



ETUDES ET DOCUMENTS DU GRAESE

**Poverty Reduction Strategies of Rural Households in
Mountainous Regions of Northern Vietnam:
The Case of Tu Ly and Xuan Phong communes
in Hoa Binh Province**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rational

After the 1995 Copenhagen Summit the emphasis swung from social development to poverty eradication. During the same period economists in the international financial institutions and political leaders promoted the neoliberal approach in the economies of developing countries. The neoliberal approach advocated minimal state involvement and the privatization of public goods. The emphasis was on economic growth with the stated expectation that poverty would be reduced as a result of growth (Correll D. 2008). National poverty strategies commonly focus on enhanced public expenditure programs, institutional reforms to improve governance, and structural reforms to build assets and increase access to markets and institutions. The efficacy of reforms often depends on their acceptance by stakeholders, and increasing evidence shows that stakeholder input can improve reform design and build up their participation (Paternostro et al., 2006).

According to Mestrum, the poverty reduction proposed by international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IFM), is the centerpiece of their neoliberal policies. It helps to dismantle the existing social protection. It puts an end to the ambitious national development projects. It puts under supervision poor countries whose policies and all reforms are scrutinized by the Bretton Woods organizations. It affirms the need for a new world order increasingly privatized in the name of the effectiveness of the poverty reduction. It leaves intact or tries to restore a "natural" social order. It puts into perspective a unified but dual world where the poor should become rich allies to fight the privileges of the middle classes too much protected by the State (Mestrum, 2002).

In South-East Asia after the crisis of the late 1990s, all countries have pledged to take further steps to reduce poverty. According to Peemans, the crisis was an opportunity to allow the discourse on poverty to be back, after it had been sidelined in the last two decades by the success of economic development, specifically regarding poverty reduction. The discourse on poverty has always followed the wake of modernization

theory establishing a close link between underdevelopment, backwardness of rural areas and poverty (Peemans, 2011).

Vietnam is an example of this societal transformations complexity induced by the interaction between "growth policies" and "poverty reduction policies". This process is rooted in the specific context of the Doi Moi policy, set up in 1986. The market-oriented reforms to promote economic growth were essential to the development of Vietnam, supported by egalitarian policies in the provision of basic services, access to land and infrastructure investments to ensure the poor broad access to opportunities (Peemans, 2011).

Since the 1990s, to combat poverty, Viet Nam developed many strategies which have changed over the years with the needs and the results in areas of concern. Governmental provisions were to promote so-called integrated strategies for increasing food production, crop diversification and access to various basic services. In particular, since 2001, with the assistance of the World Bank and the IMF, Viet Nam has developed what is called the "The Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy" (GPRGS). The CPRGS is an action program that translates the Government's Ten-Year Socio-economic Development Strategy, Five-Year Socio-economic Development Plan as well as other sectoral development plans into concrete measures with well-defined road maps for implementation.

Viet Nam has made an impressive advance towards the achievement of many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Using a "basic needs" poverty line initially agreed in the early 1990s, the poverty headcount fell from 58 percent in the early 1990s to 14.5 percent by 2008, and the figure by these standards was estimated to be well below 10 percent by 2010. Similar progress in the face of steadily rising incomes is evident when assessed by international standards of \$1.25 and \$2.00 person/day (2005 PPP). Progress has also been substantial in other dimensions of well-being, ranging from high primary and secondary enrolments to improvements in health status and reduced morbidity and mortality. Vietnam has achieved and in some cases surpassed many of the MDGs (WB, 2012).

However, although the national rate of poverty decreased, and despite all the efforts of many institutions and authorities, the poverty in Viet Nam is

still very "stable". The task of poverty reduction is not complete, and in some respects it has become more difficult. Although tens of millions of Vietnamese households have risen out of poverty, many have incomes very near the poverty line and remain vulnerable to falling back into poverty as a result of unexpected shocks, (such as job loss, accidents, or death or illness of a household member), or related economy-wide shocks, (such as the effects of climate change on rainfall and temperatures, human and animal influenza pandemics, and impacts of the 2008–09 global financial crisis) (WB, 2012). Poor people have more problems or vulnerabilities in their daily lives than the others in the same social economic environment. The weight of poverty is especially present in remote areas, especially mountainous areas, populated by ethnic minorities. This population lacks infrastructure and access to resources that could cover their basic needs.

Poverty of ethnic minorities has become an ongoing challenge. Although the 53 ethnic minority groups in Vietnam account for less than 15% of the population, they accounted for 47% of the poor in 2010 against 29% in 1998. In 2010, there were 66.3% of the poor among ethnic minorities against only 12.9% for the Kinh population (WB, 2012). The new poverty maps developed in Vietnam in 2010 indicate that poverty is increasingly concentrated in the mountainous areas of Vietnam, including the mountains of Northeast and Northwest and part of the Central Highlands. At the same time, household wealth is highly concentrated in the Red River Delta (around Hanoi) and the Mekong Delta (around Ho Chi Minh City) and in urban centers along the coast.

The analysis conducted by the World Bank in 2009 on the situation of ethnic minorities in Vietnam showed that 75% of this population lives in the Northern mountainous areas and highlands of Central Vietnam, the majority living in rural areas. The analysis also showed that the policies adopted in the past two decades have improved their access to food, increased agricultural productivity and improved access to roads and markets. However, ethnic minorities have not benefited from the privatization of land rights or agricultural extension services focused on the development of intensive industrial crops. Six major factors have been put forward to explain why ethnic minorities are still poor: poor education, poor mobility, limited access to financial market, lack of

productive land, limited access to market, and cultural barriers (WB, 2009).

The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) in its report "Mid-term evaluation of control strategies against poverty" also found that GPRGS outcomes are not sustainable because households that come out of poverty have incomes close to the national poverty line, and are remaining vulnerable to falling back into poverty (MOLISA, 2009). On the other hand, poverty is increasingly concentrated among Vietnam's ethnic minority populations. In 1993, poverty was widespread and minorities comprised only 20 percent of all poor households. By 1998 the share of minorities among the poor had increased to 29 percent, and by 2010, minorities accounted for 47 percent of the total poor group in Vietnam, and a resounding 66 percent of individuals in the poorest 10 percent of the population. According to the update GSO-WB poverty line, 66.3 percent of minorities were poor in 2010 compared with only 12.9 percent of the Kinh (WB, 2012).

In recent years, growth has favored the better-off, resulting in rising income inequality and increasing social and economic disparities. The Gini index of income inequality has risen modestly from 0.40 to 0.43, adjusted for variations in prices across regions. The evidence suggests that regional variation in growth patterns contributes to the explanation of the rise in inequality, but appears to play a more limited role than differences across households within regions. There is substantial evidence of variation in growth across region, with some poorer regions such as the North East, North Central Coast, and North West growing substantially more slowly than the Red River Delta and the Central Highland.

In brief, the gap between the rich and the poor grows more and more. The standard of living of poor households is still low especially in mountainous areas. It appears that an identical implementation of the strategies of poverty alleviation for all regions of the country is not adapted and does not produce the desired effects. The administrative system cannot handle specific poverty situations on a daily basis and it is why households cannot receive the aid when they need. The report of MOLISA also notes that 10% of the beneficiaries of assistance from these programs are not poor and that, at the same time, 52.1 per cent of poor households are not included in the list of poor households of the

communes. This entails the current problem of the revision of the poor population census in Viet Nam.

A close look at the reality of poverty in Viet Nam shows that a dichotomous vision (poor against non-poor) is irrelevant: some households are not truly poor (their monetary income rose above the national poverty line) but the real ability of these households to overcome shocks remains very low and therefore the need of social protection is required. However, this category of households receives nothing because the local government and social associations are not interested in them. This form of exclusion is derived from the definition of the MOLISA that determines who will get the status of "poor household" and to benefit from subsidies. The calculation technique used to determine the status of household appears not always to reflect the true nature of poverty.

1.2. Objective of the study

In short, why do poverty reduction strategies not bring real effects, especially for poor households in northern mountainous region in Vietnam is the big arising question that need to be answered. In response to that, this study is designed to investigate the limitations of poverty reduction strategies in northern mountainous regions in Vietnam, especially in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong communes as the case study. The specific objective of the study is as follows:

- To overview the literatures related to poverty and poverty reduction strategies;
- To assess the results in implementing poverty reduction strategies in Northern mountainous region in Vietnam in general, and in two selected communes in particular.
- To investigate the limitations of poverty reduction strategies implemented in Northern mountainous region in Vietnam in general, and in two selected communes in particular.

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Reason for choosing the study area

Based on the research objectives, three important points were considered to choose the field of study: the poverty rate, forest area and the presence of ethnic minorities.

Vietnam consists of eight major areas: the Red River Delta area, the North East, the North West, the Central Coast area of the North, the Central Coast area of the South, the Central Highlands, the Southeast and the Mekong Delta area. The study work was conducted in a mountainous area in the Northwest of the country, where the poverty rate is the highest of the eight areas shown. It reaches 39.4%. Poor minorities are heavily concentrated in the mountainous region of the Northwest and represent 72% of the population. The forest area of the Northwest region covers 1,273,718 ha, representing 11.47% of the total forest area of Vietnam.

In this mountainous region of the Northwest, we chose Hoa Binh province. The poverty rate in Hoa Binh is as high as 31.51%. The average income per person per month in 2010 was 829,800 VND (or \$43.67). Ethnic minorities are important. Seven ethnic groups live in this province, including Muong, Kinh, Thai, Tay, Dao, Mong and Hoa. Muong represent 63% of the population in Hoa Binh, the Kinh 28% and other groups 9%. The area of forest land is important and represents 72.6%.

Among the 10 districts of Hoa Binh province, two districts (Da Bac district and Cao Phong district) were selected to perform this analysis. They bring together the various features of the province. They are both located in the high mountain area, on either side of the center of Hoa Binh. For each of these districts, I chose a representative commune: Tu Ly commune and Xuan Phong commune. The poverty rate of the two communes is high: 50.43% in Tu Ly and 55.28% in Xuan Phong. The wooded area is very important: 73.80% in Tu Ly and 88.17% in Xuan Phong. Ethnic groups are various in Tu Ly: Muong represent 50%, Kinh 17%, Tay 12%, Dao 17% and Thai 4%. In Xuan Phong commune, the majority comes from the Muong group (98.5%) and 1.5% includes the Kinh and Thai minorities.

1.3.2. Data Sources

- The bibliographic sources

Information resources form a relatively abundant bibliography. The aim is to determine the components of the concept of poverty and locate interactions between poverty and rural development over time

- Primary data

Thanks to the established mutual trust, data were collected by direct observation of the village framework. The final questionnaire could be established following discussions with the village authorities and communal officials, who provided the information on the characteristics and problems of the villages. It is through them that we were able to make contact with the various categories of stakeholders in the villages.

In addition, we did a survey of 120 households to know what are the differences between the households included in the list of poor households of the commune and the household that are not in the list but vulnerable. We asked the heads of communes to randomly select the households in each group below, a total of 60 households per commune:

- The first group (A) includes the category "persistently poor", i.e. households who are poor for all dates where data are available. According to Government Regulation 170 CP promulgated on July 8, 2005, in period of 2006 - 2010, the official poverty line for urban areas was 260,000 VND/person/month) and the official line for rural areas was 200,000 VND/person/month);
- The second group (B) includes "the transient poor", which have average incomes above the poverty threshold, but are found among poor households at certain dates;
- The third category does not have currently an income level below the level of poverty, but were poor in the past. That (C) group has just come out of poverty;
- The fourth group (D) includes the households with high level of income.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Poverty

The word "poverty" is used to express the lack of variety in the material life and the moral life of human beings. According to Adam Smith, either absolute or relative, poverty is not only an economic reality. The economic aspect is only one dimension of poverty. To examine it, we must also take into account the social context, the values and cultural practices, the environment and international relations (Smith, 1776).

Appropriate identification of the poor is crucial if poverty reduction is to be achieved. Yet the definitions and measurements invoked in poverty assessments remain contentious. The various approaches currently used to categorize the poor and the policies that are subsequently formulated are often contradictory. Despite widespread recognition of the multidimensional nature of poverty among social scientists and policymakers, a single method – the monetary approach – continues to dominate largely poverty assessment (Caizen, 2010).

In fact, there are two dominant approaches to define poverty: the above mentioned monetary income approach (WB) and the capacity approach (Sen & HDR)

According to the 1990 report of the World Bank (WB), "*poverty defines as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living*". WB distinguishes absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a level of income necessary to ensure the survival of people (WB, 1990). The most commonly used way to measure poverty is based on incomes or consumption levels. A person is considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the "poverty line". The poverty gap is the amount of resources that is needed to get those in poverty out of poverty. Note that it is distinctly possible that a country 'A' may have fewer people under the poverty line than another country 'B', while at the same time 'A' may have a larger poverty gap than 'B'. A closely related measure is the Poverty gap ratio (%), defined as "The mean distance below the \$1 (1993 PPP US\$) a day poverty line, expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. The mean is taken over the entire

population, counting the non-poor as having zero poverty gap. The measure reflects the depth of poverty as well as its incidence (WB, 2012).

But according to Peter, 1\$-a-day is a flawed concept. If we define poverty as a lack of well-being, then poverty is clearly a multidimensional phenomenon. The \$1-a-day poverty line can therefore rightly be criticized for being an insufficient and mono-dimensional (i.e purely income-based) measure of the phenomenon that is poverty. This author also found that the Bank's method is seriously limited not only because of its mono-dimensional assumptions but also because, even if we accept those limiting assumptions, the method still embodies an unrealistically low poverty line (the \$1-a-day line). This low poverty line seriously misleads policy makers, politicians and the public on both the extent of global poverty and the scale of socioeconomic change needed to remove absolute poverty (Edward, 2006)

According to Sen's capability approach, the poverty is the failure of some basic capability to function. In others words, the capability approach focuses on the information about individual well-being. Capability represents the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. The actual achievement of functionings is a result of personal choice to select from the capabilities available, a choice subject to personal preferences and other factors of decision-making mechanisms (Yingqin Zheng, 2007). However, in accordance with many social scientists or philosophers the capability approach is too individualistic and pays insufficient attention to groups and social structures (e.g. Corbridge, 2002; Devereux, 2001; Navarro, 2000). In addition, the increase of physical and financial capital, when it takes place, can be a very uneven phenomenon, with negative effects, particularly on the social capital of those who do not benefit from the growth of this first capital. Social cohesion of the village is affected, weakening the collective assets of the community, and therefore the ability to improve the lives of all its members.

According to Mestrum several conceptualizations of poverty compete, which does not facilitate its quantification. Is poverty an absolute or a particular data? Is it a problem that lies at the individual level, at the household level or at the State level? Does poverty concern only the income, or is it also the well-being, vulnerability and social exclusion? Is poverty in poor countries synonymous with underdevelopment? It goes

without saying that each response is charged with ideological weight and will be crucial in guiding solutions search (Mestrum, 2002, p16).

François Houtart also said that poverty has qualitative aspects: low quality of life, lack of access to education and culture, lack of hygiene. But the problem is to know what these factors are attributed to. We can summarize that poverty is not a fact of nature (Alternative Sud, 1999). To understand poverty, we must know the type of existing social relations and mechanisms of social reproduction, because poverty is socially constructed. This injustice is that the benefits of growth are concentrated excessively by a minority. The \$1 is no longer acceptable in situations where a small minority sees its revenues growing each year by several thousand dollars. You cannot have a static view of poverty in a society where the parameters of the wealth and poverty are interrelated in a context of rapid change. The ideology of economic growth justifies inequalities by the need to provide investors with high incomes. But much of the high income is mainly used to provide an ever larger consumption of the rich minority. It is economic growth that creates new poverty situations, new forms of exclusion and marginalization, particularly due to the promotion of new social reference images linked to the consumption of the rich. It therefore leads to new social tensions and claims which are contrary to human dignity: having to claim to be poor to be helped (Peemans, 2011).

In short, the way we "see" and apprehend poverty is the result of a social construction made by the non-poor. The way the political view perceives the poor is often linked to major political concerns of the time that are not necessarily those of the poor. Poverty acts as a mirror, an instrument of political thought to expose his ideal (Mestrum 2002, p17).

2.2. Poverty reduction strategy

In the early 1950s, development was synonymous with "developing countries". Today, it is to highlight individuals, "people are assets", productive assets (Mestrum, 2002). Therefore, the objective of the poverty reduction is the creation of free and independent people, physical capital owners, which reflects their abilities. In other words, the only way to reduce poverty is to ensure that the poor themselves produce wealth. The idea is to strengthen the capacity of the poor through a market

transparent functioning, offering a choice among various social "services" providers to ensure safety.

In 1999, the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have launched a joint initiative which marks a shift in their strategies. Thus, all low-income countries wishing to receive financial aid should prepare a program of struggle against poverty, designated under the term "Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers" (PRSP). Development assistance policies, now under the auspices of the PRSPs, give today fight against poverty a central role.

Since 1998, the Vietnamese Government has launched a program to help poor households in the country. Then, in 2001, the program was combined with another program on employment and became the program for national targets for reducing poverty and for the development of employment. In May 2002, the Prime Minister of Vietnam approved the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) under Government Decree number 2685/VPCP-QHQT. This document fit into an economic development period of the country. This period resulted in the establishment of the ten-year Economic and Social Development Strategy and the five-year Economic and Social Development Plan (ESDP) in force in Viet Nam. In July 2002, the document was submitted to the Office of the World Bank as a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

Alongside this CPRGS, the Vietnamese Government has also implemented the program 135 to develop the economic and social level of the poorest towns. This program ran from 1998 to 2010. In addition, in 2008, Resolution No. 30a (NQ30a/2008/NQ-CP) has approved the programs of rapid poverty reduction that focus on rural areas, especially 61 poor districts.

In the Hoa Binh province, as in all provinces of Vietnam, the authorities have also built their program against poverty. The objectives and activities of the latter are based on those of CPRGS national and depend on the total amount granted by the state budget.

The program has the following objectives: (1) to improve the production conditions of the poor through credit projects, extension of agricultural production techniques, and development of various trades to increase their income; (2) to improve the quality of human capital of the poor

through interventions in the areas of health, education, housing and water; (3) to improve the capacity of government intervention.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Review of poverty in Hoa Binh Province and in two selected communes

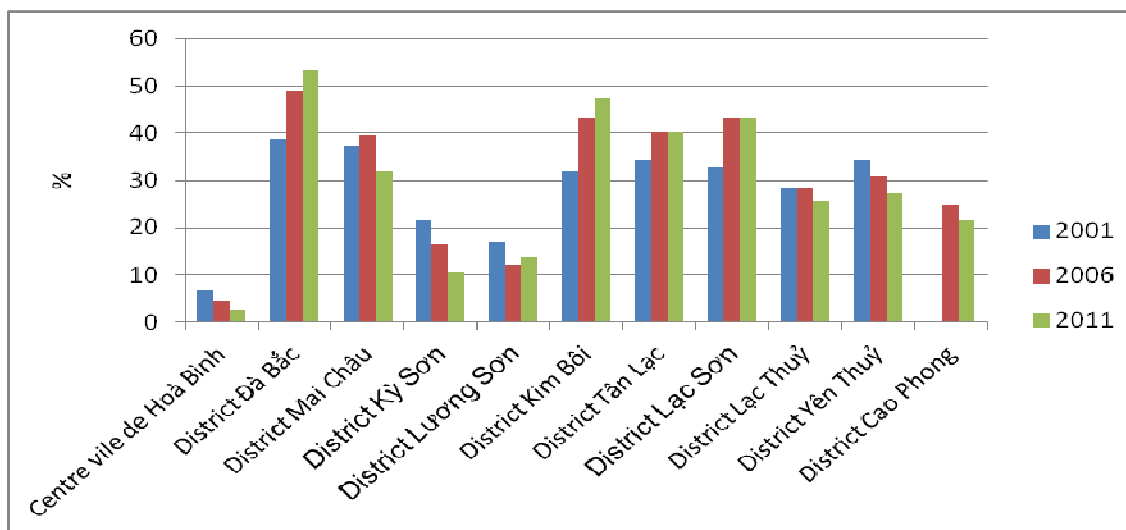
Based on the national poverty line, we could provide a specific number of poor households and a list that includes all the households in each village as well as communes. These data could be beneficial to check the proper functioning of poverty reduction strategies as well as other policies in place.



Graph 1. Poverty rate in Hoa Binh

Source: Statistical Office of Hoa Binh

Note: The poverty line was 80 000VND/person/month in rural areas and 150,000VND/person/month in urban areas for the 2001-2005 period. It was 200,000VND/month/person in rural areas and 260,000VND/person/month in urban in 2006-2010. It is 400 000VND/person/month for rural areas and 500,000VND/person/month in urban areas in the 2011-2015 period.



Graph 2. Poverty rate by district in Hoa Binh

Source: Statistical Office of Hoa Binh

Note: The poverty line was 80 000VND/person/month in rural areas and 150,000VND/person/month in urban areas for the 2001-2005 period. It was 200,000VND/month/person in rural areas and 260,000VND/person/month in urban in 2006-2010. It is 400 000VND/person/month for rural areas and 500,000VND/person/month in urban areas in the 2011-2015 period.

The graph above show the poverty rate in Hoa Binh since 2001, we can see that the poverty rate is very volatile. As every five years, Vietnam revises poverty line upwards, this gives curious saw-tooth evolution of the poverty reduction in Hoa Binh. Graphs 1 and 2 show that the poverty rate in Hoa Binh decreases sharply at the end of each period but increases in the next period. For example, from 2005 to 2010, the poverty rate decreased from 31.31% to 13.87% and at the beginning of 2011, it increased to 31.51% (according to the new poverty line of 2011-2015). Every five years, we wipe the slate clean. In other words, the poverty comes back. Poor households are not poor anymore compared to their previous lives, but their poverty still exists in their current life. This shows that poor households are always late and poverty reduction strategies meet the needs of poor households only in the short term.

Table 1: Poverty Rates in Hoa Binh in 2011 in rural and urban areas

	Total number of households	Total number of poor households	Poor households rate (%)	Number of pro-poor households	Pro-poor households rate (%)
Hoa Binh Province					
- urban area	32 430	1 082	3.34	1 262	3.89
- rural area	158 613	59 124	37.28	27 981	17.64
DaBac District					
- urban area	1 213	174	14.34	494	40.73
- rural area	11 252	6 622	58.85	2 596	23.07
Cao Phong District					
- urban area	1 395	31	2.22	24	1.72
- rural area	8 502	2 661	31.30	997	11.73

Source: Statistical Office of Hoa Binh

Note: Urban areas are the centers of the districts and Hoa Binh city center.

Rural areas represent all communes of Hoa Binh districts

The poverty line is 400,000VND/person/month in rural areas and 500,000VND/person/month in urban areas over the period 2011-2015.

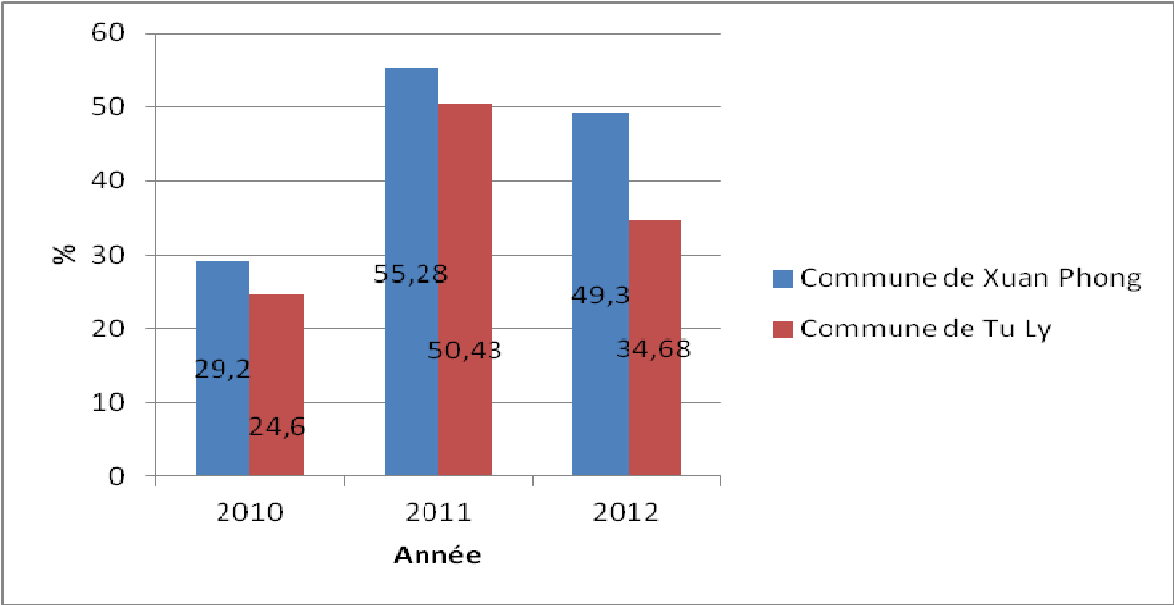
If we compare the poverty rate of Hoa Binh between urban and rural areas, we see that the gap is very significant (Table1). In Hoa Binh province, the poverty rate in urban areas is 3.34% while in rural areas it is 37.28%.

Table 2: Poverty rates among ethnic minority groups in 2011

	Total number of households	Number of ethnic minorities' households	Ethnic minorities' households rate on the total number of households (%)	Number of poor ethnic minorities households	Poor ethnic minorities' households rate on the total number of ethnic minorities households (%)	Number of pro-poor ethnic minorities households	Pro-poor ethnic minorities' households rate on the total number of ethnic minorities households (%)
Hoa Binh Province	191 043	138 098	72.29	54 748	39.64	25 540	18.49
DaBac District	12 465	10 965	87.97	6 561	59.84	2 727	24.87
Cao Phong District	9 897	7 088	71.62	2 482	35.02	843	11.89

Source: Statistical Office of Hoa Binh

In Hoa Binh province, households belonging to ethnic minority groups represent 72.29% of the population, 87.97% in Da Bac district and 71.62% in Cao Phong district. The rate of poor households belonging to minority ethnic groups is very high: 39.64% in Hoa Binh province, 59.84% Da Bac district and 35.02% in Cao Phong district.



Graph 3: Poverty rate in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong communes

Source: Statistical Office of Hoa Binh

Note: Poverty threshold was 200,000VND/month/person during 2006-2010 and 400,000VND/person/month during 2011-2015.

In both studied communes, the poverty rate in 2011 was higher than in 2010 due to the change of poverty threshold.

The characteristics of the poor in Hoa Binh in general, and in the Tu Ly and in Xuan Phong communes are described as follows by Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of province (DOLISA)

- Most of the poor belong to ethnic groups working in the field of agriculture.
- The ethnic poor still face difficulties in their food self-sufficiency because they have little cropland
- The ethnic poor goods have a very low value, estimated at 2 to 3 million VND/household

- The living conditions of ethnic groups in Hoa Binh province are still very low and do not facilitate their productions

In 2005, DOLISA also indicated the reasons why ethnic minority households were poor as follows:

- 10.78% of ethnic minority households were poor due to their lack of work
- 1.46% of ethnic minority households were poor because they had no land
- 16.5% of ethnic minority households were poor because they had little land
- 6.9% of ethnic minority households were poor because of their health problems.

According to the DOLISA estimation report of Hoa Binh, the poverty rate reduction in the province is slow. Moreover, the shape of poverty in Hoa Binh has changed. In the past poor households were the ones facing difficulties in their food self-sufficiency, However nowadays the poor households often encounter problems in health, education, culture, communication, accommodation, etc. Moreover, in the context of global integration of the country, we note that poor ethnic minorities have a hard time finding work.

3.2. Poverty reduction strategies results on two communes studied

Tu Ly and Xuan Phong are ethnic and mountainous communes which get aid through programs to foster poverty reduction in Hoa Binh province. There are three types of aid. First, there is the aid received by the communities. This type of aid aims to improve the common infrastructure by building roads, communal houses, irrigation systems, power grids. The second type of aid is the one that target poor ethnic households by the establishment of credit projects, agricultural production techniques extension, development of various trades, interventions in the areas of health, education, housing and water. Finally one has the aid that target local authorities to improve their capacity.

3.2.1. Infrastructure changes

Since the Doi Moi policy in 1986, the Vietnamese Government has granted the infrastructure a central place in the national strategy and local development. This approach was confirmed in terms of strategy and poverty reduction in the establishment of 135 programs of the Government for the period from 1998 to 2010. The two studied communes are beneficiaries of these programs. Two types of infrastructure were funded: social infrastructure (in the sectors of health, education and culture) and economic infrastructure (such as transport, energy, information technology, irrigation, drinking water).

Table 3: Status of infrastructure in the two studied communes in 2012

	Xuan Phong	Tu ly
Length of asphalt road between communes	3.38km/ 13.05km	12km/ 12km
Length of asphalt road between villages	4.04 km/9.16km	22.8km/30.9km
Length of irrigation canals	5.33km/7.5km	9.85km/46.35km
Rate of household using permanently electricity	58.67%	98%
Number of kindergartens	1	2
Number of primary schools	1	1
Number of secondary schools	1	2
Number of cultural centers	12	12
Number of official post offices	1	1
Number of health centers	1	1
Number of markets	0	0

Source: Statistical Office of the two towns

According to the surveyed households, thanks to government investment in infrastructure, living conditions have improved, especially about traffic. Before, people were losing a day to go to Hoa Binh center (located only 15 km), whereas now it takes 20 minutes. It also allows farmers to obtain market information and services. Before, farmers faced many troubles in transporting their products to the market, whereas now, the small

intermediaries go directly to the villages to buy agricultural products such as corn and sugar cane.

The conditions of agricultural production have also improved. For example, through improved irrigation, farmers can grow crops more easily. Before, there was only one harvest season due to lack of water. Now they can harvest twice a year through the development of an irrigation system.

Moreover, the conditions of education and health in both communes are also better. Before the children could not go to school because of the lack of schools, but now, in each municipality, there are two schools: a primary school and a secondary school.

However, moving between villages is still difficult, especially during the rainy season. Roads become impassable because they are not hard-surfaced. According to the figures in the table above, the rate of asphalt roads and concrete is still low in the Xuan Phong commune (44.01%), while the roads are well developed in Tu Ly commune (73.87% of concrete roads). Because of the topography, water sources for irrigation are not yet in place and the irrigation canals are still rare. Access to public services in both communes has improved, but the quality of these services is still problematic.

3.2.2. Changes in credit

According to No. 78/2002/ND-CP Decree, poor households have the right to borrow money from the Bank of the Poor (also known as the Social Policies Bank) to invest in the production or to pay school fees for their children. Farmers, women, youth and veterans associations vouch for their members so that they can borrow money from the Social Policies Bank (SPB).

Poor ethnic minorities in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong communes can borrow money from the SBP if their objective to borrow money is one of the followings:

- Poverty reduction: all poor households registered on the list of poor households in the commune have the right to borrow up to 20 million VND to invest in their production. The interest rate is 0.65% per year and must be paid every month.

- Promoting education: all poor and pro-poor households have the right to borrow money to pay tuition for their children. The amount depends on the education of each university fees. Households can borrow money in the academic semester. The interest rate is 0.65% per year and must be paid every month.
- Encouraging the export of labor: the poor and non-poor households have the right to borrow money to invest in the export of labor abroad. The amount depends on the actual costs that farmers have to spend in order to go abroad. The interest rate is 0.9% per year and must be paid every month.
- Development of production activities and trade: all households can borrow a maximum of 30 million VND. The interest rate is 0.9% per year and must be paid every month.
- Environment protection: each family can borrow 4,000,000 VND to build sinks or toilets. The interest rate is 0.9% per year and must be paid every month from the fifth month after the loan.
- House improvement: poor households can borrow 8,000,000 VND to rebuild or repair their house. The interest rate is 0.65% per year for 10 years. Households pay interest from the fifth year.

To manage credit, each village creates a credit group. There are twelve credit groups in Xuan Phong commune and thirteen in Tu Ly commune. To borrow money from the SPB, farmers from ethnic minorities must belong to a credit group. Farmers, women, youth and veterans associations support the monitoring of investment activities and collecting interests. Each association is responsible for envioning three credit groups.

According to the farmers, access to credit is easier than before. However, the loan period is short. According to Mr. Ban Van Huynh (household group B), inhabiting in Can 2 village of Xuan Phong commune, *"the credit period is short, the procedures are complicated and the amount of credit is not enough to invest"*. He borrowed 5 million VND in the bank but the purchase of a buffalo cost him 7 million VND. He had to borrow money from his cousins to complete his credit.

Some households have the right to borrow funds, but they do not know how to handle this credit. This is the case of Mr. Ban Van Thiem.

Mr. Thiem family is poor (according to the poverty threshold). He lives in Mit village in Tu Ly communes. There are three people in his family: his wife, his son who is deaf and dumb and him. In his house, there is almost no valuables and only a few bags of rice in a corner. Last year, Mr. Thiem was part of the list of poor households who can borrow a loan to the bank. He did not want to borrow because he did not know what to do with the borrowed money, but the leaders of the commune have encouraged him borrowing, so that he finally did (2009 survey).

Apart from loans proposed by the Government in the two surveyed communes, other sources of funds are available from foreign organizations whose purpose is to facilitate the production to improve poor households living conditions. In Xuan Phong commune, ChildFund organization, through the women's association, has provided loans to farmers. Until 2010, this organization has provided a total of 600 million VND loans.

In summary, despite the different loans offers, the surveyed households still lack of an investment capital because the accumulations in production remain very low. Moreover, some households do not dare to borrow money from the bank because they are afraid of not having the ability to pay or they have no property to be mortgaged. Farmers often borrow money from their neighbors or from their family members. However, these loans are always small and borrowing time is short. These loans only meet needs in short term and are not used in production.

At the production level, farmers who have no money to buy inputs, often buy on credit and pay back after harvest.

Table 4: Sources of loans in Xuan Phong commune in 2010

Source of loans	Loan amount (Million VND)	Number of households taking out a loan
SPB Bank	1400	94
Childfund	600	992

Source: Women association

Table 5: Number of households taking out loans at SPB Bank in Tu Ly commune

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of households	412	460	650	660

Source: Tu Ly statistical office

4.2.3. Improvement of poor households' house conditions

The majority of households from poor ethnic minorities have very basic accommodation. They live in insalubrious shelters that often threaten to collapse and let in rain and wind. This is why the Vietnamese government decided to set up a support program for the construction of permanent houses.

The policy to support housing for the poor has been deployed by the decision number 167/2008/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister. It aims to improve the living conditions of the poor. Government grants to poor households 8.4 million VND / household. Apart from the budget allocated by the Government, poor households can borrow 8,000,000 VND for 10 years at an interest rate of 0.65% per year to the PSB Bank. Poor households (as defined by the poverty threshold) who live in a bamboo house with straw roofs receive this aid. Households who are above the poverty threshold but live in similar accommodation, do not have the right to receive this grant. 100% of households have to add a certain amount of money for this grant because it is not enough to build a new house, due to the rising cost of construction materials.

Since 1998 until today, 251 households have benefited from this policy in Tu Ly commune and 135 households in Xuan Phong commune.

Mr. Bui Van Dau, living in the Ru6 village, has benefited from this policy. Before his household was in the group A but now his households belongs

to the category B. 4 years ago, he received 8.4 million VND from the Government to rebuild his house. He said: *"It was enough to build this house because I did not have to buy the wood, I took it straight from the forest. Neighbors and people in my family helped me to build the house for free. I just had to prepare meals for them. I paid the sheets to make the roof and nails. Now it is difficult to build this house with 7 million VND since there isn't any wood available and we must buy it"*.

Table 6: Status of accommodation conditions in the two studied villages in 2012

	Xuan Phong	Tu Ly
Number of houses	750	1385
Number of insalubrious or in poor condition houses	30	257
Number of brick houses	168	485
Number of wooden houses	552	643

Source: Statistical office of communes

Due to a limited budget, only a limited number of household can benefit from this aid every year. Households are selected by villagers' vote. The table above shows the current status of houses conditions in the two studied municipalities. The figures in the table show that there are still households living in very insalubrious houses.

3.2.4. Improving ethnic minority farmers' knowledge

The development of human capital is at the heart of the program of poverty reduction in Vietnam. Investment in education, health and agricultural production techniques extension are an essential part of poverty eradication policies.

In this section, social interactions are highlighted in order to show the role of social organizations, especially those of women and farmers, to help farmers to act more effectively in their production through increased resource productivity.

- Improved access to health and education

First, we must take into account social policies that aim to strengthen human resources, such as health and education support policies.

Poor households have free access to public health services through a health insurance card. Each person from a poor family receives a free medical insurance card that is valid for one year.

There are also policies to support education for poor families' children, from preschool to secondary and higher education. The support varies depending on poverty level of the family: tuition exemption or reduction, aid to buy books, scholarships. In general, children from poor families can go to school due to the tuition fees exemption.

Table 7: Number of households benefiting from policies to support education and health in both towns

	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>1. Policy to support education for poor households</i>				
- Number of households with children exonerated of tuition fees in Tu Ly	455	435	366	327
- Number of households whose children attended training for new professions in Tu Ly	323	328	240	250
- Number of households with children exonerated of tuition fees in Xuan Phong				416
<i>2. Policy to support health care for poor households</i>				
- Total number of households with a medical insurance card in Tu Ly	365	365	296	417
- Total insurance cards issued to the poor in Xuan Phong				1813

Source: Statistical Office of the two communes

- *Farmers training in farming techniques and everyday life*

Agricultural production techniques extension is recognized by the majority of agricultural scientists as an important component of agricultural development. Investment in agricultural research, extension and education will result in a steady increase in agricultural productivity.

Agricultural and forestry extension plays an important role in helping poor households to get out of poverty. Extension programs are part of control programs of poverty reduction in Vietnam, as the CPRGS program, the 135 program and the 30a program. This is why it is difficult for farmers to recognize that they are the beneficiaries of such programs. Moreover, there is no coordination between programs. Activities are often repeated and therefore the resources to reduce poverty wasted.

Poor households (group A) and non-poor households (groups B, C, D) take part in these trainings. This mix of social classes is positive and allows poor households to observe and imitate the activities of non-poor households.

Initially, farmers assessed positively the agricultural training because they met their needs. For example, before, the farmers did not know the cultivation timetable, but now the calendar is elaborated and distributed in public. Training often provides information needed at the beginning of each growing season to help farmers in production. However, in recent years, there has been no up-to-date training and they do not take into account the basic needs of poor households.

The following tables show the results of training in the two studied communes. They only show quantitative results, as the number of courses and participants, but there is no indicator on the quality of training. Do farmers apply the acquired knowledge after the training? According to the farmers, it is difficult to apply all the techniques learned because they do not have enough financial resources.

Farmers' techniques are highly influenced by their customs and habits, which makes it difficult to introduce new techniques. According to the farmers, they can not apply the method of manuring because it is too expensive and they do not have enough financial capital.

Moreover, some farmers participate in training extension for the sole purpose of receiving grants because trainings do not meet their needs.

Since there are often delays in the granting of budgets, training is sometimes held only to spend the money allocated for the year.

We also notice the constant participation of associations in these activities. Farmers and women associations in both communes play a role of informers among the participants. They participate in discussions on the budget or the selection of beneficiaries for such activities, but they do not play a central role in building a program based on the farmers' needs and demands.

3.3. Ethnic minority farmer's perceptions from on the changes in the two surveyed communes

In both surveyed communes, it is not difficult to notice the positive changes in rural development strategies in general and the poverty reduction in particular. People's perception about the changes in the two communes after Doi Moi is illustrated in the following table.

Table 8: Farmers viewpoint modification

	% of agreement
Traffic improvement	95.00
Population density increase	68.33
Better cohesion between farmers	68.33
Earning money is easier	60.00
Agricultural production is easier	70.00
Agricultural production is harder	11.67
Number of "beautiful" house had increased	45.00
More work	66.67
More children attend school	90.00
Children health has improved	56.67
Diseases has decreased	35.00
Easier to find a job	33.33
Harder to find a job	11.67
Crop losses	36.67

Source: Survey in 2009

Through this table, we can notice that living conditions in the two communes have significantly improved through changes in infrastructure, education and health. There is no doubt about the benefits of development aid. They contribute to economic growth, poverty reduction and social development.

3.4. Problems in the implementation of aid to poverty reduction

3.4.1. Beneficiaries' identification issues in projects to poverty reduction

The beneficiaries of policies against poverty are poor. According to Decision No. 170/2005/QĐ-TTg dated 08/07/2005 of the Prime Minister, a person is poor if he has less than 260 000 VND per month in urban areas, or less than 200 000 VND per month in rural areas (poverty threshold 2006-2010). Local authorities classify the poor and non-poor using participatory methods, that is to say that the villagers are asked to say who is poorer or richer than other ones.

However, by default, the beneficiaries of poverty reduction policies implemented by the Government are households identified as poor by the national poverty threshold. In the two surveyed municipalities, reality has shown that selecting beneficiaries based only on income poverty threshold is not relevant because poverty cannot be reduced to a single indicator. Indeed, two households may have the same level of financial life but a very different vulnerability, and in this case, they do not need the same kind of help.

3.4.2. Determination of poor households by the MOLISA method in the two studied communes

The MOLISA and Departments of Labor Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA) poverty data collection is based on a 'perception' index carried out under a MOLISA circular No. 04/2007/TT-BLĐTBXH, dated 28 February, 2007. Data are collected once a year at the end of the year in November. The survey is processed and the record is published in the first quarter of the following year thereby giving the list of household and household members to receive benefits during the one year period following the publishing of the list.

The poverty data collection starts at the Commune level where a Commune survey board is established to review household wellbeing. This board includes the heads of villages and representatives from associations and unions. The survey board reviews the poverty situation in a fully participatory manner and submits the results to a District Survey Board for approval and subsequently to the Commune People’s Committee to include a new list of those who have not escaped poverty. The assessment is based on those household judged to be below the poverty line which are then listed.

At the commune level, we can see that the chiefs of villages and the communal officials play a very important role in determining precise figures for the rate of poverty of the people.

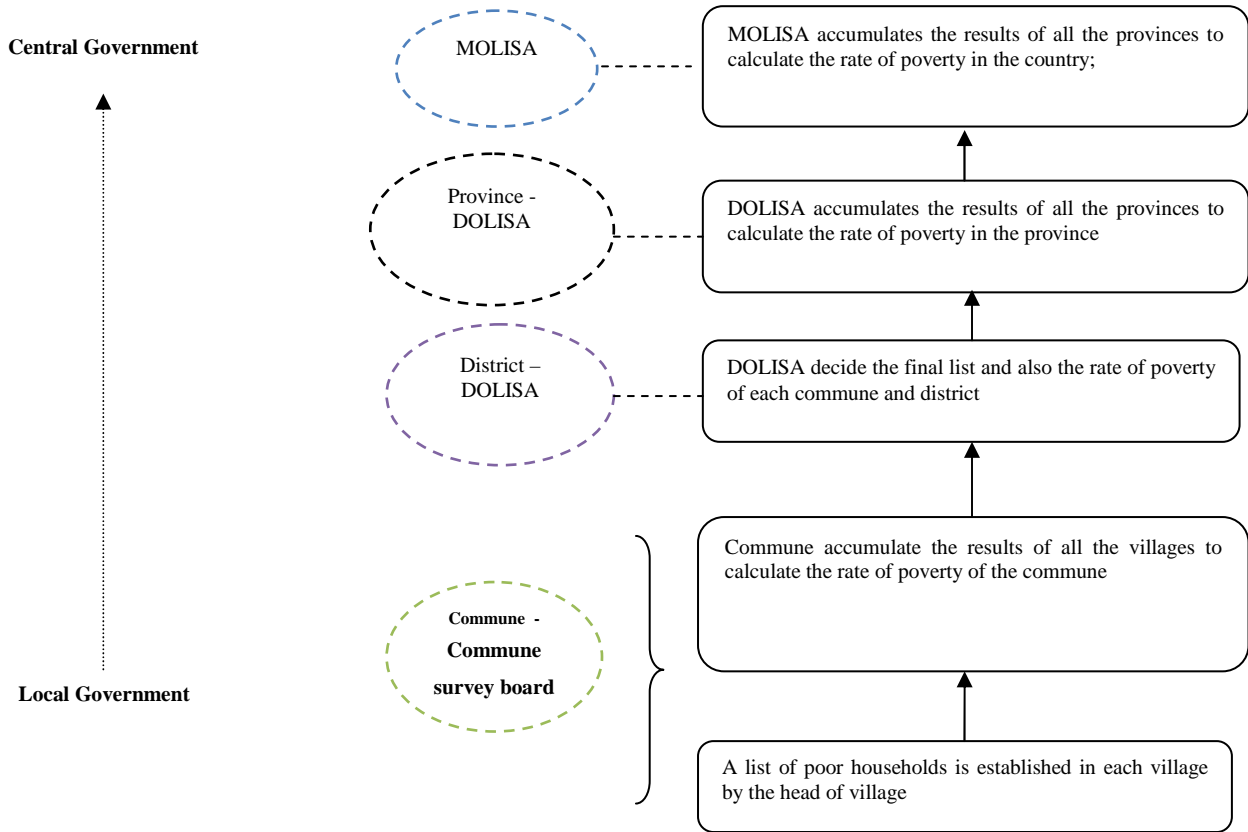


Figure 1-Level of Administrative authority to manage poor household

There are two groups of households which are analyzed. The first includes the poor households of the previous year, but that are perhaps no more poor in the revised year. The second group is composed of households

which were not poor last year but have become poor during the revised year.

First of all, village leaders write in priority two lists of the two groups of households to be analyzed, and based on revised data from the previous year and their observations throughout the year: one list for those likely to exit poverty and one for those having an income below the poverty line. Then, they take in consideration the revised criteria of MOLISA like: the changes which have occurred in the status of active labors in the household; situation of income, welfare, cropland, the basic living conditions - like electricity, water, accommodation in the house and also the risks in the production activity. Henceforth they are able to calculate the points acquired by each household on the list. It should also be noted that all these changes are in relation to the change of income and expenditure of households. Therefore, if households in the first list have more than 10 points, they are no longer in the criteria of poverty, and if households in the second list have 10 or more, are at risk of being poor during the period calculated.

Table 1: Quick assessment of households likely to get out of poverty (For Poor household in original year list (e.g 2008), newly split / merged household excluding moved household)

Changes in labor status, employment and household living standard (in 08-09)		Score
1	Additional household member(s) generating regular income of more than 500,000 VND per month in rural areas, or working as export worker(s) for more than 18 months	8
2	Rapidly increased income from current/ new or additional job for more than 6 months	6
3	Purchase of equipment/ working tools worth more than 5 million dong or of livestock/ cattle worth more than 10 million dong (from the household income)	6
4	House clearly improved (from household income) or newly built better than former house	5
6	Purchase of durable assets worth more than 1 million (from household income)	4
7	Increased farming land [gaining 1 point for each 360m ² increased]	3
8	Living conditions like electricity, clean water, toilets,... clearly improved with household income	3
9	Windfall (land compensation, winning lottery of more than 10 million dong, bumper crops for 2 consecutive years, ...)	3
10	Misfortune of the family has passed for at least 12 months (ill recovery, seriously ill member died, overcoming business/ production hazards)	3
Total Score		

Source: MOLISA 2009

Table 2: Quick assessment of household likely to fall into poverty (Non-poor household in original year (e.g 2008), including migrated household, non-poor split/ merged household in the year.)

Bad events in 2008 – 2009		Score
1	Main source of income lost due to poor harvest, natural disaster, disease, unfortunate in business/ production... and recovery is impossible and lack of support from relatives	8
2	Breadwinner losing work ability for long term seriously affects household income	8
3	Land sold to cover household member suffering from serious illness for months	6
4	School-age child/ children dropping out due to the lack of money	4
6	household member involving in drug use, gambling, alcoholism, social vices	4
7	Newly split household or newly born child without additional income.	3
8	Bad luck forces the household to sell existing furniture, production tools to buy daily food	3
9	Other hazards (like losing fortunity...)	3
Total Score		

Source: MOLISA 2009

For households in the second list, who have reached the number 10 and more, the village chief will once again review their revenue and their expenditures to determine the annual income of the household. All activities of production in agriculture and non agricultural activities (including the proceeds of sale and consumption), wages and other revenues are revised. The household income is calculated as the balance between revenue and expenditure. Finally the total household income is divided by the number of people in the family and then divided into 12 months. If the household income is 200,000 VND/person/month, one can say that it is poor.

There may be recommendations soon from the Institute of Labor Science and Social Affairs (ILSSA) that household which are classified as being 'permanently poor' due to health or age reasons need not be reassessed annually but included on the poverty list permanently. Once the lists are generated there is a poll conducted by the Village Heads at the village level by way of a show of hands to check that the survey board lists are

correct. The poverty lists are then submitted to the Commune People's Committee (CPC) for checking and consolidation prior to forwarding it to the District People's Committee (DPC), District sub-DOLISA and Provincial (DOLISA) levels.

Once the CPC has stamped and signed the poverty lists these are final and are not altered by either DPC or Provincial authorities. These lists are important as they are the means of monitoring those households that may continue to improve as well as those that for various reasons slide back into poverty.

The reliability of the income figures of peasants

The question is if the two communes' poverty rate reflects the reality of poverty in these communes? In reality, the calculation of families income - particularly rural families - is not at all easy. How can you ask a rural family to remind all its revenues and all its expenses for one year and especially if the source of its revenue is diverse and very unstable?

For example, there are farmers who have no regular work. Some months they have more or less 15 working days, but there are also months they do not have any work or sometimes the payment is done in meals. It is then impossible to have a precise figure for the level of income. The people involved in this task should have to be extremely competent – and very rigorous, they should have a representative core questionnaire of the situation of the villagers, more availability, and a strict methodology to ask questions. Such a lot of requirements is clearly above the ordinary capacities of local enquirers who moreover are often charged with many other administrative tasks.

Moreover, the calculations are based on the price level existing in the two communes whereas the poverty level of 200.000VND/month/person was based on the average price level of all rural areas in Viet Nam. Therefore one can have doubts about the meaning of establishing the poverty situation in the two communes in relation with such an average national threshold of reference.

On the other hand, there are always differences between the calculated figures and the figures presented in the official report of the communes. This change seems linked with contradictory pressures which influence the poverty policy of the communal authorities. There are two main reasons. The first one is the so-called "results disease" which point to the

tendency of the commune head to decrease the rate of poverty in order to show that its social economic development plan is reached. The other reason is the desire to attract investments and non-governmental organizations with the discourse: "we are still very poor, we need help". And that leads to a tendency to increase the poverty rate higher than the reality.

It is probably better to let the municipality officials in charge of the revision of the rate of poverty, because these people know and understand all the details of the daily reality of their commune. However, in the two studied communes, all village heads do not master the required capabilities to review the situation of poor households. But they have the right to decide who are poor and who are not, who are the beneficiaries of the poverty alleviation strategy, and also who will receive grants from the Government.

3.4.3. Poor household identification according to villagers

By going on the field, I had long and interesting discussions with village leaders about their views on the definition of poverty. According to them, the poor households are households that have difficulties in all areas of life such as the lack of land, house in poor condition, no valuables, or with a permanently sick family member, etc...

The villagers, who have no technical knowledge about the extent of poverty, have described a very realistic picture of it, influenced by economic change and progress in the country's agricultural development. Before, the situation was very homogeneous and the image of poverty was also more homogeneous. Everyone in the village lived in the same conditions (starvation, lack in all areas of life). With economic development, living conditions have improved and the inequality among families has become increasingly clear, as well as the image of poverty.

Our discussion is summarized in the following table:

Indicator	Poor	Average	Rich
House	House made of bamboo or bad quality wood, wall made from wooden bars and neohoizeaua ¹ , covering of straw or pieces of "fibro ciment"	Good quality wood, wall made from wooden bar, covering of straw or pieces of "fibro ciment"	Made of concrete
Valuables	Low value, old items, almost nothing; only one bed.	Average value, enough for a normal life, one motorbike	High value, a car, a tiller
Workers	A few working persons Low cultivation capacity Lazy Handicapped	=>2 persons Knowledge about the cultivation schedule, fertilizer use, ... Hard-working	> 2 persons Hard-working
Land, forest, garden	A little and barren Far Do not know how to cultivate	Enough land Cultivate all lands	Enough land Cultivate all lands
Livestock heads	None	A beef or a buffalo Pigs	Many cattle heads or buffalo, many pigs
Poultry	None or few	Yes	Yes
Social relations	Low	Quite good	Good or very good

Apart from the discussion with the target groups, I met different people during my investigation. According to Mr Xa, Chau village, commune Tu Ly: *" previously, poverty was synonymous with famine, and the poor family was a family which had nothing, neither money nor goods." The poor family could not borrow to anybody since everyone was in the same situation. Now, a family is poor but is not hungry, she still has means of production and may borrow to somebody else in case of necessity.*

¹ Bamboo specie : nua

Moreover a poor family can rely upon what the Government or other organizations can give. "In summary, the poor family of before had more difficulty than the poor family of today.

According to him, there are many reasons why a family is poor. In first instance one has the lack of land to cultivate or / and the lack of active workers. Another reason is that the family has many children or members who are frequently sick, or many disabled and elderly people, so the revenues are minimal whereas the spending is high. Another reason is that the active workers are lazy. According to him, families who are in the second case, still have the opportunity to get out of poverty when their children grow up or disease is cured. The last example is a more difficult situation because the families do not have the courage to leave poverty by themselves.

According to Ms. Bui Thi Du, head of the association of the Women Union of the Xuan Phong commune: *"previously, when the Government had not yet set the poverty line, we analyzed ourselves the situation of each household via the opinion of the villagers. For example, there were 30 households in the village, and a family was named on the list by other families if that family met the criteria of poverty based on their personal observation and their daily lives with each other. If a family had 80-100% of votes, it meant that it was a poor family."*

According to her, today poor households are taken in consideration in the directives of the Government and organizations. That is why they have received a lot of help. On the contrary before poor families had nothing. She thinks that instead of helping only these families that are named "poor" according to the criteria of the "poverty threshold", one should focus also on families that are not poor but who need to get out of their precarious situation.

Today, the poverty assessment of the villagers is based upon their observation of the way of life of everyone in comparing the families within their environment. This assessment can be not just as one plus one equals two, but it reflects the current reality. The villagers know the families who need cakes and those who need materials to make cakes. For those who need cakes, there is no easy solution to get out of poverty, but in the other case, there are opportunities if they get help. This can be a base to decide the type of assistance for each case. It could therefore be

suggested to promote a type of representative ad hoc association which could offer grassroots information support to the existing local assemblies, represent the villagers to monitor their current problems in daily life and in production, and which could also inform properly the local government.

3.5. Poor and non-poor household diagnosis: approach in terms of capacity

The purpose of poor household identification is to define which people have to be the beneficiaries of the subsidies from the Government. Each studied commune includes more or less 12 villages, each village has its village chief, who is appointed by the vote of the villagers. The village chief has the responsibility to determine who are the poor households, in order to distribute the subsidies from the Government.

Households included in the list of poor households of the village enjoy diverse types of aid including a reduction in the cost of study for the children of the household, provision of free health care, and money and rice in the new year occasion. Households that are not in the list receive nothing. This fact has actually created many problems. Because of the lack of an appropriate framework to tackle the real conditions of poverty, there are many households who are not poor according to the monetary threshold of poverty, but they have very precarious living conditions. These households could get out of their vulnerability in a sustainable way only if the Government and other organizations give them an appropriate aid. It would be better to take in consideration all households which are in a precarious situation. But the latest cannot be reduced only to being under a certain monetary threshold which is very elusive, due to the high rate of inflation. If one does continue with the present system, many people look at it as a sort of lottery in which one has to try, by all means, to win ‘the gifts of God’ , and stick after to the “status of poor” which has been won. That is shown by the attitude of households which have already been once subsidized, and who do not want to abandon their “privileged” status.

In the following section we try to give some indications of the discrepancy between a poverty line based upon a monetary threshold, and the more general features of precarious conditions of living.

In this part, we have taken 4 groups of households to consider their respective ability to meet their needs in their daily lives. They are comparisons between poor households and other groups of households who are not poor - according to the poverty threshold - but who are still very vulnerable. The message from this analysis is that the first three household groups A, B and C have the same problem to ensure household food security and have similar living conditions.

3.5.1. Human capital

Human capital is the set of productive skills acquired through the accumulation of general and specific knowledge, skills, etc. Each person has its own capital that comes from personal donations, innate and training. His stock of intangible capital can accumulate or wear out. The human capital of a household is based on the number of people, their age, level of education and health.

In Vietnam, the policy was to encourage the implementation of a family planning to limit births. Precocious marriages were banned and natural and medical methods for contraception explained to the public. That is why, now, the average size of households in the two studied villages is estimated at 4.7 persons and the average labor per household is 3 people. The household head average age is about 42-43 years and the average education level is elementary school. There is no significant difference between groups of households.

Table 9: Characteristics of surveyed households

	Ind.	Tu Ly (I)				Xuan Phong (II)			
		Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Household head average age	Year	40	43	48	52	36	41	37	44
Household head school level	Class	4	7	7	7	5	5	5	7
Average number of persons per household	Pers.	4.1	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.6	4.6	5.2
Average labor per household	Pers.	2.3	3.4	2.9	3.3	2.4	2.9	3.1	3.6

Source: Survey in 2009

The "age of head of household" and "head of household education level" variables are extremely important because they allow us to understand the farms development dynamics. The age of the manager makes it possible to identify the importance of the processes of accumulation and capitalization that play depending on the position in the household life cycle. For example, the diversity of household labor may vary depending on the age of the household head and this may have an impact on family income.

If we compare the average household size and average labor per household between different groups in the two communes studied, we see that there is no disproportion. However, we can see that the education level of household heads is still very low and this has a direct impact on the capacity of households to apply new technologies in their production system.

Access to education and health also improved. 100% of the households surveyed say thanks to changes in education, their children have a chance to go to school. Both communes now have primary and secondary schools in good condition, divided into groups of villages to restrict the movement of children. At primary and secondary school, unequal access to education between social classes is not too obvious.

For households in the group A, children should not pay the cost of education. For other groups, parents must pay all costs of education and they do not receive any government support for their children education.

Like education, the health sector has improved considerably in recent years. Currently, most children are vaccinated against major diseases. Poor families with a certificate of poverty do not pay hospitalization. However, despite the capacity improvement of the health center in the commune compared to before, it is still very limited. Only four or five people work there permanently (especially nurses) and health center has only four to six beds for a population of 5,000 people.

There are three types of active person in the villages of two communes: active person in the household, the exchange of workers between household and workers receiving a salary. The first two types dominate in agricultural activities. The gender divisions are recognized in households depending on the type of tasks. The woman is not engaged only in domestic work, she is also involved in direct production as rice transplanting. However, for some tasks, the division is less clear, such as harvesting, land clearing and planting. These are shared between men and women in the household. The labor exchange is a reciprocal arrangement. In the event that an active worker of the household works for another household, he may appeal to the active worker of the household to perform the same number of working days. This exchange takes place when the season of sowing and harvesting arrives.

There are two cases of workers receiving a salary. The first case includes workers receiving their wages daily (45.83% of the households surveyed). Most of them work in agriculture. The second case includes workers receiving their salary monthly (14.17%). They work for the government or in factories in other provinces. The majority of people who work in factories are young people with a high school degree (pre-university). So there is a migration of young professionals with a high level of education to the city.

If before the poor families were families with few active workers and many children, now it is not always the case. There are poor families whose active workers are lazy.

If before the differences between ethnic groups in the lifestyle, culture and also in the production activity were clear, now it's the opposite. The

maintenance of cultural traditions is not obvious except for weddings and funerals.

In general, the first three groups face the same obstacles in human capital. A limited level of education, a lack of knowledge in production activities, doubts and ancestral habits about farming are also factors that prevent farmers capacities development.

3.5.2. Physical capital

Physical capital accumulated provides a comprehensive picture of the state of the equipment and infrastructure of an economy at a given time. Increasing the amount of physical capital ensures the production of goods and services in the future. In addition, it allows the substitution of economic capital to human and environmental capital in production activities.

In rural areas, especially mountainous areas, infrastructure is an important factor in the contribution and the capacity of communities in general and farmers in particular. In the past, the topography was too rugged and it was very difficult to move, so the villagers of the two communes had great difficulty in accessing public services. Since 2000, thanks to the 135 program of the Government and other non-governmental programs, infrastructure of both communes has been improved and the main roads were built to facilitate the movement. Access to education (primary and secondary schools), access to health (medical center), and access to communication services (mail) have been developed in both municipalities. That is why education and health at farm level has improved. Farmers can know what is happening outside their community.

Housing conditions of the families

The following table lists the equipment owned by households. In groups A and B, the rate of households having a television is low. It increases in groups C and D. Motorcycles and bicycles are commonly used by farmers to move. There is no significant difference in the possession of a motorcycle between groups A and B, but the financial value of motorcycles of these two groups is low.

Only Group D in Xuan Phong, and groups C and D in Tu Ly have refrigerators and gas cookers.

Most households use wood stove. They take advantage of the natural resources of the forest. Two or three times a week, families (always women) go into the forest to collect wood for the fire.

Table 10: Facilities in the house

Indicator: %

Goods	Xuan Phong				Tu Lý			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Television	26.67	33.33	73.33	60.00	33.33	53.33	60.00	80.00
Fan	13.33	26.67	66.67	46.67	40.00	60.00	46.67	80.00
Motorbike	13.33	40.00	53.33	66.67	40.00	46.67	60.00	80.00
Refrigerator	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.67	0.00	6.67	6.67	40.00
Wardrobe	0.00	20.00	20.00	40.00	6.67	20.00	0.00	40.00
Bicycle	6.67	6.67	40.00	60.00	20.00	13.33	26.67	53.33
Gaz stove	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.67
Wood stove	100.00	100.00	100.00	80.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	93.33
Telephone	13.33	46.67	53.33	60.00	6.67	46.67	46.67	66.67
Radio	0.00	13.33	6.67	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: Survey in 2009

The following table gives us a picture of the accommodation condition of the studied groups. Currently, enormous changes take place. The number of houses made of mud walls (or wall made of bamboo) with a straw roof fell gradually giving way to houses with tiles or sheet metal roof. However, in general, houses in groups A and B are still in poor condition.

Table 11: accommodation condition of the studied groups*Indicator: %*

	Tu Ly				Xuan Phong			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
1. House								
Mud wall and thatched roof	26.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bamboo wall and thatched or tiled roof	46.67	6.67	13.33	0.00	53.33	6.67	13.33	0.00
Wooden wall and thatched, tiled or sheet metal roof	13.33	80.00	33.33	0.00	40.00	93.33	53.33	40.00
Brick wall and cement, tiled or sheet metal roof	13.33	13.33	53.33	100.00	6.67	0.00	33.33	60.00
2. Toilets								
Traditional tank and brick wall around	-	6.67	13.33	66.67	60.00	60.00	53.33	100.00
Traditional tank without brick wall around	100.00	93.33	86.67	33.33	40.00	40.00	46.67	0.00
3. Main source of water supply								
Suction pump / private wells	40.00	60.00	66.67	66.67	20.00	13.33	13.33	0.00
Protected public wells	33.33	13.33	20.00	13.33	80.00	80.00	80.00	86.67
Pond / Stream / River ...	26.67	26.67	13.33	20.00	0.00	6.67	6.67	13.33
4. Financial supply to build house								
Savings	40.00	73.33	73.33	93.33	40.00	40.00	53.33	60.00
Aid from family	6.67	6.67	13.33	0.00	6.67		20.00	20.00
Loan	26.67	26.67	33.33	33.33	26.67	33.33	60.00	46.67
Aid from the village	13.33				20.00	13.33	20.00	

Source: Survey in 2009

Most households in groups A, B and C in Tu Ly have outdoor toilets. In Xuan Phong, toilets are more modern than Tu Ly. They are the result of a development project implemented in the village.

The main source of water supply for groups of the two communes has gradually changed. Most people know the importance of water in their daily lives. The percentage of households with a private lift pump in Tu Ly is higher than that in Xuan Phong. In Xuan Phong, public protected wells reserved for the community were constructed with the ChildFund project.

3.5.4. Land ownership

Policy formalization of land rights really started in 1993. The land is given to farmers for a long term use. They have five rights toward this land: the right of disposal, conversion, lease, inheritance and mortgage. Since 1998, farmers have two additional rights: the right to sublet and the right to use their land as capital. In 2001, farmers have the right to offer their land to their friends or relatives and are compensated in cases land is recovered by the State. In 2004, for the first time, the land is regarded as a special commodity that can be exchanged on the market. This has led to strong growth of the land market. The benefits of land privatization in the economic market are obvious.

Owning farmland is very important for farmers because it has an impact on household food self-sufficiency. The observation at the commune showed that there was no inequality in the distribution of paddy fields between categories, especially between groups A and B, with the Land Law. However, there are currently couples who immigrated and have no cultivated land because of this policy. About wood lands, redistribution is more unequal because households in groups A and B continue to face difficulties in terms of time and capital to invest in forest cultivation.

In both municipalities studied, there are two main types of land: the paddy fields and hill or forest lands. In general, the average size of land owned by groups A and B households is not significantly different.

The following table shows that the average area of agricultural land owned by the surveyed households is small due to a complicated topography in the two communes. The ability to reach cereal self-sufficiency is strongly related to the number and quality of land plots owned, while the area cultivated by households in the two communes is

very limited. The average agricultural area per household in Tu Ly is 0.15 ha and 0.13 ha in Xuan Phong. However, the number of households with food crops in the Xuan Phong is higher than in Tu Ly but mainly due to a larger population in this commune.

Tableau 12: Surveyed households lands characteristics

Season	Groupe A		Groupe B		Groupe C		Groupe D	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Tu Ly								
% households with paddy fields	53.33	60.00	73.33	80.00	73.33	60.00	60.00	73.33
Average paddy field area per household (m ²)	1362.5	1385.6	1363.6	1670.1	1392.7	1524.4	1891.1	1995.3
Minimum	300	200	500	500	500	720	320	320
Maximum	2400	2400	2400	3042	3000	3000	4000	4700
Xuan Phong								
% households with paddy fields	100,00	86,67	100,00	80,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	93,33
Average paddy field area per household (m ²)	840.4	868.7	1086.9	883.0	1152.8	1352.4	2034.5	1815.4
Minimum	100	150	150	150	700	400	740	1000
Maximum	3000	3000	2000	2400	2000	2758	3100	3000

Source: Survey in 2009 (1: Spring; 2: Summer)

If we compare the average area of farmland between household groups, we see that the difference is not obvious. However, the difference between the minimum and the maximum of this area is remarkable. The minimum acreage per household in Tu Ly is 0.03 ha and 0.01 ha in Xuan Phong and the maximum area is 0.5 ha in Tu Ly and 0.36 ha in Xuan Phong. The accumulation of cultivated land is a common practice in both municipalities studied.

The rate of households with woodlands is important. However, the area of forested land owned by households is significantly different if the household belongs to groups A, B, C or D.

Table 13: Area of woodlands surveyed households

	Groupe A		Groupe B		Groupe C		Groupe D	
	TL	XP	TL	XP	TL	XP	TL	XP
Average forest land area per household (ha)	1.05	0.88	1.57	0.88	1.58	0.77	3.72	1.75
min (ha)	0.15	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4
max (ha)	2.5	3	5	2	4	2	14	6,2
% of households with forest lands	80.00	40.00	80.00	60.00	73.33	86.67	86.67	60.00

Source: Survey in 2009

In both studied communes, it is difficult to collect data on households' land ownership from 1993 to today because of the weakness of the communes statistical office. A change of caretakers over the years and poor conservation of archives, even over the last three years have made our research difficult. That's why we have tried to understand the history of land ownership through interviews with villagers.

We asked farmer groups to relate historical events and the use of forest land, especially before and after the land reform implemented in the two studied communes. The advantages and disadvantages have been highlighted through the farmers' opinion. The opinions expressed have shown farmers' rights in the use and access to forest lands.

According to farmers, the period from 1975 to 1991 was marked by forest degradation. At that time, forest resources were considered endless. Farmers were exploiting the forest in a massive way, primarily wood for the paper industry, for construction or as an energy source. Commercial logging was set by ethnic minorities to ensure their needs in extra income. Slash and burn agriculture was often performed during this period. After the privatization law of forest land, the practice of slash and burn agriculture has declined because of the limitation of forest land for each and the implementation of the law to protect the natural forest.

According to the farmers from ethnic minorities, private ownership has encouraged people to invest in their forests and the development of perennial plantations. However, farmers could obtain individual benefits within the limits of their forests. Ethnic groups who depended entirely on the practice of burning were experiencing many difficulties to be self-

sufficient in food because they had little rice and lacked technical and capital to invest in paddy cultivation.

Before the implementation of this law, people could hunt or practice harvesting in forests for daily food. Formerly, non-wood products such as wood, forest animals, fruits, herbs were abundant in forests and ensured a minimum of food security in times of deprivation. Now, biodiversity has decreased because of new forests planted. According to the farmers, we do not find some types of non-timber forest products in forest such as black fungus, monkeys, deer, roe deer.

In addition, livestock grazing has also declined because of the privatization of forest lands and new forests which resulted in a decrease of cattle. Farmers must graze their buffalo along the fields or in the garden near the house.

During the distribution of forest land in the 90s, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the program 327 were committed to provide seeds and food aid to households who cultivated forests. Farmers participated in the program for the sole purpose of receiving the food aid because they were very hungry.

Moreover, the distribution of forest land was not made clearly and the lists of households which received forest land have not been published. In terms of forest land, rich peasants had received more woodlands than poor households.

Obtaining the certificate of ownership of forest land avoids conflicts and disputes in the distribution of forest land. Households are very happy because they are certain that no one can claim the acquisition of their land. However, there is a trend towards an increasing differentiation within the peasantry. A minority of farmers could, by various means, get large concessions and enriched themselves visibly, while the majority experienced great difficulties to take the benefits of this reform of forest land. This is a real concern, especially from the point of view of the evolution towards new forms of poverty in the village.

The Vietnamese Government gives farmers the right to own forest land without taking into account the fact that small farmers, especially the poor, cannot properly operate and manage their forests due to limited access to credit, technology and infrastructure. However, poor farmers face food problems because of a lack of rice. This is why owning forest

land gives farmers the opportunity to sell their land for quick money and then try to seize new opportunities in the labor market.

Table 14: Brief history of forest land through discussions with farmers from ethnic minorities in the two municipalities studied

Period	Before 1960	1960-1975	1975-1990	1990 until today
Natural resources	Lush forest Lowlands available for agriculture High biodiversity	Lush forest Valleys and lowlands available for agriculture High biodiversity	Rapid deforestation of the slopes Hills soil degradation near the village	Rapid degradation of forest cover Severe erosion and soil acidification on the slopes Rapid loss of biodiversity
Agriculture	Shifting cultivation in the mountains, long fallow periods Rice managed collectively Subsistence farming	Fixation of agriculture in the shallows Collective management of natural resources Rice intensification: improved varieties, fertilizer, chemical fertilizer	Lowland saturation Collective management in the lowlands, individual on the slopes Development of agriculture on slopes despite bans	Reduction of the fallow period on the slopes Management of natural resources at the family farm level Agricultural intensification on the slopes of nearby villages: terraces, hedges, etc.
Social and economic environment	Little contact between ethnic groups occupying lowlands and those occupying mountains Low population density Low market integration	Prohibition of clearing land and forestry for private use Increasing population density: the immigrants settle in the lowlands Cooperative system	Crops on slopes in remote areas of the village to ensure food self-sufficiency Increasing population density Inefficiency of the cooperative system	The lowlands don't longer ensure food security Allocation of land to farmers New boundaries of villages

Source: Discussion with farmers

Wild food from picking can roughly be divided into two types: food and non-timber products which are used to generate family income. The wild food which is used as food is bamboo shoots, mushrooms, wild vegetables.

The collection also allows the family to source materials such as firewood, and wood materials (wood, bamboo, rattan).

Ms Ly Thi Lien, 43, lives in the village of Mit Town Tu Ly: *"Before, when I was a child, we went to the forest to hunt monkeys, deer, pig, muntjacs and pick black mushrooms for sale or to feed the family. Now, we no longer found them. I often go into the forest to collect bamboo shoots and plants for pig breeding or for our meal. I often pick wood for the fire. "*

In conclusion, there are inconsistencies between policy and local practice. Many small farmers are uncertain about how to develop their forest lands. Forest lands allocated to poor households are often sterile and without technical and financial support from the government. Under these conditions, it is extremely difficult for farmers to engage in long-term exploitation of forests and to earn a living through this activity.

It seems that the poorest ethnic minorities prefer a community forest management to ensure first food security. Ethnic minorities tend to gather a wide variety of forest products over a large area, which exceeds the limit of an individual plot of forest land. Some people are reluctant to receive parcels of forest land and invest in forestry, fearing that it would force them to stop cutting plants from other lands of illegal cultivation and located outside their communities.

Social discrimination between rich and poor has increased because of the distribution of forest land. Poor households tend to sell their forests to the rich and the forest land accumulation is a practice that has emerged in recent years.

3.5.5. Credit

Through the tables, we find that the rate of households belonging to group A and having borrowed money from the bank for Social Policy is the highest of the two studied communes. In Xuan Phong, most households of Group A have borrowed between 5 and 7 million VND to buy a buffalo. Groups who borrow 10-30 million VND invest in sugarcane cultivation. In Tu Ly, the money borrowed is higher than in Xuan Phong. According to the

farmers, the borrowed money is invested in farming or forestry. Investment in livestock production is about 10 million VND and the one in forestry is 20 to 30 million VND.

Table 15: Percentage of households with credit

	Xuan Phong		Tu Ly	
	Quantit y	%	Quantit y	%
Number of surveyed households	30		30	
Number of households taking out a loan	22	73.33	24	80.00
at the Bank for Social Policies	18	81.82	16	66.67
- <i>Group A</i>	7	38.89	7	43.75
- <i>Group B</i>	7	38.89	4	25
- <i>Group C</i>	2	11.11	2	12.50
- <i>Group D</i>	2	11.11	3	18.,75
at the Agricultural and Rural Development Bank	4	18.18	8	33
- <i>Group A</i>	0	0.00	1	12.5
- <i>Group B</i>	1	25	4	50
- <i>Group C</i>	2	50	2	25
- <i>Group D</i>	1	25	1	12.5

Source: Survey 2010

Table 16: Amount borrowed by households (1000.000 VND)

Financial Source	Tu Ly				Xuan Phong			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Bank for Social Policies								
- Average amount borrowed per household	14.29	24.29	19	20	8	7.5	12.5	31.67
<i>Min</i>	10	10	8	15	5	6	10	20
<i>Max</i>	30	40	30	25	10	10	15	50
Agricultural and Rural Development Bank								
- Average amount borrowed per household		25	17.5	30	10	10	10.5	10
<i>Min</i>		25	15	30	10	10	7	10
<i>Max</i>		25	20	30	10	10	14	10

Source: Survey 2010

3.5.6. Social networks

The cohesion of the community is still present in both municipalities. In each village, farmers know each other well. They even know every details of their neighbors' life such as equipment and plots owned, even their habits. Village leaders know all the details of each family of the village. During the harvest, there is an exchange of workers. In this way, they can solve the problem of lack of workers for several months. Here farmers help each other for free on important occasions such as weddings, funerals, covering the roof of a house. The household head prepares a meal to thank all the people who come to help.

The information gained through the social network of each family is also important in the field of agricultural production to look for a job or borrow money. Knowing the important people in the commune or village facilitate access to information and opportunities. According to our observation, the families of groups A and B have more limited social network than the other two groups.

There are five official organizations in a commune: the Fatherland Front, the Farmers' Association, the Women Association, the Youth Association, the Association of veterans and seniors. These associations are organized in the same way that the Vietnamese administrative system. In principle, the president of each of these organizations (at a national level) is a member of the Central Committee of the Party. Among these organizations, the Women's Union and Farmers' Union are directly involved in various development programs and have a certain influence.

On the other hand, training programs (on food, health, child nutrition, etc.), family planning, job creation, scholarships for poor students are also part of the activities of the Women's Union in the fight against poverty.

3.5.7. Household food consumption

The problems of food production have long been considered the major cause of the famine. Indeed, access to food for a household depends on its ability to produce. Therefore factors such as access to land and income levels are taken into account in the analysis of the ability of a household to access food.

The following table shows the ability of grain self-sufficiency of different groups of households. The percentage of households having to buy additional rice for personal consumption is an important figure and there is no major difference between the poorest group and other groups. Households which must buy rice for the 12 months of the year are households that have very little land for cultivation and rice. However, on the whole, we find that the percentage of households that are not self-sufficient in cereals in Xuan Phong is higher than in Tu Ly. This is explained by the fact that the area of cultivated land per household in Tu Ly is higher than in Xuan Phong.

Table 17: Level of households grain self-sufficiency in 2009.

	Tu Ly (I)%				Xuan Phong (II)%			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
% of households which have to buy extra rice for their consumption	93.33	60.00	60.00	66.67	100	80.00	100	53.33
<i>Including :</i>								
% of households which have to buy extra rice for less than 6 months	57.62	66.67	35.56	50.00	80.00	100.00	100.00	87.5
% of households which have to buy extra rice for more than 6 months	6.67	0.00	20.00	0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
% of households which have to buy extra rice for the whole year	35.71	33.33	44.44	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.50

Source: Survey2009

Households, particularly households in groups A and B, lack of rice in March, April, September and October, almost all the products of previous crops have already been consumed during these periods. This is why many households have difficulty in achieving food self-sufficiency throughout the year.

In my opinion, there are two main reasons why households in both communes have to buy additional rice. The first reason is that the average area of rice per household is low. The second reason is that productivity is low due to a lack of capital, technology, labor and poor quality of the land.

The main food in surveyed households' basket is shown in table 18.

Table 18: Basket of food items in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong

Type of food				
Ordinary rice	Pork	Cabbage	Fish sauce	Cakes/candies
Bread	Beef	Water bindweed	Salt	Milk
Noodles	Chicken	Bamboo	Sugar	Alcohol
	Duck	Spinach		Tea
	Fish			
	Eggs			

Farmers eat rice and vegetables every day and often drink alcohol and tea (which comes from the forest). The consumption frequency of meat depends on the family type. Often, poor families do not have money to buy meat frequently: *"I often go into the forest to look for vegetables, bamboo shoots for food. My family eats pork and fish about 5 times per month. There are vegetables that I do not have to buy at the market. There are weeks when we do not have meat for meals. When my family has no rice, I have to borrow about 5 kg of rice which is enough for 2 days. Then I have to go into the forest to gather firewood, medicinal plants or bamboo to sell and get money. But we are no longer part of the poor class and I do not know why. In our village there are many poor families that have richer meals. Why are we no longer considered poor? Personally I do not know"* Mr. Quan Bui Dau's wife (group C), Ru 6 Village

The following table shows the capacity of food self-sufficiency of the surveyed households. When comparing groups of households, we find that the number of households belonging to groups C and D have a greater capacity of food self-sufficiency than groups A and B.

Table 19: Percentage of food self-sufficient households

Food	Tu Ly				Xuan Phong			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
<i>Legumes</i>								
Arugula/Spinach	73.33	80.00	100	93.33	93.33	93.33	100.00	100.00
Water bindweed (rau muong)	33.33	60.00	93.33	80.00	80.00	86.67	80.00	86.67
Bamboo	86.67	80.00	100	100.00	80.00	86.67	80.00	100.00
Cabbage	33.33	20.00	73.33	53.33	86.67	86.67	86.67	86.67
<i>Meat</i>								
Chicken	60.00	86.67	100	100.00	73.33	73.33	100	80.00

Source: Survey 2009

For poor households, the ability to be self-sufficient in food level is very important. This helps them to save money to invest in other activities. However, the food categories that households produce are not varied and allow only simple meals.

Moreover, the above table does not make sense if we do not know the quality of meals in different households. However, it is difficult to ask households to remember what they ate every day for a month. So I tried to ask them about the money they spent for daily food and rice. But the numbers we collected are very relative.

If we compare the average level of spending of the two surveyed communes, we find that the level of expenditure for daily food in Tu Ly is higher than in Xuan Phong. It seems also that the standard of living of households in Xuan Phong is lower than in Tu Ly. If we compare the average daily food expenditure per household, there is a difference between groups of households surveyed. But the number of minimum and maximum spending shows that sometimes the amount of money spent by households in Group A in their daily life is higher than that of other groups. In Group A, in Xuan Phong and Tu Ly, some households spend a minimum of 5000VND to 8000VND day to buy food. This shows that the quality of their meals is very low.

Tableau 20: Daily household expenditure in 2009*Ind. 1000 VND*

Expenditure for	Tu Ly				Xuan Phong			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Average daily food and rice per household	9048.23	10450	11888.53	12927	4166.07	12110.47	13138	11728
Maximum	18400	28800	22300	30000	11160	32760	32720	18000
Minimum	3000	3000	2000	7200	1008	3600	3000	5400

Source: Survey in 2009

Although the A and B groups spend less on daily food, the money already spent represents almost half of household daily spending throughout the year 2009.

If households don't have money or food left, how do they survive? The following table shows the different strategies adopted by households. Most households choose to buy on credit. This shows a strong social cohesion among people in rural areas in Vietnam. Normally households can buy food on credit from one to four weeks. Few households store products for sale. The rate of households who go into the forest to collect non-timber products is concentrated in Xuan Phong commune. The percentage of households that takes daily jobs is higher in Xuan Phong than in Tu Ly. In fact there is no market in both communes but only small private shops. All people know each other. The shopkeepers say that *"most people here are the same. If you do not sell on credit, nobody comes and buys."*

Table 21: Households strategies in the purchase of food when regular income is not sufficient

	Tu Ly (%)				Xuan Phong (%)			
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Credit purchase	53.33	53.33	53.33	20.00	26.67	-	20.00	-
Loan	20.00	20.00	33.33	6.67	46.67	33.33	46.67	-
Forest products sale	0.00	-	-	-	13.33	-	13.33	-
Other products sale	0.00	-	-	20.00	7.67	66.67	-	-
Daily employment	53.33	-	-	-	73.33	-	86.67	33.33

Source: Survey in 2009

Here is a very specific case: *Mr. Bui Van Chau, Nhoi 2 village (Xuan Phong), education level 5/10 (group A), three people in his family. He doesn't have hill land or forest land in production, he has only 150m² of paddy field that are the legacy received by his wife. He and his wife must seek any job available in order to survive, for example weeding an orange field or make irrigation ditches for sugarcane. With these activities, they earn 70 000VND per day (2.5-3 euros) but these works are not common. Sometimes they do not find work so they have to borrow money to buy rice. All the daily expenses of the family depend on their resources from occasional help in exchange of money.*

Among the surveyed households, income comes from three main sources: crops, livestock and off-farm activities². The table above shows the number of households with incomes from different sources. Via this table, we can see that most of the families have an income coming from cultures (100% of households) and livestock (89.17%). Small businesses are a significant part of the income of a minority of surveyed families. The percentage of households with income from the forest (e.g. wood culture and non-timber products gathering) is 40.83%. Non-regular work totally depends on the needs of the market. However, the rate of households who earn money from seasonal or daily activities is remarkable and reached 45.83%.

² Off-farm activities are: small businesses, agricultural labor to other farms or construction employees in companies, government officials in the town, etc.

Table 22: Financial Resources in 2009 and the role of each activity in its contribution to total household income (indicator: %)

	%	1*	2	3	4
Products from cultures	100.00	7333	20.00	6.67	0.00
Livestock	89.17	24.30	56.07	17.76	1.87
Forest	40.83	0.00	12.24	53.07	34.69
Small business	8.33	0.00	60.00	20.00	20.00
Occasional help in exchange of money.	45.83	14.55	34.55	30.90	20.00
Income	14.17	11.76	11.76	52.94	23.54

Source: Survey 2009 (*1, 2, 3, 4 correspond to the order of importance in family incomes)

3.6. Agro-forestry difficulties for ethnic minority farmers in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong

In both surveyed communes, crop production and livestock are two important activities. The main crops are rice, corn, root crops, fruits and vegetables. Among these crops, rice and maize are the main crops. They occupy the majority of production land and working time of farmers. Industrial culture, such as sugarcane, is also important. In the livestock sector, buffalo, cattle, pigs and poultry are the main livestock kept by farmers only in family-type farms. Following the land reform, slash and burn crops have disappeared.

Despite the significant impact of programs to poverty reduction, it seems that the production difficulties are still considerable. The following table shows the difficulties remain the same compared to 10 years ago. Three types of problems are met: lack of credit, lack of access to good quality raw materials at a fair price and lack of techniques. We can see in the table that the lack of credit is still important. The rate of non-poor households that lack access to credit is higher than that of poor households.

Table 23: Difficulties in production faced by surveyed households

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Number of households lacking of loans	60.00	66.67	86.67	80.00
Plants and animal disease increase	60.00	73.33	73.33	46.67
Low quality seeds	40.00	46.67	46.67	40.00
Lack of water for irrigation	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00
Lack of fertilizer	33.33	46.67	26.67	60.00
Lack of techniques	33.33	26.67	46.67	46.67
Lack of workers	26.67	13.33	20.00	26.67
Lack of livestock feed	33.33	26.67	33.33	53.33

Source: Survey 2009

Surveyed households do not have a fallback position in case they face unexpected risks. According to our survey, the risks faced by the majority of households are: buffalo death from cold in 2009, avian diseases, pig diseases, lack of water for irrigation in 2010. Farmers are very passive in the face of risks. According to them, they do nothing when this type of risk occurs because they are unable to predict. The best solution for them is to wait for government aid.

3.7. Who should be the beneficiaries of poverty reduction programs?

All beneficiaries of poverty reduction programs are now financially poor households. We have seen that there are problems to identify poor households in Vietnam. We asked 60 households their opinion in choosing beneficiaries of poverty reduction strategies, outside of poor households according to the poverty threshold.

Table 24: What types of households need help?

	Group B households need help	Households which just get out of poverty need help	Households without land need help	Households without workers need help
% of households agreeing (N=120)	75	25	50	35

75% of farmers say that group B households need help: these are non-poor households according to the poverty threshold but whose income are close to the poverty line. The second group that needs help is the group of landless households.

3.8. Which types of aid ethnic households need?

Despite all the efforts of strategies against poverty, farmers still require assistance in terms of loans and access to good seed production.

Table 25: Types of support offered by the public

Proposition	Loan	Seeds	Fertilizer	Farming training	Techniques	Cash donation
% of household approving	75,00	56,67	30,00	38,33	48,33	36,67

The problem of poverty reduction strategies is that they take into account the quantitative results but set aside the qualitative results. Poverty reductions projects’ mode of execution encounters many problems. The information is not clear and do not circulate well, and favors primarily those at the top at the village, district and province. The people in charge of poverty reduction programs have limited capacity to manage these activities and keep important documents. Farmers’ representatives, as farmers' associations, have no right to monitor projects and their role is much formal.

Programs to fight against poverty existing or not, non-poor farmers must adapt in any way whatsoever. As labor compensation is too low, many farmers find temporary or permanent outdoor job to maintain the family farm.

3.9. Why some households are able to overcome poverty and others are not, despite government aid?

3.9.1. Reasons why poor households overcome poverty in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong

To better understand the situation of the communes and especially the reasons why poor households from ethnic minorities overcome poverty, we randomly selected households and interviewed them on this situation.

Mr. Bui Van Thu is of Muong group. He lives in Ru 1 village, Xuan Phong commune. Before, he was poor because his wife died young and he had to care for their three young children. He has changed several times dwellings, and for this reason, he had no time to deal with agricultural production. So, he was not food self-sufficient. He left his wasteland in search of work elsewhere. But thanks to the support of the government, he was able to rebuild his house, borrow money to invest in rice cultivation and raise pigs. His life has improved. His eldest daughter is married and his second child goes to Hanoi to work. Their average income was 7 to 8 million VND per year in 2008 which brought them out of the "poor" category.

Mr. Bui Van Tan is Muong. He lives in Nhoi 6 village in Xuan Phong commune. There are four people in his family, and among them two workers. He is not poor because he worked and was able to plan activities to earn money. He grows rice, corn, sugarcane, raises pigs and buffalo. Financial resources are very diverse. He is not poor anymore since 2005. The average income per person in his family is 300 000 VND / person / month.

Mr. Bui Quang Phuc is Muong. He lives in Nhoi 3 village of in Xuan Phong. There are four people in his family. When his children were young, there was not enough farmland for the household to be self-sufficient. Now the children have grown up and go to work. They went into the commune to look for work. Moreover, as he borrowed money from BSP to invest in breeding pigs, their income has improved. His family is not poor since 2008.

Mr. Dang Van Tien Dao belongs to the Dao group. He lives in Mang Tay village oin Tu Ly. There are four people in his family, including two workers. According to him, his family is no longer considered poor

because according to local officials, their income is above the poverty line of 200 000 VND / person / month.

Mr. Ha Van Dan belongs to the Tay group, he lives in Dong Chanh village of, in Tu Ly. He is not poor since 2008 because he borrowed money from the BPS to invest in cattle, pigs and poultry breeding and in learning agricultural techniques. As he gained experience in production, the farm has grown and living conditions improved.

Ms. Hue Thi Xa is Muong. She lives in Chau village in Tu Ly. There are four people in his family, including one worker. His family is no longer considered poor since the children have grown and have become active in their turn.

In summary, the three main reasons to overcome poverty:

- Children grow up and work and family income improves
- Householders are active and workers. For this reason, when they have the opportunity to borrow money at a low interest rate from the BPS or learn new techniques through extension, they can develop various production activities to earn money
- The family income has turned above the poverty threshold following the review by the village leader

3.9.2. Why poor households remain poor in Tu Ly and Xuan Phong

Mr. Bui Van Quynh is Muong. He lives in Ru 3 village in Xuan Phong. There are five people in his family, including two workers. He became poor since his family was separated from the extended family. As he has little land, it is difficult for him to ensure the household food self-sufficiency.

Mr. Bui Van Tien is Muong. He lives in Ru4 village in Xuan Phong. There are four people in his family, including two workers. He has been poor for a long time. He has not invested in agricultural production despite having borrowed money from the BPS to buy buffaloes. He also received money to rebuild his house. He preferred to go to another town in Cao Phong district in search of agricultural work and earn money immediately (60 000VND/day) rather than taking time to develop his own agricultural production. It's hard for him to overcome poverty because he is not employed. Besides, he drinks a lot of alcohol. He received a lot of support

from the Government and the commune but still has not managed to overcome poverty

Mr. Bui Van Dua belongs to Muong group. He lives in Nhoi 2 village in Xuan Phong. There are eight people in his family, including three workers. His parents are sick all the time. His children can not go to school. He had to borrow money and do not have the ability to pay back. He received a grant to rebuild his house or to grow crops but did not overcome poverty.

Mr. Ban Dao Van Luong belongs to Dao group. He lives in Mit village in Tu Ly. There are four people in his family, including a worker. He is deaf. His parents were poor, and he is poor too since he got married and had two children. He has 700m² of paddy field and 1200m² of forest land in production. Despite this, he has trouble overcoming poverty because his wife, main worker of the family, has no experience in agricultural production.

Mr. Ha Van Phuc is Tay. He lives in Dong Chanh village. There are three people in his family, including two workers. He is poor because he does not have any capital to invest in agricultural activities. He has no experience in production and little cultivated land (500m² of paddy field) and has no forest land. He has not yet received aid from the Government.

Mr. Trieu Phuc Khoa is Dao. He lives in Ma village of, in Tu Ly. There are seven people in his family, including two workers. He is disabled, cannot work, has no education, has little land and many children. Despite having received aid from the Government, he hasn't overcome poverty.

In conclusion, the main reasons why households remain poor:

- There are permanent sick people in the family or household head is disabled and can not work
- Families have many children but few workers
- Families have little or no farmland
- Workers are lazy, alcoholic and sometimes prefer a job which they can immediately earn money with.

3.9.3 *Reasons why households have a comfortable life*

The main reason for this is that the head of the family works and plan well household's life. He knows how to take advantage of all the means at its disposal to earn money and develop revenue streams.

Here is the case of Mr. Van Minh Ly: he lives in Huong ly village, in Tu Ly. He listed us in detail its income for a year. Over a year, he got 10 million VND from corn, 5 million VND from cassava, 4 million VND from the "dong rieng", 30 million VND from sugarcane, 3 million VND from ginger and 1,7 million VND from the annona (cay na) and apricots (cay mo). His agricultural revenues amounted to approximately 54 million VND. Moreover, every year he collected 1500 kg of rice which is sufficient for the household consumption. From 2005, he began to invest in forest cultivation. He cultivated 10 hectares of "Keo" plants which he harvests after 7 years.

Mr. Bui Van Yen is Muong, he lives in Ru1 village in Xuan Phong. There are six people in his family, including four workers. He is very active in the application of new production techniques. His revenues for corn and other vegetables amounted to 11 million VND/year and sugarcane to 30 million VND. The pig and horse brings him each 20 million VND and aquaculture 80 million VND.

4. CONCLUSION

We cannot deny the role of poverty reduction strategies implemented by the government in ethnic minorities farmers lives living in the mountains. The positive changes in the field of infrastructure, credit, health, education and technology are significant contributions in changing farmers' life. The results are clear because before, the population lived in austerity, in an environment where everything was destroyed by the war. At that time, basic services were the same for everyone and all the people lived in the same poverty.

Today the situation of poverty has changed because of economic growth policy which focuses on resources privatization. Indeed, there is no clear definition of poverty. After decades of struggle against poverty, we can see that poverty is more a question of inequality in the society as a whole. It results from the difference between the upper and lower classes. Poverty is not an individual problem and an approach to improve the capacity of poor households is not really suitable and sufficient.

In Vietnam, with the economic crisis, precarious situations and poverty appear increasingly in the public space. The separation between the poor and the rest of society is becoming more pronounced. This "gap" is identified by a lack of social, educational, financial or domestic skills among the poor. But it seems that the poverty reduction policies to improve the capacity of poor households are unable to bridge this gap.

We can say that poverty is growing within the society and this is not a marginal or peripheral reality. In this new context, the precariousness and insecurity are the building blocks of what we call the "new poverty", which is often an accumulation of complex situations that affect all aspects of the existence of a nuclear family. It is the product of a social position weakened and threatened. This is why the analysis of new poverty can never lead to acceptable results if they are not integrated into a broad explanation of economic growth and the meaning we want to give to it.

The answers to the central question of this research "**Why policies to reduce poverty are not successful in the mountainous areas in Vietnam?**" are addressed in three main parts I, II, III as follow:

1. There is obviously a difficulty in identifying poor households in Vietnam and it has created problems in determining the beneficiaries of poverty reduction strategies.

Indeed, there is not a poor class clearly defined and identifiable. After decades of struggle against poverty, we can see that poverty is more a question of inequality in the society as a whole. Poverty is more linked to the differences between the top and bottom rather than a "poor" class. Poverty is not an individual problem. Our analysis showed that people who are considered poor are not the same in reality.

Limits are partly due to the initial and persistent choice of determining a very low level of monetary poverty threshold, moreover always eroded by inflation. One could assert that these limits could be removed if the poverty threshold was raised to the internationally accepted standards. At that time, a number of people who are at the edge of the present threshold and are suffering of the monetary vagaries associated with its low level, would have a much higher monetary income, and thus would escape from the traps of the present situation.

But that would not eliminate the main deficiencies derived from the choice of a mono dimensional approach of poverty, fixed around the monetary income level.

One has show that MOLISA has tried to escape that limit, by developing a complex set of criteria to evaluate the real situation of different types of households. That strategy has also developed a sort of dynamic assessment of the evolution of poverty, which is certainly an appropriate approach. But the MOLISA approach has been confined to the fixed official amount of the threshold, restricting evidently the scope of its attempts at a more realistic approach of poverty.

This study demonstrates that the method used by the MOLISA to determine poor households has created problems, because the system uses only the level of household income to classify the categories of villagers. Due to insufficient elements to calculate the national poverty line, a part of village groups are not included in the list of beneficiaries but are actually very vulnerable and need help. These are households that are not poor, according to the criteria set, but which would be listed as poor households in the situation of economic recession, crop failures, or after a period of floods.

The limits of the MOLISA approach could be perhaps overcome by enhancing the participation of the villagers in the assessment of the real poverty situation, according to the informal practices which were followed in previous periods. The field research has showed that villagers are very aware of the need to help people of the community who are really in need. They do not search a statistic approach of the “poor” in general, but want to help neighbors who need help, because that can at the same time enhance the quality of life in the community. Such a more participatory approach of poverty alleviation could also be more cost-effective. It could allow the local cadres to be redirected at supporting projects based on voluntary association (some sort of mutual aid team) between people and families with insufficient resources to develop a more secure base of food production, which is obviously the most important point to improve.

To devise policies to reduce poverty effectively, it is important to know at what we are aiming. Definitions do matter. Clearer and more transparent definitions of poverty are an essential prerequisite of any development policy that puts poverty reduction at its centre (Stewart F. et al, 2003).

II. Then comes the execution mode of strategies against poverty: information confusion, limits of budgets allocate, insufficient participation of local people in planning and monitoring, limited autonomy capacity at the local level, are the reasons why the results of the strategy to fight against poverty are not effective.

In general, politicians and projects to support poor households and communes have a positive impact in the fight against poverty. We can see that the absolute poverty decreases. There are not anymore households who are hungry in the two surveyed communes. However, issues concerning the quality of poverty reduction strategies arise.

The fundamental problem, in my opinion, is primarily the very limited administrative capacity of local officials. In Tu Ly, managers are more competent than in Xuan Phong, and it was easier to collect data over several years. In Xuan Phong, it seems to me that the administrative system of the documents does not work properly. It is difficult to know the official information over several years. Whenever people in charge of data collection have changed, data were lost. Despite decentralization in planning and execution of programs to fight against poverty, it seems that

it is still very formal. Local authorities and associations initiative is not encouraged in planning and funding, and beneficiaries are only recipients.

In addition, aid and its implementation do not fit the real needs of the affected populations. Assistance by credit is a typical example. Our analysis showed that credit need for these populations remains very high despite the efforts and credit policy for the poor households implemented by the Government. The reality is that poor households often use their credit inefficiently and this affects their ability to pay back debt and interest payments. This is why banks are still reluctant to give high credit to the poor and vulnerable households. Farmers' associations play a bail role but their ability to follow the credits is very low. Thus, even if households have more support, they are very diverse and there is no link between them. This is why the expected results in terms of poverty reduction are still not met.

Then, because of information confusion in project activities to poverty reduction, the beneficiaries do not know their rights, and this creates inconsistencies. *For example, they organize embroidery training. Normally the course will last a month and is organized for 15 participants. But the project only gave two days of class, the first day and the last day of training. Participants received compensation for the two-day course but have to sign an act of presence to every other day without having trained as a whole.* How managers can do this? The farmers, not well informed about their rights and their passivity to claim what is due to them, encourages this type of behavior. Moreover, as this project comes from outside, farmers do not understand the significance. For them, the most important was the compensation received for the two days of training but also the time they lost to do something else to survive. Moreover farmers associations could not intervene because, simply cooperating with the local authorities, they were not informed by the farmers. It seems to me that sometimes projects information against poverty are blocked to serve the interests of small elites.

Finally, Vietnam Government does not have sufficient resources yet to cope with the risks and continue to support poverty reduction while putting in place a system of social protection. Outside unpredictable risks such as natural disasters, farmers from ethnic minorities face health, age and economic problems. This is why we need to plan ahead and create a viable system to protect against these risks.

Implementation of poverty policy has generally been top-down and local participation limited by insufficient management and financial shortage. In some cases accountability to the local population has been very low. Although the government has applied radical changes in poverty reduction strategies aiming at encouraging participation in poverty management, enforcement of the policy intentions of participation and monitoring has been low at the district and commune level. The implementation success is still limited. One reason is that the policies do not encourage real decentralization, but only allocate duty and responsibility for implementation of what the central government has already decided. Thus rather than creating incentives to develop and manage local solutions the policies have created an extra workload for the local authorities and financial dependency on short-term government allocations.

Participatory approaches should be applied strictly in poverty reduction strategies. The beneficiaries should be enabled to define their problems, define potential remedies and then take the lead in designing the research that will help them realize their goals.

III. Finally, land resource privatization, particularly forest resources, limits minority farmers' ability to cope with unexpected risks.

The mountainous ethnic population living inside or on the forest rim depends on forest resources. These are considered as a support of small farmers to cope with unexpected risks.

In the mountainous regions of Vietnam, forest land is considered a significant asset production for poverty reduction. Forests are not only a savings account for people in and around forests, but they also provide a wide range of subsistence because they serve food, medicine and firewood for the inhabitants, especially minorities.

However, it seems to me that minorities are losing more and more their permanent resources for living after the forest land privatization under the Land Law. Poor households, which are always in short supply of food and money to meet their daily needs and continue to depend more or less from natural forest products, are more interested in their immediate needs than the next ten or twenty years. In addition, they have very few resources to invest in plantation forests, except the family labor.

Many small farmers are uncertain about how to take care of forest land allocated to them. The richest tend to quickly take advantage of the land granted, while the poor and ethnic minorities take time to learn how the system works, and the time allowed for the development of the land is often exceeded.

In addition, biodiversity decreases because of new planted forests. According to the farmers, we only find some types of non-timber forest products, others have disappeared. The cattle grazing also decreased due to forest land privatization and new forests. Moreover, the distribution of forest land was not made clear and the lists of households which received forest land have not been published in the surveyed communes. In terms of forest land, rich farmers had received more woodlands than poor households. A minority was able, through various means, to get large concessions and got enriched visibly, while the majority experienced great difficulties to take the benefits of this forest land reform. This is a very real concern, especially from the point of view of the evolution towards new forms of poverty in the village.

Under the provisions of the forest land allocation legislation, the government expects land users to plant both protection forest and production forest. Theoretically, they are allowed to harvest the production forest that they plant after gaining permission from the central government. Even so, both the forest land allocation and the reforestation policies of the government focus more on environmental protection and conservation rather than supporting resource-poor local people to improve their livelihood.

Also land allocation mistakes and delays in the issuing of official government land use certificates (red book) has added to the limited success of policy implementation. In some cases of land allocation people have received no or only temporary local authority certificates (green books) and still feel unsure about the process and their future rights and possibilities. In other cases only some people received land or the allocation was so haphazard that people afterwards returned to their old system of land sharing. Unclear borders (between individual households in the hamlet as well as between neighbouring districts and communes and between the 3 forests categories: Production Forest, Protection Forest and Special Use Forest) have created many new conflicts even on the hamlet

Beyond the common belief in social justice and equity of local forest management, beyond the common allegation that indigenous people are noble forest steward, Genevieve Michon and his collaborator suggest way by which the domestic forest paradigm could help revisiting the global norms, standards, and methods of forest management. They conclude with the need for a redefinition of forest policies and regulation to accommodate this neglected but widespread aspect of forest management and to fully integrate its benefits for the society at large (Genevieve Michon, 2007) Domestic forest are site specific by nature. To be integrated into global forest management, some universal features must emerge from various technical, structural, economic, and social dimensions of these forests. The first universal feature concerns the local managers themselves. They are, in their vast majority, farmers. They secure their subsistence and income through production, be it of annual crops, animal husbandry, or tree crops. Forest management is one obvious component of their farming system, and we could therefore talk of “farmers’ forest.

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GRAESE : Groupe de Recherches Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est



Le **GRAESE** (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est) regroupe des chercheurs concernés par les problèmes du développement en Asie Orientale et Sud Orientale. A son origine se trouvent des académiques et des chercheurs ayant participé à des projets de recherche, d'enseignement et de coopération dans cette région du monde depuis le milieu des années 1990. En Belgique, ces activités ont associé, dès le début, des chercheurs de l'UCL, des FUSAGX, et de l'ULG qui poursuivent une coopération régulière depuis une quinzaine d'années. En Asie ces activités ont concerné un grand nombre de chercheurs et d'académiques de diverses universités et institutions vietnamiennes, laotiennes, cambodgiennes, thaïlandaises et chinoises. L'Université Agronomique de Hanoi (UAH) est un partenaire privilégié depuis le début. Ces activités ont concerné particulièrement les projets de développement agricole, les composantes socio-économiques du développement rural, les rapports villes-campagnes et les politiques affectant ces différents domaines. En outre plusieurs thèses de doctorat ont été réalisées dans le cadre de ces activités, et sous diverses formes de partenariat entre les universités belges et asiatiques concernées. Le **GRAESE** vise à donner une meilleure visibilité à ces diverses activités, à faciliter la circulation de l'information entre les chercheurs et centres de recherches concernés, et à appuyer et soutenir l'intérêt en Belgique et en Europe pour les problèmes du développement asiatique dans un public plus large.

En pratique le **GRAESE** a pour objectif :

- 1) de stimuler la recherche interdisciplinaire concernant les problèmes et les enjeux du développement en Asie orientale et sud orientale
- 2) de publier sous forme de Working Papers (format papier ou online) des résultats de recherche liés aux projets en cours et aux questions concernant les diverses thématiques du développement appliquées à l'Asie orientale et sud-orientale, avec une attention particulière aux thèmes évoqués ci-dessus.
- 3) de réaliser des publications scientifiques de divers types concernant ces problèmes et réalisées par des chercheurs des différents centres partenaires en Europe et en Asie.
- 4) de fournir un lieu de rencontres entre chercheurs concernés par ces thèmes, particulièrement dans le cadre des doctorats en cours.
- 5) d'organiser des activités d'enseignement et d'information sur les problèmes du développement de l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est, notamment à travers l'organisation de conférences et séminaires donnés par des académiques et chercheurs asiatiques de passage en Belgique.

En Belgique les activités du **GRAESE** sont coordonnées par Ph. Lebailly (UEDR-Gembloux-ULg) et J.Ph. Peemans (CED-UCL). Le secrétariat du **GRAESE** est assuré par l'UEDR.

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