

**FOREST DEPENDENCY IN VIETNAM: A CASE STUDY IN XA
LUONG COMMUNE, TUONG DUONG DISTRICT, NGHE AN
PROVINCE, VIETNAM**

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ABSTRACT

The most difficult challenge to Vietnam's natural resource management is to integrate conservation and development. A lot of people depend on forest resources for daily needs from food to timber and non-timber forest products sold for cash in Vietnam. This leads to forest degradation. The study evaluates forest dependency, household socio-economic factors affecting forest dependency, and local people's opinions toward forest resource condition and dependency. Data was collected in the Na Be Hamlet. Quantitative household surveys with statistical analysis, in-depth interviews, focus-group discussion, and field observation were used in the study.

Although the forest resource is still degraded, the local households depend on it heavily for cash income. Households with higher number of pigs and bigger gardens were less dependent on forest resource. However, as the number of months when there was a lack of food increased, so did forest dependency increase. The estimated unstandardized coefficient for number of pigs, area of home garden and number of months that household lack food is - 0.039, - 0.000041 and 0.049 respectively.

Three-quarters of respondents thought that forest condition were good in the past (10 years ago), whereas the forest resource condition has been deteriorated up until now. Nearly 60 % of respondents said the condition now was poor and over one-third said it was very poor. Ninety-four percent thought that forest area had decreased and nearly all respondents (98 %) saw the need to improve the forest. Interviews and group discussions revealed that the common point is that the forest was poor and degraded. The weak enforcement of forest protection regulations is a reason for rapid depletion of the forest in both quality and quantity. The interviews and group discussions also revealed that there was a consensus among local people on the need to improve forest resource condition. Over one-third of respondents said the forest dependency was very high in the past, whereas about 27 % said it was still very high. About 85 % of respondents felt a need to reduce forest dependency. The level of forest dependency is slightly decreased because of the degrading of the forest. The study revealed that the protection forest harvesting was a source of cash income. All participants in all groups were aware that logging was illegal and the forest had been degraded rapidly. They wanted to reduce forest dependency.

The study suggests the following measures to reduce the pressure on the forest: promote pig husbandry in households; expand paddy fields and home garden to supply food for all local people and increase income; open training classes in cultivation and animal husbandry techniques for local people; enhance local people's capacity building and empowerment towards forest management.

**KEY WORDS: FOREST DEPENDENCY/ LOCAL PEOPLE'S OPINION/ PROTECTION
FOREST/ PIG HUSBANDRY/ HOME GARDEN**

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