to 10 months are usually maintained and the ratio of malnourished children in Phan Son and Phan Lam is decreased to less than 40%. Particularly in Phan Son commune, 2,555 children were vaccinated.

However, it is reported that a large number of people are still affected by malaria. In Phan Son the number is 180 and 144 in 2001 and 2002, respectively. This figures correspond to about 10% of the population of Phan Son. Children under 15 years old, especially children of poor family, are affected more by pneumonia due to inadequacy of warm clothes. Rate of women who have some disease about gynecology is

as high as 60-75%. One of the causes of disease is the lack of hygiene and clean water, especially in Phan Lam commune.

IV-4. Culture

It was in 1954 that inhabitants of Phan Son commune settled at the present location for the first time. They learned how to grow wet rice when they arrived there. In contrast, Phan Lam people were forced to migrate so often and in 1982 when they went to the North of Bac Binh and the South of Di Linh and Duc Trong of Lam Dong province they started new nomadic life. It was in the early 1990s that they settled at the present location and stop shifting cultivation.

Their traditional culture is well retained. They organize cultural exchange for farmers in Phan Son, Phan Lam, Phan Dien and Phan Tien annually. In December 14th and 15th in lunar calendar, the local people have the New Rice Welcoming Festival called “Nho vre ro he” in Koho and “Bang kok padai” in Raglai, which aims to worship the Rice Deity with the hope to win his support for more yield than usual.

However, their lives are becoming more and more mechanized. In Phan Son commune, 451 out of 471 households are using national electricity network, and 35 families have TV set and 306 have radio and cassette players. In Phan Lam commune, 112 out of 146 households are using national electricity network, and all households have radio, and 11 households have TV set and 70 have radio cassette. Details are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Summarize home appliance and means of production and trade

| Kinds of appliance | Phan Son | | Phan Lam | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | Number of households | (%) | Number of households | (%) |
| 1. Home Appliances | | | | |
| - Electricity | 451 | 95.75 | 112 | 76.7 |
| - Television | 35 | 7.43 | 11 | 7.53 |
| - Motorbike | 75 | 15.92 | 7 | 4.8 |
| - Bicycle | 159 | 33.76 | 43 | 29.45 |
| - Refrigerator | 3 | 0.46 | 2 | 1.37 |
| - Cassette player | 82 | 17.4 | 70 | 47.95 |
| - Radio | 306 | 64.97 | 146 | 100.0 |
| 2. Means of production and trade | | | | |
| - Tractor | 14 | 2.97 | 7 | 4.8 |
| - cart | 27 | 5.73 | 6 | 4.1 |
| - Water pump | 18 | 3.82 | 4 | 2.74 |

V. Agriculture and Forestry

V-1. Agriculture

1,775 hectare in Phan Son commune is used for agriculture, accounting for 9.9% of the total area (see Table 7). 1,704 hectare is used for growing annual plants. 263 hectare is used for growing rice, most of which is used for double cropping (257 hectare). The rest is used for subsidiaries and annual industrial tree with 1,442 hectare, accounting for 81.2%. In 2002, Phan Son commune produced 1,045 tones of rice, which is equivalent with 466 kg of rice per capita.

Farmers of Phan Son commune do not grow rice in the mountain any more. However, many households are still using approximately 17 hectare to grow upland rice, which is mainly used to worship their tradition. Certificates of the natural and agricultural land use rights are held by all families in the commune. On average, a household is provided with 3.77 hectare agricultural land, of which annual plants and long-term tree account for 3.62 hectare and 0.15 hectare, respectively.

Table 7. Distribution of Agricultural Land

| No | Agriculture land | Phan Son | Phan Lam |
|------|---|----------|----------|
| 1 | Annual plants | 1,704.75 | 130.0 |
| 1.1. | Rice and subsidiaries | 262.98 | |
| | - Two rice crops | 256.64 | 19.0 |
| | - One rice crop | 6.34 | 48.0 |
| 1.2 | Field in the mountain | 17.00 | 5.0 |
| 1.3 | Specialized growing subsidiaries and annual industrial plants | 1,441.77 | 64.0 |
| 2 | Long-term plants | 69.76 | 80.0 |
| 2.1 | Fruit tree | 69.76 | 70.0 |
| 3 | Total | 1,774.51 | 211.0 |

Total agricultural land of Phan Lam commune is 211 hectare, accounting for 0.537% of the total natural area. On average, a family has 1.445 hectare. Land using for growing annual plants is 130 hectare and 19 hectare is used for double cropping of rice production, and 48 hectare is used for single cropping. 64 hectare is used for growing subsidiaries and annual industrial tree.

The reason why Phan Lam commune depend mostly on single cropping is that water source is very limited, especially in dry season. There are La Bu River which is a boundary between Phan Lam and Phan Son communes and some small rivers such as Gia Bang (Ia Bang), Yang In, Ca Cau, all of which meet together in Ca Giay River. However, water is only available in rainy season and exhausted in dry season. This makes it very difficult for farmers in Phan Lam to live and produce in dry season. Phan Lam has 10 wells in total but in dry season 8 wells are dried up and only 2 wells are available. People often drill or dig up wells with the depth of 38-46 meters to get water.

Like Phan Son commune, upland rice is grown according to their customs to worship the Rice Deity and to make green rice flakes.

In 2002, gross output of food that converted to paddy was 339 tones, which means that on average a household gained 2,322 kg of paddy per year or 424 kg of paddy per year per capita.

70 hectare land is used for planting fruit tree. Especially popular trees in this region are cashew, mango, longan and sapotier.

Today, 100 households in Phan Lam, making up 68.5%, were provided with certificates of the natural and agricultural land titles.

Picture 1. Eleven Year-Old Cashew Garden



Picture 2. Fruit Garden



V-2. Breeding

Breeding cattle, buffalo, goat and pig plays an essential role in agricultural sector of these communes. In recent years, Phan Son and Pham Lam communes have been actively encouraging farmers to raise cattle and buffalo. Inoculation against epidemic diseases for cattle is done by the local authorities. Breeding grass fields was developed, and new types of cattle were introduced. Thus, breeding is making considerable contribution to household income.

In Phan Son and Phan Lam communes, a household raises one or two cattles on average, and some feed from 6-7 cattles. All households sell small cattles annually. On the other hand, some households concentrate in breeding goat. Almost all of local farmers raise pigs. Some households also raise several domestic fowls for home consumption.

Table 8. Breeding in Phan Son and Phan Lam communes in 2002

| | Total | | Phan Son | | Phan Lam | |
|---------|--------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Number | Per HH | Number | Per HH | Number | Per HH |
| Cattle | 1,315 | 2.7 | 755 | 1.6 | 560 | 3.8 |
| Buffalo | 680 | 0.78 | 655 | 1.4 | 25 | 0.17 |
| Goat | 920 | 1.94 | 510 | 1.08 | 410 | 2.8 |
| Pig | 675 | 1.55 | 325 | 0.7 | 350 | 2.4 |

V-3. Forestry

Collection of forest products is the tradition of the ethnic minority people in Ca Lon. In the past, forest products were abundant. Lowland people needed their products and came to buy them. Division of labor existed between the ethnic minority people in mountainous area and the people in lowland. However, as the value of forest products were decreasing due to the decrease in demand, the forest products were over-exploited. And as the transportation was improving, lowland people came to forest to collect forest products. The area needs forest protection.

After 1996, Phan Son commune set up a specialized and responsible team including 12 cadres with forestry forces to protect 8,000 hectare of forest of the commune. 15 households have been redelivered with 600 hectare for forest protection. This activity is supported by the government and generates income for the people. At the same time this policy makes people more dependent on the government.

Picture 3. Worshipping Bimong Po Chei Sawah



Using the analytical framework for community forest management of the national working group on community forest management, the situation in Ca Lon area is assessed as shown in Table 10.

Table 9. Assessment

| Analysis indicators | Assessment |
|---|--|
| 1. Forest resources | Natural forests, mainly watershed protection forests ? Many spiritual forests but small in area ? No household forest gardens. |
| 2. Land use rights and community forest resources | Household and community are not allocated forestland yet ? Forest protection contracts given to households and group of households by state forest owners; households are not forest owners ? Self-establishment of some spiritual forests (forest owners) |
| 3. Community beneficiary | Receiving all benefits from forests in the locality: ? Freely harvesting and using timbers for home use, collecting non-timber forest products for home use and for sale ? Using water Source, environment, religion. |

| | |
|--|---|
| 4.Capacity in organization and management of community forests | <p>There are no forest protection regulations; also with spirit forests that are self defined by the locality.</p> <p>? Forest protection household groups are administratively established (by the commune) which shows little self-governance from community.</p> |
| 5. Impacts from Government and Province | <p>The province does not implement forestland allocation to households and community.</p> <p>? Before 2002: applying policy of forest protection contract according to Programme 327 to the commune that was loosely managed.</p> <p>? Now: The province applies new policy in issuing forest protection contract: large area to each household (40 ha per household), the fee doubled the amount of Project 661 (100.000 VND/ha/year). Strict allocation and monitoring, proper allocation files. Transferring contracted forests at the field site, with landmark and clear boundary.</p> |

V-4. Industries

A businessman of Ho Chi Minh City established a bamboo chopsticks factory in Phan Son commune. Some 50-60 people are collecting bamboo in forest to sell for the factory, which bring about 40,000VND (4US\$) per person per day. Moreover, about 5 labors are working regularly in this factory but they are coming from other communes.

In Phan Lam commune, a few families, mostly old people, are still making several kinds of basket. These products are usually sold to lowland people or at town markets.

Picture 4. A Field Charcoal Making Kiln



According to Instruction No. 90 of the Government, charcoal producing activities from natural forests were banned. This made it very difficult to survey charcoal production. Forest Protection Division of Bac Binh District, Ca Giay Protection Forest Management Board report that charcoal producing activities in our research site has been decreasing in recent years. Ethnic minority people do not use charcoal by themselves. Some poor households are making charcoal with small and simple kilns (150-200kg/kiln) when they clear forest for cultivation and have leisure time to sell. Bigger kilns are used by lowland people who are making charcoal to sell.

VI. Trade and Service

There are 2 general stores and 43 small stores in Phan Son and 10 stores in Phan Lam. They are selling groceries and alcoholic drinks, and some are providing meals, refreshment and TV Karaoke in the evening.

Furthermore, merchants from other communes come to Phan Son and Phan Lam to sell many kinds of goods such as home appliances, foods, clothes, and so on. Sometimes they are selling goods by barter or on credit which will be repaid after the harvest.

4 households in Phan Son and 3 in Phan Lam have rice mill. In addition, 1 household in Phan Lam are making ice to sell to the local people. One household in each commune own machines such as tractors, excavators, bulldozers, and rent out to local people who pay the rent by the harvest instead of cash.

VI-1. High Interest Loan

These merchants have an important role as money lender. Since farmers adopted modern technology of agriculture, they need investment capital to grow rice or other crops much more than ever before. However, the amount of investment is so big that they have to borrow money from somebody. The government is providing low interest loan to the poor but the total fund is very limited and the farmers have to borrow money with high interest rate from merchants. Merchants are mostly ethnic Nung (or Chinese).

In March 2003, our field survey reveals that almost all of the families of Kaho and Raglai are borrowing money from merchants. The debt is expected to be paid back completely by the harvest of the crop in 2002 (about December 2002). However, the crop in 2002 was severely damaged by the serious drought and the yield was not as high as expected. If this happens, the revenue from the two crops in 2002 may not be enough to pay the debt back to the merchants.

The households without any debt are not necessarily rich. In fact some of them are the poorest or the households without labor force. They are free from debt because they cannot borrow money even if they want to borrow or because they don't need to borrow at all. In a village of Phan Son 11 households are without debt because they are retired and obtain from the government the amount of 40,000 VND per household per month.

The interest rate varies among borrowers. The method to calculate the interest rate is complex and controversial. Some examples are as follows:

1. To borrow a bag of rice (50 kg) the repayment will be 8 barrels of rice.
2. To borrow a bag of fertilizer NPK the repayment will be 12 barrels of rice.
3. To borrow a bag of S.A fertilizer the repayment will be 7 barrels of rice.
4. To borrow a bag of URE fertilizer the repayment will be 10 barrels of rice.
5. To borrow a barrel of rice seed the repayment will be 2 barrels of rice.

The barrel is made of iron sheet with the shape of cube. According to the people, a barrel is equivalent to 40 US mugs (a kind of mug of the US Soldiers for drinking water which was used before 1975). However, the barrels actually used are bigger than this. In fact the barrel is equivalent to 53 US mugs, not 40. Two full mugs of rice is equivalent to 1.05 kg. If 50 kg of rice is borrowed as the case 1 mentioned above, 8 barrels should be repaid, which is equivalent to $(8 \text{ barrels} \times 53 \text{ mugs}) = 424 \text{ mugs} = 223 \text{ kg}$ of rice. The price of milled rice in Phan Son as of March 2003 is 3,000 VND/kg, which means 50 kg is equivalent to 150,000 VND. And three months later 8 barrels (or 223 kg of husked rice) will be repaid. The price of husked rice is 1,200 VND/kg, which means 223 kg is equivalent to 267,600 VND.

The price of a bag of URE fertilizer in Phan Son is 150,000 VND, while in Song Mao it is only 125,000 VND. If transportation cost, 5,000 VND is added, the profit will be 20,000 VND. In the same way, a bag of NPK fertilizer costs 200,000 VND in Phan Son, while the price in Song Mao with transportation cost added is 180,000 VND. And a bag of S.A fertilizer is 70,000 VND, while the price in Song Mao with transportation cost is 55,000 VND.

Thus, it can be said that the borrowers have to pay very high interest rate if they borrow from merchants. The difficulty for the borrower is that if they cannot repay fully the debt of the previous year, their debt is accumulating to the next year. For example, if total debt is 10 barrels for this year but they just repay only 6 barrels, next year they should repay in total 8 barrels.

If farmers grow hybrid maize, the borrower should pay back with dried maize. The lender calculates the price lower than the market price by 200 to 300 VND/kg. For example, the borrowers should calculate the selling price at 1,300 VND – 1,400 VND/kg if they sell maize to the money lender while it is 1,600 VND/kg – 1,700 VND/kg if they sell to the market in Song Mao. Furthermore, the scale of the money lender is not also exact to cheat the farmers. The borrower should use the scale of the lender.

Furthermore, farmers borrow money not only for cultivation but also daily consumption. At the harvest of crop the borrowers have to sell all of their agriculture products to the lender. If the value exceeds the amount of repayment, then the lender will return the difference to the borrower. The borrowers are always losing because they have to buy from the lender at a higher price than the market price and have to sell to the lender at a lower price than the market price.

Since the borrowers have to sell all of the products to the lender at a lower price than the market price, a lot of lenders try to hide their products to sell in the market. Such behavior is called “parachute”. For example, if the borrower harvests 5 tons of maize, he/she sells only 4 tons to the lender and the remaining one ton is sold in the market.

Usually a person borrows money from only one lender in order to make the payment easy. However, some persons borrow money from many lenders. In this case, when harvesting crops in the field, the lenders strive mutually to carry agriculture products to their houses. And conflicts usually occur between the borrower and lender, and among lenders.

Thus the residents in Phan Son have difficulties in their life and one of the reasons is that they have to pay very high interest and at the same time they are suffering from the exploitations of the lenders. They have very little chance to repay the

debt fully because the natural conditions are very severe and land productivity is not so high. Furthermore the demand in daily life is increasing day by day influenced by the modern consumerism. The stimuli to consume more are making people to borrow more money to construct house, to buy Chinese motorcycle, for marriage of their children, etc.

The residents are recognizing their situation as being exploited. Sometimes they feel hatred against and are afraid of the Nung. However, they have to rely on them. They cannot find out any other sources for borrowing. The authorities in Phan Son commune have intervened to decrease the interest rate for many times in vain because they cannot find out any other sufficient sources to lend to the people. Thus the lack of other sources of capital for cultivation is one of the important factors of poverty in Phan Son and Phan Lam.

VI-2. Coexistence of Merchants and Farmers

Even though the ethnic minority people may be exploited by the merchants, both of them need each other. First of all both of them are minorities. Minorities are helping each other to protect themselves from the majority people. Secondly the merchants treat the minority people very flexibly. If the poor has no money to repay, the merchant may wait for the next harvest. This may repeat many times. If this fact is taken into consideration, the effective interest rate may not be so high. Thirdly, the ethnic minority people learn from the merchants who know much more about the market and about the quality of the agricultural products. Sometimes merchants advise the farmers. This could happen because the ethnic minority people are secured their land by law.

Merchants thus play the role of advisor to the ethnic minority people individually. They sometimes play an important role in the decision making of the community such as resettlement. They may know how to gain from an unfavorable resettlement plan. Those who are close to the information could gain while those who depend on the former may lose if they follow the leaders. The situation seems to make the poor dependent on the other. And the poor always suffers a loss.

VII. Why move to the Forest?

It is usually believed that the life in the mountain is harder than in the plain. The land that Ca Lon people were offered at the initial stage of this project was the lowland which will be irrigated in the near future by the dam to be constructed. The offer

may seem to be beneficial for them but it is a very much narrow view of well-being. People were afraid that their livelihood, tradition, and culture which depend on forest will be lost if they move to lowland. If they live mixed with the majority and Chinese people, their economic independence may not be secured and they may lose their land in the end.

There are several reasons why the people in Ca Lon chose the present place. An important one is that their life is secured in Ca Lon. Here the word “life” is used in a broad sense including not only economic but also social, cultural and spiritual life. They have been living in Ca Lon peacefully and co-existent economically with other ethnic groups. The relationship between Ca Lon people and lowland people has been that of division of labor. Ca Lon people collect forest products and exchange them with lowland products provided by lowland people. Both need each other. The stability of their life is achieved by the forest products.

The spatial distance was an important factor for the peaceful co-existence. It takes nearly one hour by car from Song Mao town or Cho Lau town to Ca Lon valley in dry season. The distance is inconvenient for transportation and often considered as an obstacle to economic development but it enabled them to protect their rich forest and forest products from outsiders. For example, they can catch illegal loggers, which is evident from the pile of logs in front of the offices of the people’s committee of Phan Son and Phan Lam. The distance also enabled them to maintain economic independence because it is difficult for outsiders to exploit the villagers economically. The distance is also effective in preserving their rich cultural traditions, which are very important parts of their life. Thus they need the distance to protect themselves from the evils of the outside world. Ca Lon was the best location for them to preserve their important values and guarantees their existence. However, it should be emphasized that they are not living in isolation but that they are actually benefited from the contact with other ethnic groups. Their counter-proposal to move upstream rather than the downstream in the original resettlement plan is understandable from these aspects. Their judgment is not made solely by economic calculation but based on the evaluation of their entire life.

VIII. Misuse of Participatory Assessment

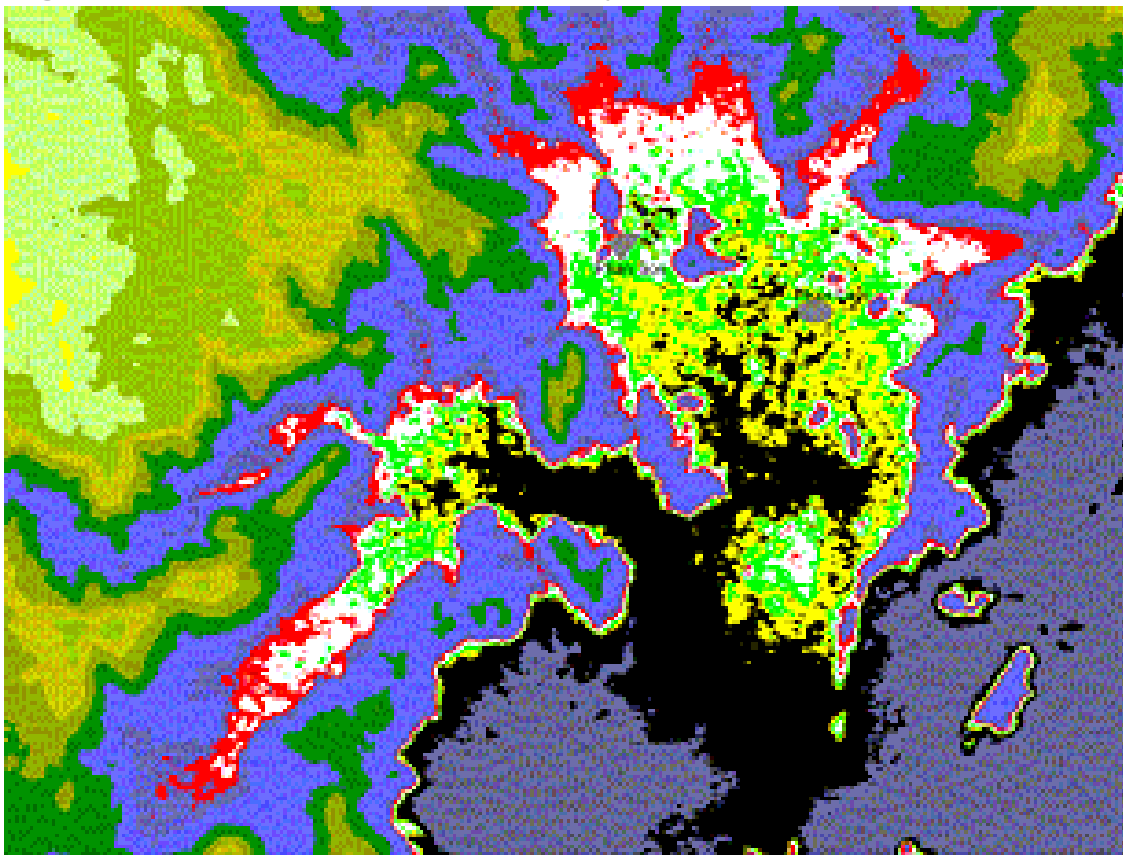
Whatever they may be thinking in their mind, they will say that they are

willing to move for the sake of the country and its people because they fought for the independence of their country. If people are asked officially, they will reply officially. In this sense the participatory assessment is very dangerous because we may misunderstand their true will. In some cases it may be used for the sake of the government at the cost of some group of people. This could happen when the people is very obedient and well trained in a certain sense as is the case of ethnic minority people. Some of the interviews in this baseline survey reveal this fact. We have to be very careful in interpreting the result of such studies.

IX. Really Flooded?

The question that we were often asked during our baseline survey was whether their land will be flooded or not. This means that the affected people are not well informed about the dam construction plan. Because we are not given the detailed data, we are not sure where to be flooded. However, it still seems to be unlikely that their villages will be completely submerged under the water. Especially the residential area of the villages 1, 2 and 4 of Phan Son is located at a higher altitude so that it seems possible for them not to be flooded at all (see Figure 3). In dry season when the water level is lowered, a larger area will appear above the water. On the other hand, we are not sure whether Phan Lam will be flooded or not but it seems possible that Phan Lam may not be flooded at all if the planned water level is lowered by a few meters. If our conjecture is true, it is difficult to understand why they have to resettle. If Phan Son is not flooded, why do they have to resettle? If only a few meter reduction of the planned water level may save these villages, is the cost, both material and mental, covered by the marginal benefit of higher water level? We share this feeling with many of the villagers. At the workshops in Phan Son and Phan Lam, some villagers said that they heard that a large part of Ca Lon basin will not be flooded only if the dam construction site is shifted to downstream by a few kilometers. This may be closer to the original plan that includes the third village of Phan Son in the flooded area. To our question on this point, some provincial officials replied that the area is topographically or geologically unsuitable for dam construction. But it is not answered why the area was included in the original plan.

Figure 1. Phan Son and Phan Lam by contour line



Note) This figure is drawn based on the satellite image provided by ERSDAC. The red line shows the contour where the road is under construction. The white color shows the area that is only a few meters lower than the road. Phan Son is located in this area. Phan Lam is located a bit lower than Phan Son. The estimates from the satellite image is not so accurate but shows the situation of each village.

The opinion that the shift of the dam site to the downstream may save a large part of Ca Lon basin may indicate the black area in the figure. In this case the third village of Phan Son, the southwest of Ca Lon, will be flooded.

Some engineers told us that the irrigation plan was drawn so as to fully utilize

the released water from the Dai Ninh Hydropower Station. We are not sure whether the plan took into consideration the broadly defined resettlement costs of Phan Son and Phan Lam people. If the calculation includes the resettlement cost in a broad sense, which includes material and non-material costs, the plan may not be efficient economically.

We are not experts in this technical aspect and our conjecture may not be correct. But important thing is that the villagers are not informed enough. They lack knowledge, information and explanation to evaluate the resettlement. Very unfortunately the explanation was not given at the workshop in Phan Thiet in spite of our request. People need explanation: Are there any alternatives to the present plan? If yes, why is the present plan chosen? People have to be convinced with the plan before resettlement. If not, the land disputes may occur, as is happening elsewhere.

Social unrest may be caused by the inflow of free migrants from other provinces. "(Binh Thuan) province has another problem that more than 17,000 families of free migrants from other 36 provinces are dwelling in the province, which could be a source of social unrest"(SAPROF, p.12) . On the other hand, SAPROF mentioned that the project "will bring about ... migration of free migrant in the Project area," but this is not necessarily beneficial to the province if it causes social unrest. In this sense, these descriptions seem to be confused. If free migrants are flooded into the area, the social stability may not be maintained. If they encroach into the forest area as is already happening in Ca Lon, they will exploit the forest products, the result of which is deforestation. Conflicts may happen between free migrants and the ethnic minority people. It is not the ethnic minority people but other people who over-exploit forest products including illegal logging. It was many years ago that the ethnic minority people have stopped shifting cultivation, following the government policy. Shifting cultivation is not the cause of deforestation any more. Shifting cultivation is not the reason to resettle people by the name of forest protection.

When the road for dam construction is completed, the transportation will be easier than before. It is certainly beneficial to the local people in some aspect but it is also convenient for outsiders to exploit forest products, which may lead to deforestation. Therefore, the forest, on which the whole life of ethnic minority people depends, should be protected, preventing over-exploitation.

Ca Lon people express their preference to move to the upstream rather than the

irrigated lowland. However, the judgment should be based on well-informed understanding of the situation. Villagers should be given enough information and explanation before they finally decide. And if they made the choice, the choice should be respected. The new area may not be enough for all villagers and the allocated land may not be as large as the present one. They may be allocated smaller land due to the limited available land. Ca Lon people are very much worrying about the land area. The fact that they choose the new resettlement area by themselves does not mean that the responsibility of decreasing living condition in the new settlement area is of the people themselves. The responsibility is of those who forced them to move.

It should be emphasized that the well-being of people does not solely depend on economic aspect. The approach to measure the living standard in terms of income is inappropriate because the well-being of people depends on other non-economic aspects. More appropriate approach is therefore to examine the important functionings in the sense of Amartya Sen's capability approach. This approach could reveal the injustice for the ethnic minority people, who depend on others, namely merchants by economic transactions and the government by poverty alleviation policy.