

## COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT (CFM) IN HOA BINH PROVINCE: STATUS AND SOLUTIONS

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### SUMMARY

Community forest management in Hoa Binh province has been established in association with the traditions, beliefs and culture of the communities. Hoa Binh province has allocated 48,771.19 ha of forestland to the hundreds of ethnic communities, accounting for 14.04% of the total forestland of the province; This policy has contributed to improving the income, especially of the poor, creating works for local people and enhancing the awareness of local communities on the role and the multi-values of forestland. However, the community forest management in Hoa Binh province have encountered many difficulties. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of community forest management, it is necessary to promote allocation of forestland and issuance forestland use rights to local communities, to attract more human resources from the community in the management, to diversify the types of payment for forest environment fees and to improve forest values.

**Keywords:** Community, forest management, Hoa Binh province, income from forest.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The villages (hamlets), notably the northern mountainous villages where many ethnic groups are located, play a significant role in socio-economic development. "Community" means all of Vietnamese people living in an area of village, hamlet, mountainous village or a similar resident area with the same customs or the same family name, allocated land or acknowledged with land use rights by the State (National Assembly, 2013). The community-based forest management have been formed for many years, associated with the traditions, customs and practices of the communities and are of great significance to these communities. This is a form in which all members of the community are directly involved in the management and the distribution of the product or benefit from the forest under the management the community (MARD, 2006).

In Hoa Binh province in particular and in many other localities throughout the country have long existed community-based forest management (Nguyen Ba Ngai, 2006). Hoa Binh province has allocated over 48,771 hectares of forestland to the community for management and use (Hoa Binh People's Committee, 2016). This has helped bring into

play the positive and active nature of communities, contributing to improving income, to changing labor structure and to changing perceptions of community. However, there remain still difficulties in the community-based forest management; for example, the area of forestland allocated to communities is still small, and the area for which land use right certificates are granted only takes up a small percentage of the allocated land area. Moreover, the benefits from community forestland are still limited, violations in management of forest are still taking place. The present article therefore focuses on assessing the status of community-based forest management, clarifying the shortcomings and causes and proposing solutions to improve the effectiveness of community-based forest management, contributing to hunger eradication, poverty alleviation, income generation and livelihoods of ethnic minority people depending on the forest for living.

### 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Method to choose research locations:** In order to conduct the research, the authors selected villages where community-based forest management are applied. The selected research locations were 5 villages representing

communities with large, concentrated population of the same ethnic group and sharing the same customs. Muong is the largest ethnic group in the province, accounting for 63.3% of the province's population (GSO, 2016). Therefore, 3 of the selected villages were: Duc village (Nam Phong commune, Cao Phong district); Cu village (Tu Son commune, Kim Boi district); Thung 2 village (Quy Hoa commune, Lac Son district); another village is Ban Nhac (Dong Chum commune, Da Bac district), representing the Tay community. The population of Tay community only represents 2.7% of the total population of the province, but this community is concentrated in one area and is very attached to the forest. The last village representing the Dao community is Suoi Ben Hamlet (Tien Son commune, Luong Son district). This village is still called hamlet according to local tradition. The Dao community accounts for only 1.7% of the province's population, but it is also a community with a tradition of community-based forest management, and its people live in concentrated villages. The rest of the ethnic groups are not concentrated or have no community-based forest management tradition.

**- Method of secondary data collection:**

The article uses the summary reports on the province's management and use of forestland; Forest and forestry land inventory reports were collected at state management agencies in the area of Hoa Binh province, together with previous relevant studies, in order to clarify the results of the community-based forest management in the province, thereby identify the difficulties and shortcomings, providing some solutions for better community-based forest management.

**- Method of primary data collection:**

Primary data were collected by direct interview using questionnaires. The number of households surveyed ( $n$ ) is based on Yamane's formula,

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N*e^2} \text{ (Le Huy Ba, 2006) (where N is the}$$

overall number;  $e$  is the sampling error).

As the survey conditions in communities is harsh due to complicated terrain, lack of concentration in the communities and the differences in customs and practices, the applied error for survey sample is 10%. Surveyed households were selected by stratified random sampling method, income classification (rich and middle income households, medium households, near poor households and poor households). Criteria for classification of households are implemented in accordance with Decision No. 09/2011/QĐ-TTg and applied in the locality. Through the survey and application of the formula, the total number of households surveyed is 219 households.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Current situation of land and forest land allocation for communities in Hoa Binh Province**

In implementation of Decree No. 02/NĐ-CP dated 15/01/1994, the provincial People's Committee issued Decision No. 548/QĐ-UBND, dated 29/11/1999, providing guidelines on forest land allocation. On the basis of Decision No. 672/QĐ-TTg dated 26/04/2006 by the Prime Minister, the People's Committee of Hoa Binh province issued Directive No. 04/CT-UBND of People's Committee of Hoa Binh province, dated 17/04/2013 on directing and enhancing measures to grant certificates of land use rights, ownership of houses and other assets attached to land, so far the whole area of forest land in the province has been assigned to the community for management and use. Although there is no specific regulation on the allocation of land to communities, based on the regulations of the State, Hoa Binh has allocated forest land to communities like other land users. The results of forest land allocation in the province are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Forestland status

No.	Subjects	Area (ha)	Percentage
	<b>Total</b>	<b>347,426.40</b>	<b>100.00</b>
1	Special-use forest management board	40,531.17	11.67
2	Protective forestland management board	2,410.94	0.69
3	State-owned enterprises	11,197.70	3.22
4	Private enterprises	2,144.15	0.62
5	Enterprises with 100% foreign capital	68.13	0.02
6	Households, individuals	143,003.63	41.16
7	Communities	48,771.19	14.04
8	Armed force	615.14	0.18
9	Other organisations	383.86	0.11
10	Commune People's Committees	98,300.49	28.29

Source: Hoa Binh province People's Committee (2016)

Of the 347,426.4 hectares of forestland, the area allocated by communities for management and use is relatively high at 48,771.19 hectares (14.04% of the province's total forestland area), which is higher than the average percentage of land use by communities in the whole country (6.7%) (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2017). In comparison with other localities, according to the results of the forest inspection and inventory in 25 provinces in 2014 - 2015 under the project "National Census for Forest Inventory in the period of 2013 - 2016", the proportion of forest land area managed and used by the community in Hoa Binh province is relatively large. This proportion is much larger than that of some provinces such as Bac Giang province (2.49%), Lang Son province

(5.24%), but still much lower than that of Son La province (59.71%) (MARD, 2016). This shows that Hoa Binh province has paid much attention to the allocation of land and forests to communities. However, compared to other types of land users, the People's Committee of the communes takes up the lowest rate of forestland use, but still account for 28.29% of the province's total forestland area, while these areas can be allocated to communities for management and use.

According to the statistics, the land area allocated with land use right is 20,515.90 ha, accounting for 42.07% of the total land area allocated to the community; while the area allocated without land use right is 28,255.29ha, accounting for 57.93%, details are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Status of forestland management by communities

No.	Land use right grant status	Area (ha)	Percentage
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48,771.19</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Land use rights granted</b>	<b>20,515.9</b>	<b>42.07</b>
	Without dispute	15,695.4	32.18
	With dispute	4,820.5	9.89
<b>2</b>	<b>Land use rights not yet granted</b>	<b>28,255.29</b>	<b>57.93</b>
	Without dispute	26,887.24	55.13
	With dispute	1,368.05	2.80

Source: Hoa Binh province People's Committee (2016)

The survey results show that the area of forestland allocated to the community is mainly natural forestland, natural forest after

poor exploitation, with low timber reserve and the benefit from allocated forest is very low. In addition, the forestland allocated to the

community is mainly located far away from the community, very difficult to travel to, the map system, land allocation records are still incomplete, so there are still violations such as overlapping and conflict, causing difficulties in the management and use of forestland. According to survey results at the survey sites, the communities have been allocated land

since 1994, but without land use rights certificates. It was not until the implementation of Decision No. 672/QĐ-TTg, dated 26/4/2006 of the Prime Minister and Directive No. 04 /CT-UBND of People's Committee of Hoa Binh province, dated 17/4/2013 that the communities were granted land use rights certificates.

**Table 3. Forestland allocation status of surveyed communities**

No.	Location	Allocated forest land area (ha)	Land use rights status
1	Ban Nhac	61	Without LURCs
2	Duc Village	120	With LURCs
3	Cu Villagr	605.5	Without LURCs
4	Thung 2 Village	166	With LURCs
5	Suoi Ben Hamlet	131.02	Without LURCs

Of the 5 selected communities, only 2 communities were issued LURCs. The issuance of LURCs to communities does not change the benefits derived from the forest because, as stipulated in paragraph 2, Article 181 of the Land Law 2013, the community is restricted to all rights to transfer, lease or donate land use rights; to mortgage or contribute capital with the land use rights. At present, there is no regulation on the area of forestland allocated to communities. The province only applies the regulations for other types of land user, based on the local land fund and the land use demand of the community to allocate land to the community. The area of forestland allocated to communities is mainly the traditional forests that communities have managed or used for a long time, or forests managed by the Commune People's Committee and then handed over to communities. The LURCs assigned to the community are in the name of a community representative, which is not in accordance with the Land Law of 2013, causing disputes as well as difficulties in land management.

### **3.2. Forest use efficiency of communities in Hoa Binh province**

#### **3.2.1. On economy**

Most of the forest land managed and used by the communities is natural forest where exploitation is forbidden, so the main source of forest resources comes from NTFPs. All communities develop village community forest management regulations. The main products to be exploited are firewood, rattan, bamboo shoots, honey, and medicinal plants. In addition, households who have demand for timber for house construction are subject to the procedures for timber harvesting for house construction but are not allowed to trade. Besides, the community also receives payment for forest environment services in accordance with Decree No. 99/2010/ND-TTg dated 24 September 2010 and Circular 62/2012/TTLT-BNNPTNT-BTC dated 16/11/2012. However, only communities located in the basin of the Hoa Binh Hydropower Plant will be paid. In each community, the payment has its own management regulations, but most communities use it as public funds instead of sharing it amongst the households.

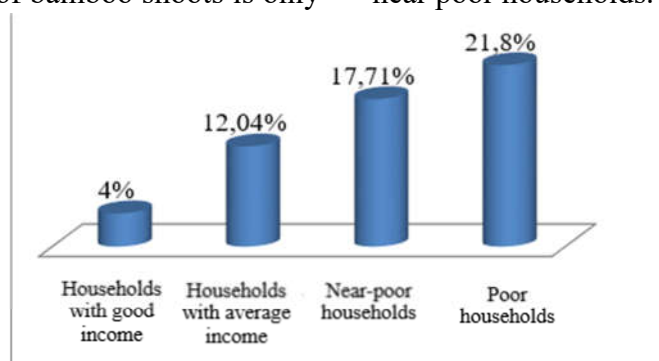
The results of the household survey show that the proportion of income from forestland to household economy is not large, ranging from 9.26% to 16.59% of the total average income of a household as shown in the table 4.

**Table 4. Proportion of income from community forest for household economy**

No.	Location	Ethnic group	Average income of household (million VND/year)	Average income from community forest land of household (million VND/year)	Income from community forest land ratio (%)
1	Ban Nhac	Tay	10.89	1.01	9.26
2	Duc Village	Muong	12.60	1.44	11.45
3	Cu Village	Muong	10.99	1.82	16.59
4	Thung 2 Village	Muong	11.24	1.61	14.37
5	Suoi Ben Hamlet	Dao	14.06	1.91	13.58

Products harvested from the forest to generate income for the household are mainly NTFP such as firewood, bamboo shoots, rattan, honey, medicinal plants... However, each community has different customs and habits, so each of these products has different values. For the Dao community, due to the small number of people and the tradition of exploiting medicinal plants and using medicinal plants for their livelihood, they are very attached to the forest, especially the forest of the village. Exploitation of products in the community forests is clearly stipulated in the regulations and all people in the community as well as outside the community can access the forest. But for the Tay people, because of their high mountainous life, the Tay community considers the community forest as the common property of the village, the forest is precious to the people, a sacred place, so they protect the forest and exploit it with good awareness, only for daily needs and rarely sell the products. The regulations of the Tay people are also very clear about the time to exploit in the forest; for instance, exploitation of bamboo shoots is only

allowed in May and June and is prohibited in other months, other products are exploited in limited numbers but are still open to other villagers to exploit. As for the Muong community, this is the largest population in Hoa Binh province. Their livelihoods are closely linked to the forest. Forest products are the source of income for many household living in villages, exploiting forest products, especially medicinal products, is traditional for the Muong ethnic group, which is why their income from community forest is higher than that of other ethnic groups. The exploitation of products from community forests of the Muong people is also very strict in the village regulations. Accordingly, the exploitation is extended to the people outside the village, but there is a limit on the volume of exploitation for each product. Although the income from the common forest land area of the village is not the main source of income for most households, this is an important source of income because most of the communities are still in difficulties, with a high rate of poor and near poor households.



**Figure 1. Ratio of income from community forest land to household income**

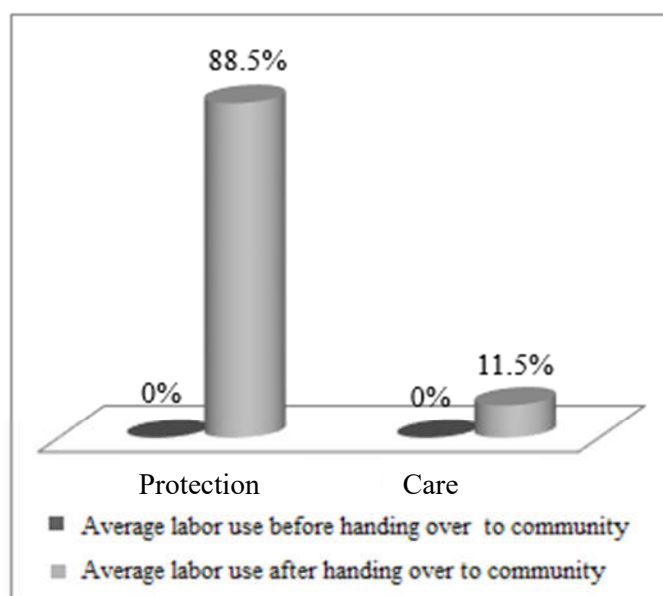
The survey data show that for the households with good income, the income from the community forest accounts for a small proportion (about 4.0%), but for the poor and near poor households, the proportion is high, more than 17.7% to 21.8% of total household income (shown in figure 1). This indicates that the area of community forestland is very significant for poor and near poor households in the community.

The results show that the income from community forest land in Hoa Binh is similar to other communities in Yen Bai, Son La, Dien Bien, Lang Son and Cao Bang provinces...

according to study by Do Anh Tuan (2012). The exploitation of non-timber forestry products in these communities is similar to that in Hoa Binh, mainly firewood and some forest products such as rattan, bamboo shoots and medicinal plants are practically open to all households in the village as well as for outsiders. The households do not have to apply for village permission but are free to go to the forest without having to pay any fees.

**3.2.2. On the society**

*a. Change in division of labor in the community*



**Figure 2. Labor use ratio on management and use of land**

Previously, as forest land was not allocated to the people, the people got into the forest mainly for exploitation, instead of protection and care. Since granted land use rights, communities have developed their own regulations on organizing forest protection and care. Therefore, the average number of employees for forest protection and has increased, but the rate of increase is not significant (the forest care is almost unchanged because people still think the forest is the common land of the community, not the land of individual and they should not care). Forest care activities are mainly clearing vines. According to survey data, the number of care workers accounts for only 10% of total care

and protection labour. The protection in most communities is organized in form of teams. The patrol team take turns patrolling the forest once or twice a week. Forest patrolling, care and protection are carried out in accordance with community rules, which are the responsibilities of all community members and are not paid due to limited funds.

*b. Change in perception of the people*

Beginning in 1994, when Hoa Binh province allocated land and forests to communities, violations such as forest fires cases, theft or encroachment of forest land were significantly reduced. Violations at the study sites are shown in figure 3.

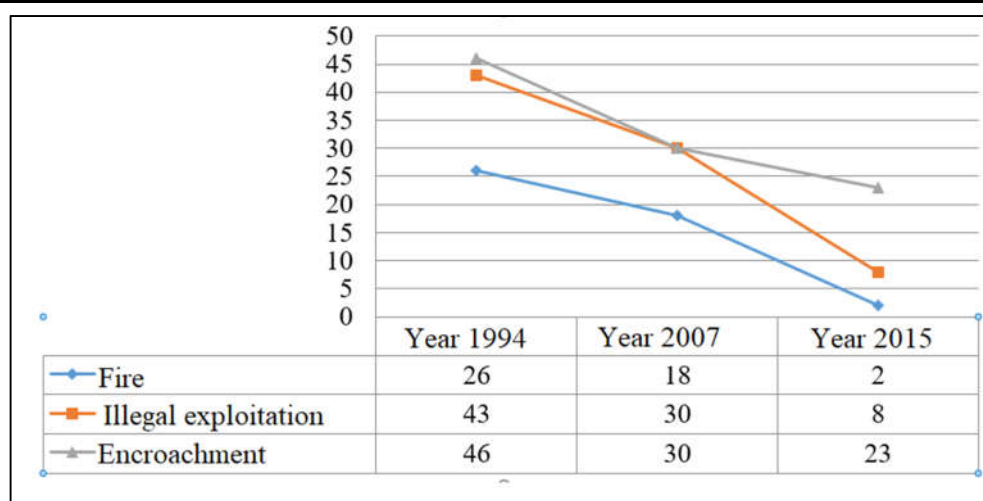


Figure 3. Statistics of the number of violations in the management of forest by communities

The life of ethnic minorities had been still very difficult, mainly dependent on agricultural production but short of land for cultivation, so slash-and-burn agriculture and encroachment on the area of forest land of the community had been serious and difficult to solve. After the allocation of land to the village community (1994), followed by the issuance of land tenure certificates to the communities, together with a review of the land area and implementation of the fixed cultivation and settlement policy, the community had partly solved the land encroachment, exploitation and forest fire. However, as the issuance of LURCs was only available in some communities in 2006 and 2013, disputes and encroachments on forest land by the community are still complex. The number of local forest land encroachment decreased but encroachments still occurred and were difficult to solve. This is in line with the research conducted by Le Quang Vinh (2012) in Phu Loc district, Thua Thien Hue province. In communities where the LURCs were latter issued, violations had decreased remarkably,

especially in recent years. The remainder of the violations is mainly encroachments on community forest land.

### 3.2.3. On the environment

#### a. Water quality

Water sources for the production and daily life of ethnic minority communities in Hoa Binh province are heavily dependent on nature. Being aware of this, the community has paid close attention to forest protection and care. However, in recent years, due to the lack of proper community management and use, over-exploitation without new planting and supplementation, altogether with floods and landslides has made the water supply for production and living decrease considerably. Surveys found that more than 40% of people think that the water source is poorer than before, only a fraction of about 15% of respondents think it is better. This implies that more attention should be paid to watershed forests and protection of water sources in order to ensure water supply for the production and the living of the communities.

Table 5. Community opinion on water quality

Criteria	Water for production		Water for living	
	Number of households (households)	Rate (%)	Number of households (households)	Rate (%)
Better (%)	35	16.0	33	15.1
Unchanged (%)	91	41.6	87	39.7
Worse (%)	93	42.5	99	45.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results of the survey in Hoa Binh province are also consistent with the study conducted by Do Anh Tuan (2012), in which the quality of water supply for the community is being reduced. Maintaining and promoting the regulation of water sources requires specific solutions which enhance the value of forests.

*b. Awareness of the people about the role of forests*

Community participation in management of forest has been formed for a long time. So far, with the policy of land allocation, forest allocation and the implementation of many

other policies, awareness of the community-based forest management has changed dramatically. According to the survey data, the majority of people believe that community-based forest management plays a big role in maintaining and improving the quality of water resources (more than 70% think it is very important); More than 60% of respondents said that it is very important for the supply of NTFPs, mainly firewood, medicinal plants, bamboo shoots, rattan and honey. However, most respondents think that it is less important in household economic development (shown in table 6).

**Table 6. Role of community-based forest management**

*Unit: Household*

No.	Community	In water source			In households' economy			In NTFPs supply		
		Very impor-tant	Impor-tant	Less impor-tant	Very impor-tant	Impor-tant	Less impor-tant	Very impor-tant	Impor-tant	Less impor-tant
1	Ban Nhac	28	8	0	3	11	22	20	13	3
2	Duc Village	28	11	0	4	11	24	26	8	5
3	Cu Village	36	13	0	10	11	28	31	12	6
4	Thung 2 Village	34	14	0	8	15	25	29	13	6
5	Suoi Ben Hamlet	29	18	0	4	13	30	26	16	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Rate (%)</b>	<b>70.8</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>60.3</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>11.4</b>

The results of the study are well suited to the study conducted by Do Anh Tuan (2012) and Pham Van Dung (2016) on people's perceptions of the role of forests. As many as 90% of people think that community-based forest management is very important for water resources, thus ensuring livelihoods for the people in the community. In communities such as Thuy Duong village (Loc Tien commune), Thuy Yen Thuong village (Loc Thuy commune) in Phu Loc district, Thua Thien Hue province, community forest protection helps to maintain water resources for Ecotourism areas contribute to the livelihoods of the people (Le Quang Vinh et al., 2012). In addition, community-based forest management plays an important role in providing NTFPs for community activities (Le Quang Vinh et al.,

2012, Do Anh Tuan, 2012). The economic role of community forests contributes little but it is vital to the poor, forest dependent communities (Do Anh Tuan, 2012).

**3.3. Some issues in community-based forest management**

The research shows that the community-based forest management in Hoa Binh province still has some difficulties as follows:

- The area of forest land allocated to communities for management and use still accounts for a small proportion (14.04%).
- The forestland area where land use rights are assigned to communities (with LURCs) accounts for less than 50% of the allocated area. This has caused many disadvantages in the management and use of land, affecting the community's welfare.



- Revenues from community forest are still mainly NTFPs due to the fact that the land allocated to the community is mainly protected forestland, and these resources has been increasingly declining in both quantity and quality.

- Although violation of forest protection law has decreased sharply, there is still land encroachment and land disputes between villages and other land users, causing great difficulties for land management.

- At present, as the consequence of unplanned exploitation, the solutions for care, new planting, supplementation and improvement of forest quality are still limited, so the water source for production and daily life decreases considerably.

- Income from forest environmental services is also insignificant. Currently, only areas in the Hoa Binh hydropower sector are covered. The amount paid is so small that it only contributes to a tiny portion of the total income of households in the community.

- According to the village convention, all people have the same responsibility for caring and protecting forests. However, the mobilization of people is still challenging due to lack of funds for these activities. In fact, these tasks are being done voluntarily and alternately.

### **3.4. Some solutions to improve the community-based management of forest in Hoa Binh province**

The management and use of forestland in the past years has changed but also encountered many difficulties. To overcome and complete this task, it is important to implement some solutions as follows:

- Promulgate specific regulations and accelerate the allocation of forestland and grant LURCs to communities in order to create stability in the management of forest by communities.

- Strengthen propaganda, advocacy to limit violations, forest fire and encroachment on forestland.

- Implement measures/mechanisms (particularly financial mechanisms) to attract

community workers, especially poor people, to forestland management and use.

- Increase the mobilisation of people in the community to participate in the work of forest protection, tending, planting and replenishment to ensure water for production and daily life.

- Pay more attention to environmental service fees, more particularly, raise fees for forest environmental services and diversify payments for these services so they can generate income for individuals in the community.

- Promote services, stabilize the consumption market of non-timber forest products to improve and stabilize incomes for people.

- Construct conventions and agreements in villages (hamlets) with more specific regulations on community forest management.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Community-based forest management in Hoa Binh province is a popular traditional land use method associated with ethnic minority communities in the province. Over time, this work has achieved certain results.

- There are 48,471.19 ha (accounting for 14.04% of the total forestland area of the province) allocated to the communities; of which 10,379.97 hectares of land use rights (occupying 42.066% of the total area allocated to the community). Mainly protective forest land is natural forest, and the right to use 57.934% of the area has not been allocated.

- The community-based forest management has created a source of income for the people in the community, although the rate is not high, it is significant for the poor and near poor households, helping to stabilize the people's livelihood.

- The management of forest has contributed to changing the structure of labor use in the locality, changing people's perceptions about the role of forests in life, society and the environment in a positive way.

However, in the process of managing and using community-based forest in the province, there are also difficulties and obstacles. Therefore, solutions such as: boosting the

allocation of land and forests to communities; accelerating the granting of land use right certificates to the community; to create a stable source of income; to help the people earn significant income from forest land and to improve their living standards need attention from relevant authorities and stakeholders in the near future.

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## QUẢN LÝ RỪNG CỘNG ĐỒNG TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN TỈNH HÒA BÌNH: THỰC TRẠNG VÀ GIẢI PHÁP

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<sup>3</sup>Viện Điều tra, Quy hoạch rừng

### TÓM TẮT

Công tác quản lý rừng dựa vào cộng đồng tại tỉnh Hòa Bình đã được hình thành gắn với truyền thống, tín ngưỡng và văn hóa của các cộng đồng nơi đây. Kết quả cho thấy tỉnh đã triển khai giao đất rừng cho thôn (bản) với diện tích 48.771,19 ha, chiếm 14,04% tổng diện tích đất rừng; việc quản lý rừng dựa vào cộng đồng đã đóng góp phần cải thiện thu nhập của người dân đặc biệt là đối với các hộ nghèo; góp phần thay đổi phân công lao động trong cộng đồng và nâng cao nhận thức của người dân về vai trò của rừng. Tuy nhiên, trong quá trình quản lý cũng gặp phải không ít khó khăn. Vì vậy, cần có những giải pháp phù hợp như đẩy mạnh công tác giao đất, giao rừng và cấp giấy chứng nhận quyền sử dụng đất; thu hút lao động của cộng đồng vào công tác quản lý; đa dạng hóa loại hình chi trả môi trường rừng, đẩy mạnh hoạt động của thị trường lâm sản ngoài gỗ và cải thiện giá trị rừng để nâng cao hiệu quả trong quản lý rừng dựa vào cộng đồng.

**Từ khóa:** Dựa vào cộng đồng, quản lý rừng, thu nhập từ rừng, tỉnh Hòa Bình.

Received : 01/8/2018

Revised : 27/9/2018

Accepted : 04/10/2018