



**Social Policy Ecology
Research Institute (SPERI)**



**Livelihood Sovereignty
Alliance (LISO)**



**Culture Identity and Resources
Use Management (CIRUM)**

Case study

Pilot model of community forest management in Son Linh commune, Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province

Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI)



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Abstract

There are many pilot models of effective village community forest protection until now. Community forest entails cultural and livelihood significance for local people, as well as plays a positive role in environmental protection.

This research was carried out in the seven villages in Son Linh commune, Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province, where the Kinh (Vietnamese ethnic majority) reside and maintain community forests. 41 people involved in in-depth interview and provided information to fill up semi-structured questionnaire. The interview focused mainly in perception of the local people regarding community forest, their evaluation of the outcomes, effectiveness of community forest and mechanism of forest management. Son Linh commune obtain number of advantages for forming, maintaining and promoting collective forest. These advantages include long-term, stable watershed forest used by local people; little intervention by outside actors, especially state forest enterprises; local people's good awareness of forest significance and their consent to protect forest; vision and courage of the district and communal authorities in land use planning and land allocation to local communities. Son Linh commune shows a good pilot model of forest protection, in which the role of the dam contractor cum watershed forest protector is remarkable, while village regulations are well integrated with statutory law on forest protection. Though watershed forest does not offer big direct income, it actually enables indirect income and great benefits owing to its ability to stabilize and provide water sources for rice cultivation, drinking water, and food for animal. Moreover, community forest embeds humanity implication, while poor and landless households get access to non-timber products. In addition, watershed forest plays a vital role in prevention of landslide, soil erosion and flood.

On the basis of this real evidence of community forest, it is recommended that the on-going revisal of the law on Forest Protection and Development should confirm community forestland tenure in the classification of forest and recognize the role of village community in forest protection for the sake of the community and the common.

Introduction

Community became one of the land and forest users according to Land Law 2003, Land Law 2013 and Law on Forest Protection and Development 2004. To date there are many pilot models of effective village community forest protection and management, which comprise of local livelihood and cultural significance while keep positive environmental and ecological effects.

Through quick assessment in the seven Kinh ethnic villages of Son Linh commune, Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province, CIRUM and SPERI staff recognized that it is worth to explore further the village forest management there. According to Decision No. 5811/QD-UBND of the Huong Son district People's Committee dated 3 November 2015, communities of the 7 villages of Son Linh commune were granted with 15 land-use right certificates on the total area of 412.39 hectares. Survey carried out by CIRUM and SPERI showed that the mentioned community forest areas are well protected and effectively managed by local people, and forests are recovering strongly. Therefore, further research on methods, effects of community forest management in Son Linh commune is an essential step for drawing lesson learnt from community forest and advocating policy community forest. With this perspective, CIRUM has collaborated with SPERI to carry out a field research in August and September 2016.

This research aims at clarifying reasons, motivations and methodology used by village communities in Son Linh commune, Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province for establishment, recovery and management of more than 400 ha of bare land and degraded forest after forest exploitation done by many other stakeholders in the past. From the real evidence, this research tries to provide lesson learnt, suggestion and recommendation for policy of community forest, particularly in the revisal of Law on Forest Protection and Development 2004 and the adjustment of bi-law Land Law 2013 and its implementation.

(For the social, economic situation of Son Linh commune and review of land allocation activities in the commune, please see Annexes 5 and 6).

I. Perception of local people and officers in community forest: forests are protected well when they are managed according to the village purposes rather than state plan

Ha Tinh provincial People's Committee implemented a programme to classify 3 types of forests in Huong Son district in 2005 and 2006. The current community forests in Son Linh commune were classified as production forests. Those forests were urged by the provincial authorities to allocate to

households in order to serve industrial plantation, or economic concession. At that time Son Linh communal leaders perceived that those watershed forests were very essential for water resource and habitat protection, so they should be classified as protected forests. Mr. Nguyễn Hữu Đoài (former communal chairperson, and one of communal party leader at that time) discussed with other leaders and people, and Huong Son district authorities supported local initiatives. Then the mentioned watershed forestlands were kept for village communities rather than being allocated to households. Decision of the communal leaders was supported by most of the local people because of their causes for community benefits. This is a remarkable decision, which brings about benefit for people and capability to protect land, forest and water resources. Mr. Nguyễn Minh Tuấn, current chairperson of Son Linh communal People's Committee asserts that "this is a truly pilot model of community forest, which meets the people's inspiration. Communal authorities have created favorable conditions for villagers to protect forests. Each villages have their own regulations, however, they are not as being strongly enforced as communal law enforcement. Therefore sometimes villagers need supported forces, such as forest protectors, police or forestry staff".

There are different views towards origins of community forests in Son Linh commune. Among 41 respondents, 26 persons (63.4%) say that community forests have been belonged to collective, village or community for long time, and no one else used to manage before that; 12 respondents (29.2%) think that community forests used to be under management of state, communal authorities, cooperatives or state forest enterprises; and 3 respondents (7.3%) state that there used to be individuals or households had used the land before it become community forestland. According to Mr. Nguyễn Khắc Thứ (former chairperson of Huong Son district People's Committee), all forest area in Son Linh commune used to be forest concession exploited by Huong Son state forest enterprise before 1980s. After exhausting the forests, this enterprise returned the forestland to local authorities.

The most important factor contributing to agreement of planning, maintaining and operating community forests is the understanding of local people in the importance of community, watershed forest. For instance, Mr. Phan Văn Tịnh, village No. 2 says "Land allocation to community is a very right action. Most of forestland in our commune belongs to community while households have smaller stakes. Whenever forestland is allocated to households, they have right to practice slash and burn to get mono-crop or to exploit, and then cause the irrigation dam dry and rice field deserted". The villagers' high level of awareness is symbolically demonstrated: "villagers identify community forests as their rice bowls; without forests these bowls will disappear" (quoted from

Mr. Phạm Văn Đản, village No. 9, Sơn Lĩnh commune). In addition, villagers have observed consequences caused by shortage of forest: “If severe drought happens villagers face a lot of difficulties. If you have to carry some loads of water per day, you will understand importance of forest and water source deeply” (Mrs. Trần Thị Đài, village No. 6). Based on this understanding, most of the villagers are willing to protect collective forests for maintaining water sources and avoid allocating forestland to households for mono-crop plantation.

Of the 41 respondents to the definition of community forest, 17 persons (41.5%) understand holistically that community forests are collective ones, which belong to the village, serve to protect water source for rice production and drinking water, so everyone has right and responsibility to protect forests. 17 respondents (41.5%) understand that community forests are common property, cannot be shared, and everyone has right and obligations to protect. 7 respondents (17.1%) think that community forests are watershed forests serving for rice production, drinking water, and protect environmental habitats.

In response to practical recognition of the community forest at the field 17 among 41 respondents (41.5%) know clearly names, location, areas and borders of all their village while only 1 person (2.4%) does not know any of the community forestland plot; the remaining respondents know partially about community forests. From the mentioned statistics, it is possibly concluded that most of the villagers understand well benefits and significance of community forests. This is one of the advantageous preconditions for the collective consent for community forest protection and refusal of allocating land to households, as what has happened in other surrounding communes where acacia and other mono crop plantation take place instead of watershed and water source reservation.

II. Forms of community forests

1. Community-based forest protection

Villagers in Sơn Lĩnh commune emphasized voluntary and self-managing role of the community and a combination between village regulations and state laws. In addition, people recognize the supporting role of communal authorities, forest protectors and mass organization in forest protection.

For a good protection of forest, the respondents acknowledge the role of local people and their closeness to forest as the first factor. “Villagers here live with forests, so they understand forests well. We only need to tell them what to do, and never have to raise high voice before them” (Mr. Phan Văn Tĩnh, Village

No. 2). Village leaders are the closest organs to engage with villagers' activities. According to a village leader of village No. 4, village plays essential role in forest protection activities. Another village leader describe the role of each actors in forest protection as follows: "Village head and leaders of mass organizations involve in forest management and protection. The contractor of irrigation dam has direct responsibility for forest protection. Forest development needs collective action, in which there should be a person working as a coordinator". Each village has demarcation of its own forests and defines its specific methods of forest management. For instance, in Village No. 1, the village Fatherland Front and other mass organizations stimulate 6 or 7 households adjacent to community forest to take responsibility for community forest protection" (Mr. Nguyễn Ngọc Sơn, party leader of Village No. 1). Village No. 9 deals well with fire prevention on the basis of the agreed regulation, which requires everyone to contribute labour or money to make fire-breaking lane every year. Whoever goes to contribute labour does not have to contribute money, otherwise others should contribute VND 10,000 for a half-day working if they cannot attend.

Involvement of men and women is fairly equal, while 54.8% of respondents confirm that all their family members participate in forest management and protection. It is notable that those who do not involve in forest management are elders or those are too busy for cultivation and do not have time for forest management and protection. Respondents saying either only woman (wife) or man (husband) involve in forest management are often the widower or widow, or because one of he spouse is illness and cannot join.

Communal authority, forest protectors and forestry staff play important role in forest protection in Sơn Lĩnh commune. A village leader says that "The on-site forest protectors go to check everyday to discover illegal logging or prevent fire. They involve in measuring and evaluating of forest, too. Every year forest protectors and forestry staff set up plan for prevention and extinguishment of fire, then they hold village meeting and inform everyone".

2. Forest protection via contracting bid for using irrigation dam

Sơn Lĩnh commune has created a model of combination between benefits and obligation of watershed protection, which can be shared and multiplied in the localities of similar situation. Bid for contracting and using irrigation dam is organize every five years. The contractor does not have to pay a half of the water-using fee, and, in return, takes responsibility of active and direct protection of watershed forest and irrigation dam. Communal People's Committee signs contract with contractors for using big irrigation dams. For other cases, Communal People's Committee signs contract with a mass organization, for instance, with Veteran Association, then the contracted mass

organization cooperates with a person in charge to protect watershed area. Contractors are selected among villagers and live close to the watershed area and irrigation dam, so as they can combine raising fish with regular check and protection of watershed forest. The contractors have more responsibility in reminding and preventing others from cutting trees or violating forest protection regulation. They are subject to be the first on to detect fire in the forest, to extinguish or to inform village leaders and other villagers to extinguish fire in time. It is provided clearly in the contract of using irrigation dam that the contractor has to set first priority to regulate and use water of the dam for rice field irrigation and production.

III. Mechanism of forest management and protection in Sơn Lĩnh commune

Regarding institution of forest management and protection in the commune, 15 people (48.4%) within the 31 respondents confirm a combination between village regulation and state laws; 10 respondents (32.3%) state that village regulations are the most important; while 4 people (12.9%) assert the importance of application of state law. Through the mentioned statistics, significance of village regulation or customary law or its combination with state law in forest protection in Son Linh commune is clearly stated.

A majority of respondents (67.7%) say that only local villagers are entitled and have favorable conditions (i.e. short distance) to access to use resources from community forest. Level of voluntary abide by village regulation is shown while 38.7% respondents confirm that they can access to community forest without asking permission. Beside, village leaders and irrigation dam contractor has an important role in granting permission to access community forest (25.8% of respondents say that they need to ask those people before accessing community forest). Regarding awareness of one's obligation in protection of community forest, 54.8% of respondents refer protection of trees and prevention from cutting forest, while 38.7% of respondents emphasize fire prevention. Because most of the villagers in the Son Linh commune are Kinh ethnic majority originated from lowland and have settled in the commune less than one century, 45.2% of the respondents say that there is no worshipping rituals or taboo relating to community forest; 38.7% confirm that there is no ritual ceremony today, but they know that there used to be in the past, or they are still practicing some abstain, such as, no catching snake, or not cutting trees at certain places in community forest. Belief, indigenous knowledge and customary laws attaching to forest is one of the clear differentiation between such a Kinh community as those living in Sơn

Lĩnh commune and other ethnic minority groups, who live close to forests for many generations.

IV. Outcomes of forest protection in Son Linh commune

Forest protection has brought about clear benefits to people in Son Linh commune. First of all, watershed forests preserve and regulate water sources for irrigation. In addition, forests provide non-timber products and food for human and animals. There are 12 irrigation dams in Son Linh commune, which are served by watershed forests providing stable water sources. Those irrigation dams essentially provide water for 70.9 hectares of rice for nine out of 10 villages in Son Linh commune. Thanks to the watershed forests, irrigation dams serving two crops of rice annually, 564 tons of rice is harvested in the nine villages. With this output, local people get an income of VND 3,384,000,000 (USD 150,600) every year (See detail in Annex 1). Representatives from 7 visited villages list out direct and indirect benefits from community forests, such as firewood, bamboo, fish, shrimp in irrigation dams, leaves and trunks for animal food, which create a total income of VND 3,213,840,000 (USD 143,028) per year (See detail in Annex 2). To sum up rice and other incomes, local people obtain an income of VND 6,597,840,000 (USD 293,628) from the community forest each year. This is a considerable amount, which contribute to stabilize livelihood for 2,911 beneficiaries.

Because of great benefit brought about by watershed forests, all interviewed 11-village leaders rank these water sources as 'very important'. This rank (very important) is evaluated by 85.4% among the entire 41 respondents (including village leaders and villagers), while 9.8% choose the scale of 'important' for the benefit of daily use water retrieved from the community (watershed) forests. For the importance of water sources from the community forests for the irrigation and production activities, 97.6% respondents choose the scale of 'very important', and 2.4% evaluate as 'important'. The reason for lower ranking of 'very important' for the daily use water is that some residential areas are far away from community forests, or even residential area and forests are separated by a river (as the case of village No. 9).

Regarding products from community forests, firewood, bamboo, leaves and trunks for animal food is the most counted by villagers. 18 people among 31 respondents (58.1%) say that they have not accessed to take anything from community forest for the recent year, but they confirm that they are benefited from water source. 6 respondents (19.4%) have taken one type of forest products, 3 respondents (9.7%) have got 2 types of products; 3 respondents (9.7%) have got 3 types of products; and one respondent (3.2%) has harvested 6 different types of product for a recent year. All respondents confirm that

water source is the most important benefit taken from community forests. The villagers and local officers interviewees release that young couples, the poor and landless households are usual users of products from community forests.

Mr. Nguyễn Minh Tuấn, Chairperson of Son Linh Communal People's committee states that "Some people may not evaluate fully multi-faceted remunerations from community forests. People can get non-timber products, bamboo shoots and firewood from forests. Local people can get bee honey because bees migrate to our forest recently, so they do not need to go so far for that. Water source and ground for animal rising is the most important thing provided by community forests. There are more than 400 hectares of forestland being allocated to communities in my commune. Today if someone suggest to distribute that collective land to households, villagers will not accept because they have seen wellbeing from community forests already." An on-site forest protector comments that "it is not right way to allocate watershed forests to individual households, because villagers reserve the right to clear forest for mono plantation aftermath. One can see a sum of income after 10 years, but a lot of harms can be observed, especially exhausted water source. Community forests do not bring in such a sum of income after 10 years, but such daily benefits as food for pigs or cows, bamboo shoots, bamboo, and rattan can be counted as a great sum every year".

Outcomes of community forests in Sơn Lĩnh commune can be seen clearer in comparison with forest in the surrounding communes. The research team observed that rice field in Son Linh commune grew well and evenly turned to yellow colour (ripen time and ready for harvest) in the beginning of September 2016. At the same time, rice fields in the adjacent communes of Sơn Lâm and Sơn Quang were sporadically green below the burned area or mono-planted acacia of the local households. It was clearly seen that because of lack and unstable water from irrigation dams, people in other communes cannot grow rice right time; while in Sơn Lĩnh commune, villagers can grow rice with more stable and available water sources.

The most important outcome is the local people's willingness for forest protection in Sơn Lĩnh commune. "People are voluntary and actively discover problems and inform to village leaders. We know that our rice bowls, clothes and foodstuff come from community forests. Because our lives rely on forests, we should protect forests as our own gardens" (Mr. Hoàng Nhung, Village No. 2). Willingness for forest protection is observed clearly in fire prevention and extinguish while all strong villagers come to extinguish fire; women and children come to support and serve water, foodstuff. An elder says that "when our community forest caught fire I could not come to extinguish, I felt so anxious at home" (Mr. Tôn Đức Trí, 77 years old, Village No. 1).

Though some people say that their community forests do not change much so far, most of the interviewees confirm that forests are getting richer. After a long time for persistent forest protection, positive change can be observed, as it is remarked by a villager in Village No. 8: “When the state forest enterprise dissolved, Magnolia and Eucalyptus were cut down barely. There were not big trees left in the forests. Then local people have been protecting those forests so far, and we can see trees with diameter of 100 to 150cm today”.

V. Challenges

1. Overlapping of forestland management would cause losses to community

Villagers and local officials of Son Linh commune released some shortcomings relating to community forest; the hottest issue is overlapping of land boundary between village No. 8 of Son Linh commune and communes of Sơn Lâm and Sơn Hồng and between village No. 1 of Sơn Lĩnh commune with Sơn Tây commune. Besides, borderline in formally allocated mapping between Village No. 2 and Village No. 3 is not correct according to real traditional use by the two villages. These overlapping incidences retain potential conflict over management of land and borderline as well as possible social unrest.

2. Community have been protecting watershed forests for long time, but have not obtained benefit as the state agencies have

Village communities in Son Linh commune have been allocated with forestland and become actual owners and protectors of forests and water sources. However, they have not yet benefited from forest environmental service fund though state forest agencies have. Local villagers have not any income sources from forests in order to maintain forest protection activities because their forests are mainly functioned as protected forests, and most of the forests are recovering rather than being able to provide commercial products.

VI. Recommendation and conclusion

1. Recommendations drawn from pilot models of community forest management in Son Linh commune:

- In forestland planning, it is necessary to consider and base on needs and land use purposes of the local community. This process will ensure suitable land use planning according to reality, simultaneously avoid such discrepancy as what happened in Son Lam commune, where watershed forests are classified as production forests and allocated to households for mono-crop plantation rather than collective protected forests;

- In order to ensure feasibility of forestland planning, local people's participation is a must. People's initiatives and contributions should be heard thoroughly before making decision on land use planning or adjustment of the plan. This will avoid problems, such as the adjustment of forestland use planning for promotion of rubber or acacia in Huong Son district in recent years.

2. According to Law on Forest Protection and Development 2004, villages being competent to get forestland allocated should have traditional customs of collective forest protection. In reality, when a new established mountainous community have their needs for forest use and protection in order to protect water source or practice spiritual rituals. Therefore, the revised law should incorporate villages, which have the need for collective forest protection in their socio-economic development process and regulations on forest protection to be relevant to get forestland allocated.

3. Community protecting watershed forests should be equally entitled to be benefited from payment for forest protection as other land users. The case of Son Lĩnh commune shows that production and direct income from watershed forest is limited because of the reservation or environmental function. However, community has not equally enjoyed payment for forest environmental service as state forest management boards. This phenomenon implies national mechanism of distribution of environmental service fund. This fund should set a minimum rate of payment for all watershed forests disregarding whether a forest plot is belonged to a payment source (e.g. hydropower, tourist or irrigation operation) or not.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Irrigation dams and benefits from irrigation in Son Linh commune

Village	Name of irrigation dams	Irrigated rice field area (ha)	Total productivity per year (2 seasons, kg per 500sqm)	Production (tons of rice per year)	Beneficiaries
1	Khe Dong, Làng Hùng	4.9	350	34.3	300
2	Làng Hùng, Trại Cộ	19	420	159.6	402
3	Hồ Chấn, Trì Báo, Trì Báo Ngoài	8.7	400	69.6	375
4	Trì Báo, Rú Ban, Đồng Pheo	11.2	350	78.4	440
5	Đình Đệ	6.0	420	50.4	350
6	Đình Đệ	5.6	390	43.7	178
7	Đình Đệ	5.5	420	46.2	314
8	Lở Trên, Lở Dưới	7	420	58.8	300
9	Hồ Cây	3.0	390	23.4	252
Total	12 irrigation dams	70.9		564.4	2,911

Annex 2: Direct and indirect benefits from community forests

(Unit price: VND)

Village	Firewood	Deer	Cows, buffaloes	Goats	Fish	Bamboo	Total values
1	-	120,000,000	18,000,000	-	3,600,000	6,000,000	147,600,000
2	20,400,000	72,000,000	220,000,000	-	54,000,000	20,200,000	386,600,000
3	28,350,000	144,000,000	147,000,000	240,000,000	36,000,000	42,000,000	637,350,000
4	35,500,000	108,000,000	10,000,000	37,800,000	9,000,000	-	200,300,000
6	9,400,000	540,000,000	800,000,000	122,500,000	24,000,000	28,200,000	1,524,100,000
8	10,650,000	-	-	-	12,000,000	200,000	22,850,000
9	-	42,000,000	210,000,000	23,040,000	20,000,000	-	295,040,000
Total	104,300,000	1,026,000,000	1,405,000,000	423,340,000	158,600,000	96,600,000	3,213,840,000

Annex 3: Area, situation of community forests in Son Linh commune

#	Forestland user	Plot	Sub-zone	Zone	Area (sqm)	Type of forest	Wood volume (cubic meters)	Origin	Code of land certificate
1	Village community No. 9	27	1	1	263358.7	Natural forest	240	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757999
2	Village community No. 8	35	3	1	306699.4	Natural forest	1315	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757995
3	Village community No. 8	35	3	2	404608.7	Natural forest,	997.5	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757997
4	Village community No. 6	56	27	25	43122.5	Natural forest, bamboo	123.8	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757991
5	Village community No. 6	27	6	39	169963.1	Natural forest, bamboo	363.7	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757992
6	Village community No. 6	27	6	40	336340.1	Natural forest, bamboo	719.8	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757993
7	Village community No. 8	27	27	1	53968.6	Natural forest	108.3	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757998
8	Village community No. 6	27	27	7	220598.9	Natural forest	475.4	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757994
9	Village community No. 4	35	1	8	24338.1	Acacia I		Planted by villagers	BX 757989

10	Village community No. 3	35	1	9	41552.9	Natural forest	66.5	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757987
11	Village community No. 3	27		2	808998.8	Natural forest with bamboo	153710 trees	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757988
12	Village community No. 3	35	2	4	272696.6	Natural forest	339.9	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757996
13	Village community No. 2	35		19	787400.5	Natural forest	173228 trees	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757986
14	Village community No. 1	35	4	22	649595.4	Natural forest	129919 trees	Allocated by state Protect and promote forest	BX 757985
15	Village community No. 4	35	3	1	81141.0	Bare land			BX 757990

(Source: *Huong Son district Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 2016*).

Annex 4: Roles in protection and management of community forests and irrigation dams



Note:

Tasks of each actor are coded according to the attached numbers. Larger circles imply greater role of the actor in community management and protection. The closer from the circle to the central box of 'Community forest & irrigation dam' the greater tasks are implemented by the actor.

- 1: Manage and sign contract of irrigation dam use and management
- 2: Deal with administrative sanction
- 3: Solve problems at village
- 4: Propaganda for forest protection
- 5: Fire and flood prevention
- 6: Prevent from cutter of forest

- 7: Discover and prevent from fire in forests
- 8: Regulating irrigation water
- 9: Use dam for raising fish
- 10: Protect watershed forests
- 11: Grant permission for collecting non-timber products
- 12: Checking and protecting forests

Annex 5: Socio-economic situation of Son Linh commune

Historically some ethnic minority groups had migrated along Truong Son range or Vietnam-Laos border from Northern to Southern Vietnam and passed by Huong Son district (Hồ Hữu Phước, 2015). Until now there remain residents originated from lowland area who still live in the mountainous area of Hương Sơn district. The mentioned people migrate upstream of the river to reclaim riverbank and grow rice for about one hundred years. They established the current communes of Sơn Tây, Sơn Lĩnh, Sơn Hồng, and Sơn Kim in Huong Son district. In the south of Son Linh commune, where there are terraces and plain rice fields, there exist a Muong Muong old tree in the Village No. 2. There used to be a shrine at the bottom of that old tree. An ancient tomb was discovered on the mount of Động Trù, which belongs to Village No. 1. According to the village elders' estimation, the tomb might be built 200 years ago. According to them, that tomb might belong to a person of a rich family or a French ruler, who died and had been buried in this area (Minh Lý, 2014). The north area of Son Linh commune contains villages, which are newly set up during the movement of reclamation of new land areas after the August Revolutionary of 1945. According to the local villagers, the Hương Sơn company used to manage and exploit apart of the forests in Linh commune, and stopped their operation in the commune in early 1970. Until the mid 1980s, a forestland area of around 8,000 hectares belonging to the communes of Son Linh, Sơn Quang and Sơn Lâm was almost exploited to exhaustion (CIRUM, 2012).

There are 3,612 people of the 1,006 households registering as residents living in Son Linh commune according to the statistics of June 2016. The actual number of people regularly live in the commune is 3,060 people who are belonged to 922 households in the commune (Son Linh communal People's Committee, 2016). Almost people in the commune are the Kinh or Vietnamese lowland majority ethnicity, in addition to a few Thái ethnic people.

Son Linh commune is in the mid-land and mountainous area of Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province. The commune locates 20km far away from the district capital town of Pho Chau. The topography of the commune is slopped down from the west to the east side. Mountains take the largest area (75% of the commune's total land area). Son Linh commune has a total natural area of 1,902ha, of which 1,129 ha is classified as forestland (CIRUM, 2012); rice field is 90.3 ha; maize area is 35ha; peanut takes an area of 82.8 ha; and the non-agricultural land is 85ha (of which 28.5ha is residential area). There are 244ha of riverbank area, where people grow grass for animal raising. There are 1,256 cattle; 293 pigs; 1,400 deer; 16,000 chicken and ducks raised in the commune.

Total income in the 6 first months of 2016 is VND 39.78 billion (USD 1,767,200), of which 21,3% of the income comes from cultivation; 20,4% is from gardening and husbandry, and 58,3% is from other income sources. Though the number of poor households decrease compared to that of 2015, it is counted 16.8% of the households classified and poor and 10.3% is semi-poor in June 2016 (Son Linh communal People's Committee, 2016).

Annex 6: Land allocation activity in Son Linh commune, Huong Son district

The Huong Son district authorities have made great efforts to allocate land to communities and households recently though the land areas left are not so abundant. According to 2012 statistics, of the total forestland area of 84,416.9ha in the district, state enterprises manage 51.5 % of the area. Although almost households face shortage of land, only 13,194.7 ha were allocated to households, or 15.6% of the total forestland (CIRUM, 2012). To date, the Huong Son district authorities have carried out three times of forestland allocation in Son Linh commune. The first time was in 2006, the second was in 2010 to 2011, and the third was carried out in 2014 and 2015. There were no support for villagers in the first two times of forestland allocation, so people had to pay VND 1,100,000 (USD 49) per ha as a fee when they received land certificates. Minimum fee for a land plot is equal to that of 1 ha. The third time of land allocation is targeted at allocating the small area left out after the previous times. The provincial and district budget support VND 500,000 (USD 22.2) and the UN-REDD project provide VND 480,000 (USD 21.3) for a hectare of allocated land. So, the receivers of a land certificate of 1 ha only need to pay VND 120,000 (USD 5.3) for the remaining fee. In the village No. 4 though the forestland area is as small as a thousand sqm, each household manage to receive land certificate separately. Therefore there are only 40 ha of forestland in the village, 108 land certificates are granted for each household. Because of no support in the first two times of land allocation, many households wanted to save fee payment for land certificate for a land plot of 1 to 2 ha by cooperation and agreement between different households, in which one is designated as land certificate holder (interview Mr. Phạm Văn Nguyễn, communal forestry staff). According to a leader of village No. 6, this type of arrangement may cause matter in the future, because the children will go to work outside of the community, and they will be able to forget their parent's verbal agreement. If someone bases on legal land certificate to claim the right for only one household; that will be troublesome for the others who actually share the land.

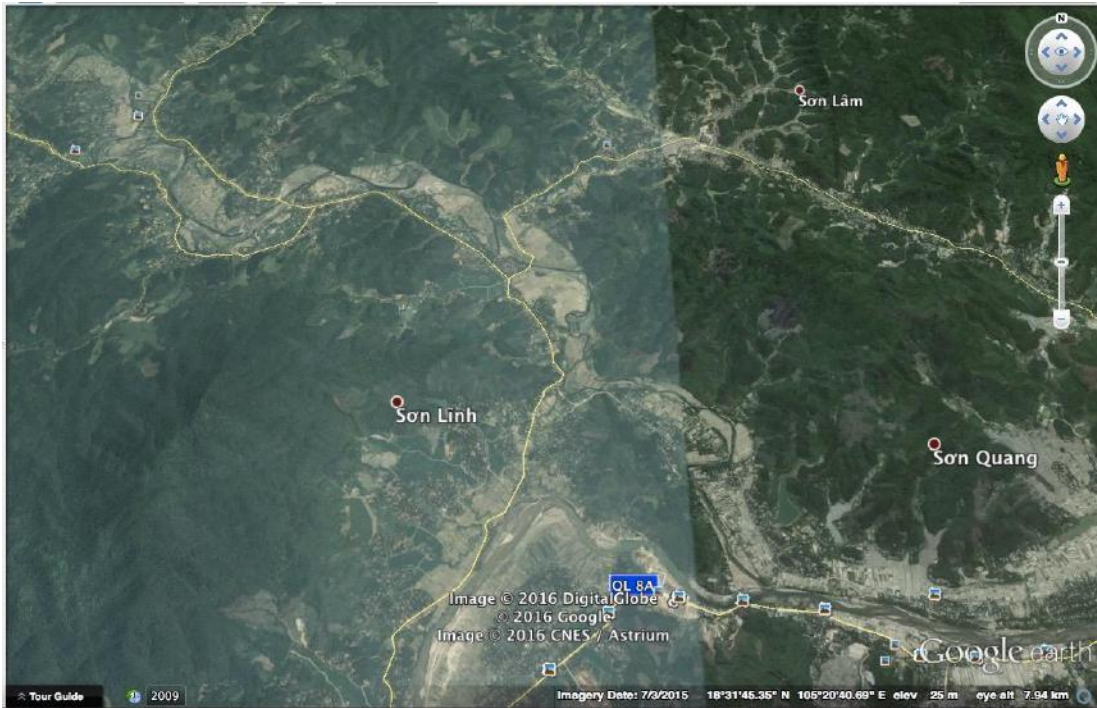
In the third land allocation activity, the Huong Son district People's Committee enacted Decision No. 5811/QĐ-UBND dated 3 November 2015 regarding land allocation in Son Linh commune. According to the district Department of Natural Resources and Environment, there are 72 land certificates with 527.41 ha of land were granted to Son Linh commune. Communities get 15 land certificates granted with 412,39 ha of forestland (See Annex 3 for detail). Households get 57 land certificates granted with 115.02 ha of land. Percentage of land granted to community in Son Linh is at a prominent height, 78.2%,

while the average percentage of the Huong Son district is 24,52% (See detail in the Table 1 below). The above-mentioned statistics shows the importance of community forestland in Son Linh commune.

Table 1: Comparison of land allocated to communities 2015

#	Commune/ District	Total land allocated in 2015 (ha)	Land allocated to community in 2015	Percentage allocated to community (%)
1	Sơn Hồng	1,384.1	543.6	39.27
2	Sơn Lĩnh	527.4	412.4	78.19
3	Sơn Quang	314.5	3.13	1.00
4	Entire Huong Son district	5,561.1	1,363.4	24.52

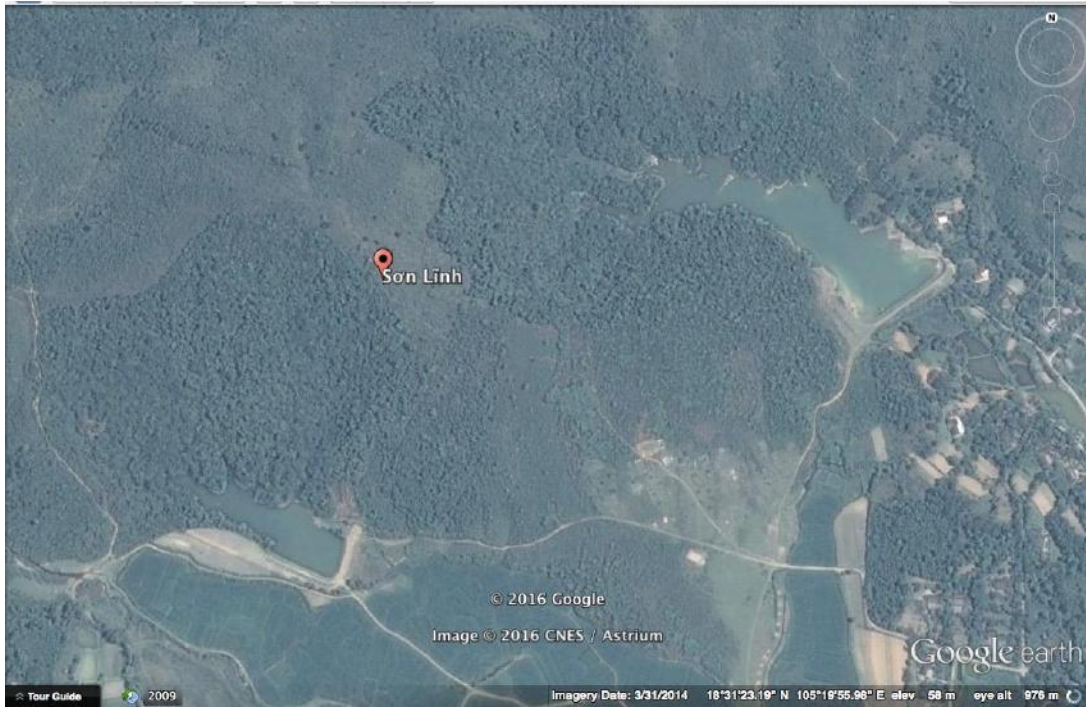
(Source: Huong Son district Department of Natural Resources and Environment, 2016).



Google Earth showing the entire Son Linh commune at the west



Community forests and irrigation dams of villages No. 1 & 2 in Son Linh commune, Google Earth view



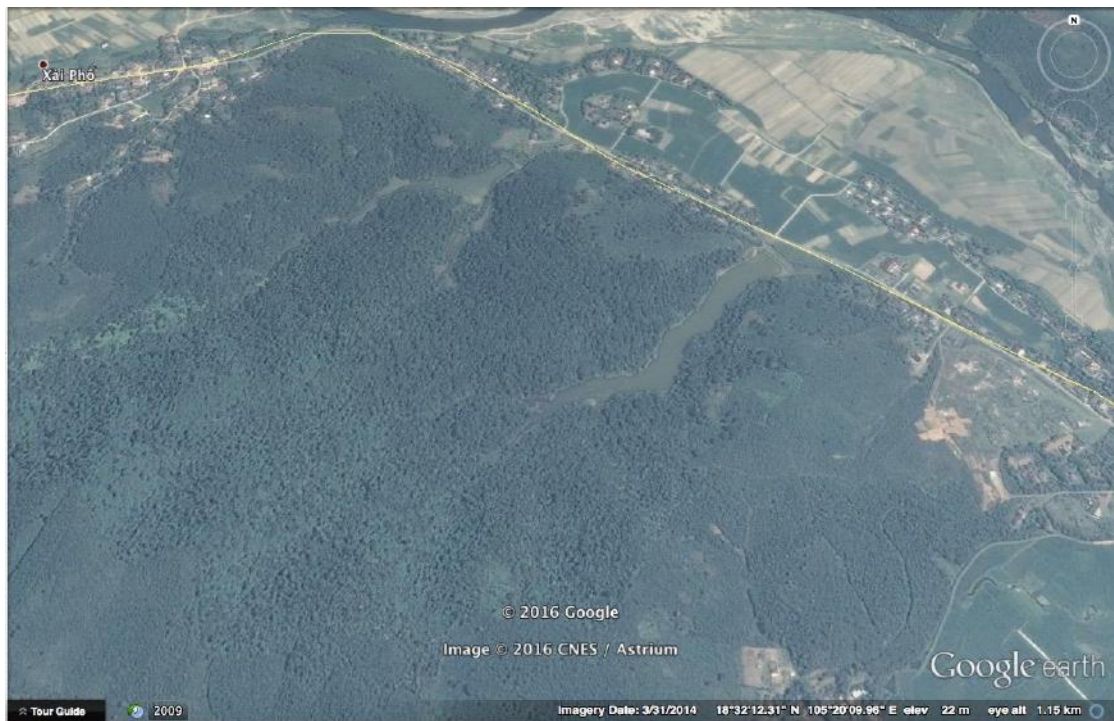
Community forests and irrigation dams of Villages No. 3 in Son Linh commune, Google Earth view



Community forest of Village No. 4 (in the East) in Son Linh commune, Google Earth view



Community forest and irrigation dam of Village No. 6 in Son Linh commune, Google Earth view



Community forest and irrigation dams of Village No. 8 in Son Linh commune, Google Earth view



**Community forest and irrigation dam of Village No. 9 in Son Linh commune,
Google Earth view**

Annex 8: Pictures taken during field research



Làng Hùng irrigation dam and community forest of Village No. 2, Son Linh commune



Lở Dưới irrigation dam and community forest of Village No. 8, Son Linh commune



Interview in Village No. 9, Son Linh commune



Rice field retrieving water source from the upper irrigation dam and community forest of Village No. 2, Son Linh commune