

COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT METHOD IN ETHNIC MINORITY AND MOUNTAINOUS AREAS

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Community-based natural resources management has been applied in many different parts of the world, especially in developing countries. The content of this method is to take the community as a center, direct the community to the resources management system, bring people to live consciously in the natural environment and protect resources such as protection for themselves. Through analyzing the current status of community-based resources management in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, the paper proposes some effective solutions to enhance the role of ethnic minority communities in resources management.

Keywords: Community-based resources management; Natural resources; Ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

1. Problems

Community-based management is one of three management methods: (1) Centralized state management, (2) Community-based management, (3) Community self-management. This method consists of 5 levels: Notice level (The State makes decisions, notifies and guides the community to participate in management); Consultation level (The community provides information, the State consults the community to make decisions, inform and guide the community to participate in management); The co-implementation level (The community has the opportunity and permission to participate in discussions, make suggestions to make decisions and be involved in management; Partner level (State and community jointly managed); Presiding level (The community is empowered by the State to manage, the State only controls).

Community-based resources management, essentially consists of three main contents: *responsibility, power and control* of the people and the community. *Responsibility* means that the community is directly involved in ownership from exploitation, protection and development. *Power* in the sense that the community is both a user and a resource manager; The community has a legal right to make decisions regarding control, exploitation and maintenance of resources. *Control* is a community capable of implementing and determining the results from its decisions related to the system. It is the capacity of the community

to contribute to technology, labor and finance, as well as the institutional support of the community in the process of planning and maintaining the sustainability of resources. The level of participation of the community is varied and at different levels. From merely sharing information about the implementation plan, to discussing ideas, or participating in “cheap labor”, or “cost sharing”, or participating in develop management decisions, make plans, implement activities, comment and evaluate after implementation. Community-based resource management, in addition to viewing the community as an important resource, also means bringing the community into the right direction “*people know, people discuss, people practice, people inspect and people benefit*”, and thus will achieve sustainable and reasonably development goals, with practical results. The meaning of community-based resources management, therefore, is more of a work of deep people’s spirit, in addition to considering this management from a scientific perspective. Community-based resources management consists of the awareness of the power of the people and the community, and expressing faith in the people and the community.

2. The situation of community-based resources management in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

In fact, community-based management of natural resources (land, water, forests and minerals) has long emerged in the self-governing society of

ethnic minority communities (ethnic minorities) based on custom, customary laws, conventions, ... “The customs and practices of ethnic minority people have linked people in the village into a tight community, orderly, disciplined and traditional, having the fine customs and habits of a human life in harmony with nature and individuals attached to the community, making an important contribution to the management and protection of natural resources, towards sustainable development ”.¹ Although each ethnic minority has its own customs and habits, it is common to find that in the practices of protecting natural resources of the people, they considered “water” as “mother” and “forest” as “god”, “wild beast “is” friend”, plants have “souls”. From such conception, ethnic minority communities have clear and strict regulations on water resource protection and forest protection, especially in watershed forests. Customary laws on wildlife protection, method of harvesting timber and forest products by seasons have the effect of protecting the ecological balance for long-term exploitation. Regarding the protection of water sources, the customary laws of the people all have specific protection rules, and everyone who contaminate the water will be punished. Whoever breaks the ditch, drains water must be punished. Embankment of dykes, construction of ditches and dams is the duty of all workers. With land resources, reclamation is encouraged, but must strictly comply with the rule on forest protection. Customary laws of the people stipulate not cutting down trees in watershed forests; For forest products, forest can only be harvested seasonally, not cutting young trees, not hunting animals in breeding season. Many ethnic groups also stipulate that if any tree is cut down, the new one must be replanted, and when harvesting root must leave behind few root branches... The customary law considers the destruction of natural resources, the natural environment is offensive to the gods who rule this resource. Therefore, each person abstain from destroying the watershed forest, cutting down the magic tree, killing the totem animals. Along with the conventions on environmental protection, customary laws are “sacralization”, “divine sanctification” of the people who make important contributions to the protection and development of harmonious and sustainable mountainous and highland areas. The technical knowledge about the exploitation and use of natural resources has created the unique cultural values of ethnic minorities. In the customary law to protect the natural resources of each ethnic group always divided into two parts: the responsibility part and the penalty part. In particular, the responsibility part

is bigger, the punishment part is like the specific sanctions that are only to reinforce responsibility. These conventions, are carried out voluntarily by the community. Today, these conventions exist and always accompany the law. At the beginning of the year, during the village festival, the conventions are reiterated for descendants for deterrence and education.

Implementing the “Doi Moi”, right from the early years of the 90s (XX century), our Party and State highly appreciated the participation and contribution of all levels, sectors and communities in all fields, including resource use and protection with a series of slogans mentioned as “socialization”, “State and people work together”. However, in the beginning, the problem of fully transferring the responsibility of managing resources to the community still has shortcomings. Although in 1998, 1999... we have the *Water Resources Law*, the *Forest Protection and Development Law*, but the provisions of this law do not mention any management by the community for land and water resources. It was not until 2005, in the revised *Forest Protection and Development Law*, that the community was designated as a participant in forest resource management and subsequently, in 2006, in the *National Water Resources Strategy until 2020*, then new community is considered to be the main object to ensure the sustainable management and use of water resources. Although the “community-managed” institution was created late (in 2005 in the revised *Forest Protection and Development Law*), or has not yet been formalized by law, comprehensive socio-economic and physical innovations are possible. Deep processing in our country over the past 30 years has promoted the existence and development of community-based resource management. Policy of Contracting 10, Contracting 100 in agriculture; policy of sedentarization and settlement; long-term forest and land allocation policy for farmers and ethnic minorities; socialization and privatization trend; regulations on promoting democracy at the grassroots level ... have created conditions for the community to participate in natural resource management and initially bring about practical results.

After the Party’s Resolution No. 24 (IX Congress) on Ethnic Minority Work, many ethnic policies came into being, giving real rights to the community. Specifically, Program 135 (socio-economic development of communes and villages with special difficulties), Decision No. 74/2008/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister: Regarding a number of policies to support the prize to decide on residential land, poor production land and poor life in the Mekong River delta in the 2008-2010 period, the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 29/2013/QĐ-TTg on a number of policies to support the

¹. Vu Thi Thanh Minh (2015), Local knowledge in exploiting and using natural resources of ethnic minorities in the northern uplands, *Journal of Ethnic Minorities Research*, No. 3.

settlement of residential land and employment for poor ethnic minorities, difficult life in the Mekong River Delta in the period of 2013-2015, the Prime Minister's Decision No. 1592/QĐ-TTg on continuing implementing a number of policies to support productive land, residential land, housing and daily-life water by 2010 for extremely poor ethnic minority households; and Decision No. 755/QĐ - TTg of the Prime Minister approving policies to support residential land, productive land and domestic water for poor ethnic minority households and poor households in communes and villages... has placed the ethnic minority community in the center of development. In each category of programs, projects are concerned about the role of the local ethnic minority community, to encourage and assure people to prevent shifting cultivation, and sustainable poverty reduction. Especially in the Land Law 2013, there is a clause that states that there should be policies on residential land, community living land for ethnic minority people in accordance with customs, customs, cultural identity and reality situation of each region. At the same time, it is necessary to formulate policies to create conditions for ethnic minority people to directly produce agricultural products in rural areas with land for agricultural production. Most recently Decision No. 2085/QĐ-TTg dated October 31, 2016 approving the specific policy to support socio-economic development of ethnic minority and mountainous areas in the period of 2017-2020 and Decision 2086/QĐ-TTg. On October 31, 2016, approving the project to support socio-economic development of very few ethnic minorities in the period of 2016-2025 also placed great interest, great support and investment for the community. Ethnic policy in this period has completely shifted from direct investment to households to investment in household groups, communities, promoting community-based natural resources management.

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In the provinces of Lao Cai, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Kon Tum, in 2015, the East-South Asia Community Resource Management and Cultural Management Consultancy Center (CIRUM) and International CARE In Vietnam, the localities have coordinated to implement the project "Improving capacity to access and manage productive land and forest land for ethnic minority communities". Up to this point, the project has supported the communities of Van Kieu, Thai, Xo Dang, Ro Ngao, Dao Do ... to improve their incomes through the development of livelihood models associated with forest towards sustainability. During project implementation, the capacity of village communities is raised; awareness and capacity to protect livelihood rights associated with local knowledge, traditional culture of the people, and protection and development of natural resources is markedly improved. The policy of assigning land and forest for long-term management to ethnic minority people has obtained very positive results. According to the report of the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs: "By April 2018, the forest area allocated to ethnic minority communities was more than 805 thousand hectares (accounting for 71.4% of the total area of forest land allocated to the whole community); the area of land granted using right is 345.7 thousand ha (accounting for 42.9% of the total area allocated to ethnic minorities). As a result, forests have been managed more effectively, reducing deforestation and illegal exploitation on a large scale. The conversion of forest use purpose has been monitored more closely. Forest environmental services have become a significant source of income for forest management and protection.² Many models of sustainable income generation from land and forest allocation to ethnic minority communities have been successful as Ngoc Linh ginseng model of Xo Dang people in Tu Mo Rong district (Kon Tum); model of growing purple satay plant of Gia Rai people under the canopy of natural forest in Chu Mom Ray National Park (Kon Tum); model of natural sapling development of Van Kieu

². Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs, "Current situation of ethnic policy in the period of 2016-2020, orientation of policy formulation in the period of 2021 - 2030", at the Seminar "Current situation of ethnic policy, Orientation of construction policy for the period of 2021-2030" organized by the Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs in cooperation with the Embassy of Ireland in January 2019, in Hanoi.

people in Quang Binh...

Models of community management on land, water, and forest resources at household, local, and central levels as a participatory model of irrigation management (an effective method of management water resources have the participation of the people, because the beneficiary communities will join as water users, water resources managers and guards, especially for small-scale irrigation systems); model of establishing forest protection groups at village and hamlet levels; village and hamlet water source protection groups; the grassroots self-management team on natural resources and environmental protection, established and supported by the People's Committee of the commune, has been developing effectively and has been replicated in many ethnic minority areas with education value and raising awareness. Therefore, when discussing the role of the community in resource management in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, at the *Annual Forum on Ethnic Minorities Development*, the Ethnic Council of the National Assembly, the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Embassy of Ireland in Vietnam held on December 9, 2015, have all agreed that: The trade-off between equality and economic efficiency can be avoided; narrowing the development gap between ethnic groups and the common ground by empowering the community as a social capital and using the available capacity of the ethnic minority community is possible. In which, community-based resource management and benefit-sharing mechanism for people are effective management methods in the area of ethnic minorities in Vietnam today.³

In addition to the achievements, community-based resource management faces these following difficulties and limitations:

Currently, in the process of implementing the socio-economic development policy in mountainous ethnic minority areas, there are many difficulties in managing the use of land resources and forest resources, especially is the shortage of productive land and production water of ethnic minorities in both Northwest, Central Highlands, Southwest and Central Coast. In fact, residential communities, especially ethnic minority people, have not really paid attention to the use of forest resources (underdeveloped forest occupations), water resources ... This is a great barrier in the process of ensuring livelihoods and social stability in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. There are many places in that ethnic minority communities

are not fully aware of the roles, responsibilities and benefits of their communities and individuals in participating in managing natural resources. These factors have greatly hindered the promotion of community's role in natural resource and natural resource management, especially for communities with low educational standards.

3. Solutions to improve the role of ethnic minority communities in natural resource management, in the upcoming time

Currently, we are promoting the process of implementing industrialization and modernization of the country, besides the great benefits, this process also negatively impacts the ecological environment of the country and each locality. The question is how to develop but to preserve the ecological environment and traditional cultural values, and to solve social issues? In our opinion, in order to better manage community-based natural resources in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, we need to focus on the following groups of solutions in the upcoming time:

3.1 Group of solutions for developing policies to protect natural resources

The State needs to increase *investment* (capital, science and technology, construction of facilities ...), to improve the effectiveness of the protection of land, water, forest and minerals resources and allow people to give their input into natural resource management decisions. For a long time, we have invested quite a lot to develop socio-economy, but the investment is still spreading without focus and there is no strict inspection and urgency. We take a lot of productive land and forest land to plan the construction of infrastructure and population planning in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, but when reconstructing it is not synchronized: build markets but have little or no people participate in them; building commune health stations with modern equipment but not convenient for people to come for medical examination and treatment, because ethnic minorities live too far from medical centers; a number of community buildings are inconsistent with the ethnic culture, customs and traditions. Irrigation works in some places have not been set up in the relationship between large irrigation works and small and medium-sized irrigation works, especially in places where there is potential for reclaiming paddy fields and irrigation for both agricultural and forestry production areas... leading to waste of natural resources and the efficiency is not as expected.

The main cause of these problems is that we have not done well the survey and planning before building the construction, and also because we have not fully utilized the value and role of the community

³. Ethnic Council of National Assembly, Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs, United Nations Development Programme (2015), Embassy of Ireland in Vietnam, *Annual Forum on Ethnic Minorities Development* held on 9th December 2015 in Hanoi.

in resource management. The community has not been allowed to comment on the State's management and investment decisions. Bureaucratic managers, without accurate information about the facility and lack of knowledge about local circumstances and practices, therefore their management decisions are ineffective and unsustainable.

In addition to the priority policies on *investment*, policies to *develop human resources* suitable for each residential area, the State needs to strengthen the policy of *sharing benefits* in exploiting and using natural resources, land and forests, fair distribution of profits between the State, economic units and people. A part of the costs, royalties and profits of production projects from mountainous resources should be set aside for investment to improve the lives of ethnic minority people, to help them stabilize their lives and prevent shifting cultivation. For migration to build industrial areas, urban areas, hydroelectric projects, ... there should be a thorough study of customs and practices of each ethnic group living in that place, in particular, special attention should be paid to the use of local experience (local knowledge) in forest exploitation and protection, protection of water sources and cultivation skills on slopes.

Our Party has a policy of allocating land and forests to each farmer household. This policy has achieved remarkable results, 5 million hectares of forests have been newly planted, but in fact, because of intermingled ethnic groups, the increasing population density and the "Forest god" in the spiritual life of the people is increasing, so the forest is still destroyed, especially in the watershed forest. Given this fact, it is necessary to maintain and have specific policies to protect public forests (including forbidden forests and sacred forests), policies to promote the ownership of the community with forests, empower the management of public forests, provide long term ownership for those who have experience in planting and protecting forests as well as the Ha Nhi community, Muong and Dao people. Most of the watershed forests and forests protecting the water resources of the community are in protection or special-use forests. Therefore, there should be specific policies or guidelines for the recognition of the sacred forest of the community to be on par with the small-scale special-use forests... Promoting the participation of ethnic minorities in the protection of forest land special-use forests and protection forests (protection and development of forest resources). Develop policies for people to receive remuneration from the state through the protection of this resource (can be mobilized from natural disaster prevention or environmental funds).

For land areas that are often flooded, drought, and subject to harsh climate, we should invest in building ecological villages and empowering them

to share investment costs and managerial rights for their people.

Research policies to create conditions for ethnic minorities to protect and rationally exploit trees under the forest canopy. Research to convert the area of special-use forests and production forests to area assigned to communities and local people to manage and exploit production forests.

We have the *Land Law, Forest Protection and Development Law, Environmental Protection Law, Mineral Law, National Strategy on Water Resources until 2020, National Environmental Protection Strategy to 2020 and vision to 2030,...* these regimes have been and will be important legal foundation for the community to manage natural resources better.

3.2 Group of solutions to improve the role and raise community awareness about community rights in resource management as well as the value and urgency of natural resource governance.

Degradation of natural resources is not only due to economic and trade development or population pressure and environmental pollution, but also a complex issue related to the traditional lifestyle and culture of local community. Therefore, we need to strengthen communication to raise community awareness about the rights of communities in resource management. Participating in resource management, community of villages, hamlets,... not only share costs and benefits more equitably in the management of natural resources, through which, community solidarity between villages and hamlets in the program, the project is enhanced. Each household is entitled to more sustainable livelihoods through these programs. Along with improved economic life (through agroforestry models, reforestation projects, cultivation on slopes...), people's technical and experience levels are improved, People benefit through ecological services, recover faster after natural disasters and it is important that resources are better managed. However, not every person, every authority and institution are understanding this. The error is primarily caused by lack of awareness and consciousness. Because of their livelihoods, for the immediate benefit of small communities, they have just planted forests and destroyed forests; or depleted land and then leave another place to destroy forest for cultivation without worrying about land reclamation; using water wastefully, arbitrarily making water pipes into families to damage the common water system... So far, we have only stopped at the general propaganda without specific legal sanctions, or not strictly so that these problems are still ongoing.

Now we have to improve the community's management and control role by raising community

awareness as well as empowering communities at all levels, empowering people with positions and roles, empowering people with important roles in the community, exercising the power of the community when someone breaks the rule. Making each person in the community see their responsibility is a process of movement, changing regional awareness and cultural factors and choosing ways to mobilize and develop awareness for each social class, each population, is extremely important.

With the ultimate goal of attaching social security, environmental safety to natural resource management, to improve the governance of community resources, we need to strengthen dialogue between the local community (along with active participation and commitment) with government agencies which are responsible in the legal framework of the Government and regulations, village and hamlet regulations, and small communities. At the same time, strengthening capacity and participation of *civil society organizations* (such as the Association of Science and Technology in each province, city and locality) and agricultural and forestry extension, or improving training skills at community, skills involved in activities. At the same time, it is necessary to develop a clearer legal and regulatory framework at the local level, such as district and commune resource management regulations and village regulations... There are specific training programs for the community and representatives of local governments on resource management skills as steps in the process of *collective resource management* (data collection, evaluation, vision building, strategic planning and planning) participatory activities of many people, negotiating skills with authorities when solving problems arising in resource management. Besides, it is necessary to care about the preservation and promotion of existing local knowledge on natural resource management of ethnic minorities.

Governments at all levels, along with socio-political organizations, non-governmental organizations, and prestigious people in ethnic minority groups should co-operate, contribute, propagate and educate people to raise environmental awareness, step by step forming a new concept of sustainable development and development; propagating people to use and protect land and water efficiently; propagating people to exploit and use resources and minerals economically. In order to do so, first of all, it is necessary to propagate to the people to know their position, role and rights, the village community role in managing and controlling natural resources, and protecting the environment. Participating in resource management, environmental protection, villages are not only shared costs and benefits more equitably

in collective management, but also their solidarity spirit, technical level and experience are enhanced.

Various forms of propaganda should be used, such as: Propagating through mass media in common and ethnic language; word of mouth; to integrate propaganda in community meetings and activities; propaganda on the online portal of state management agencies; organizing propaganda contests that link environmental protection with socio-economic development in the form of written or stage competition, transformed into scripts that use language and speech of the people.

The content and method of propaganda are associated with each specific socio-economic development policy and object.

For rural people, ethnic minority people, ethnic minority areas that directly produce food, mobilize farmers to cultivate rural environment protection. Using organic fertilizers to replace chemical fertilizers, using pesticides scientifically and rationally; using clean water, hygienic latrines, not letting buffaloes, cows, cattle and poultry wander, bringing shelters to place far away from living house; avoid building shelters, toilets near water source or wind direction. Mobilize people to build biogas plants; do not build handmade brick kilns and hunt wild animals. In particular, the craft villages must strictly comply with the commitments on smoke and waste during the use of raw materials.

For state-owned agricultural and forestry farms and mineral exploitation enterprises, enterprises doing hydroelectricity in the area need to be propagated and mobilized so that they can voluntarily perform their obligations to village communities and be responsible for general environmental protection. Enterprises located in ethnic minority and mountainous areas need to implement the policy of the Party and the State on investment: production development must ensure harmony between three benefits: economy - society - environmental protection. Enterprises are responsible for producing and processing consumer goods, and consuming products and materials from agro-forestry for people in the area, which must be associated with ecological environment protection.

4. Conclusion

Solving poverty associated with protecting the natural environment, managing and using resources efficiently has been a fundamental, long-term and urgent issue in our country. Of course, it is easy to see that this sustainable development depends on many factors, including the internal forces of the people themselves, the local community itself plays a central and important role.

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QUẢN LÝ TÀI NGUYÊN DỰA VÀO CỘNG ĐỒNG - PHƯƠNG THỨC QUẢN LÝ HỮU HIỆU Ở VÙNG DÂN TỘC THIỂU SỐ VÀ MIỀN NÚI

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Tóm tắt: Quản lý tài nguyên thiên nhiên dựa vào cộng đồng đã và đang được áp dụng ở nhiều vùng khác nhau trên thế giới, nhất là ở các quốc gia đang phát triển. Nội dung của phương thức này là lấy cộng đồng làm trung tâm, đưa cộng đồng tham gia trực tiếp vào hệ thống quản lý tài nguyên, đưa con người sống có ý thức trong môi trường thiên nhiên và bảo vệ tài nguyên như bảo vệ cho chính mình. Thông qua phân tích thực trạng công tác quản lý tài nguyên thiên nhiên dựa vào cộng đồng ở vùng dân tộc thiểu số (DTTS) Việt Nam, bài viết đề xuất một số giải pháp hữu hiệu nhằm nâng cao vai trò của cộng đồng DTTS trong quản lý tài nguyên thiên nhiên.

Từ khóa: Quản lý dựa vào cộng đồng; Tài nguyên thiên nhiên; Vùng dân tộc thiểu số và miền núi.