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Land Privatization and Livelihood Diversification: An Examination from the Southern Uplands of Vietnam

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Abstract

This paper examines the process of implementing land privatization and its effects on household livelihoods in the Uplands of Vietnam. The research was undertaken with three upland villages situated in the buffer zone of Cat Tien National Park in the southern uplands of Vietnam where have recently been adopted a land privatization program according to the 1993 Land Law and some other frontier development programs, such as nature conservation, remotely mountainous community development programs supported by the central government. Such policies and programs have ultimately aimed at improving both upland livelihoods and environmental sustainability of the uplands, simultaneously.

The research demonstrates unequivocally that though the land privatization throughout the nationwide has been guided by the unique legal framework, the implementation of land privatization in the uplands, particularly in the buffer zone communities locating around the protected areas has resulted in the notable divergence across communities, even households. The differences in the result of implementing land privatization in the upland communities were mainly caused by different factors embodied in both land legislation and local practices. Unsurprisingly, the divergence of implementing land privatization among communities and households has actually created differentiation in distributing benefits of land privatization among communities and households. In fact, the empirical findings suggest that land privatization (land titling) served only as initial conditions while households' initial assets play as the determinants factors which determine how households transfer their land title into material benefits. The empirical investigations also suggest that together with land privatization, market liberalization, the government's programs for socio-economic development and nature conservation have strongly influenced on the southern upland livelihoods. Differences in the results of land privatization, households' initial assets ownership as well benefits from such programs which have been enable households to pursue different patterns and tendencies in livelihood makings. In other words, distributing benefits from land privatization and other government's programs was not equal among households and the ways in which households diversified their livelihoods, differently.

Keywords: southern uplands, buffer zone, Cat Tien National Park, land institutions, property rights, land privatisation, rural livelihood, indigenous ethnic minorities, Kinh, Tay, and Ma.

1. Introduction

In order to integrate into the mainstream development process and move its worsening socioeconomic situation away, over last decades Vietnam has deeply involved into reforms towards market – oriented economy. Land privatisation is one of most fundamental policy of the reform agenda that has created an important platform for land policy debates and also has gained the typical attention of scholars from multiple disciplines and policy decision-makers. Many studies and publications on this issue have recently come out, the concern on the linkages between land privatisation and rural livelihood diversification has been still inadequately paid concerns, however. Hence, it is reasonable for

my study taking its speculation to examine the relationships between land privatization and rural livelihood diversification in the southern uplands of Vietnam in order to enrich more theoretical and empirical investigation to this research field.

Over last decades, this region has been undergone rapid socio-economic and natural resource transformations due to massive intervention of the government and penetration of markets. It is particularly true that during the late 70s to 80s the central government has adopted a numerous socio- economic development programs, such as land development, collectivisation, Sedentarization, and new economic zone programs in the region with attempts to exploit its resource potential for national development and to improve living conditions of its residents. Especially, the government recently decided to implement a campaign for a large – scale land privatisation in the southern uplands as adopted in most parts of the country in order to foster economic development. Thus, land privatisation over the southern uplands has made substantial shifts in property rights to land and assets from state and collective entities to private sectors. Market transactions have replaced bureaucratic decisions as major mechanism of allocation. These institutional reforms have, therefore, altogether transformed southern uplands’ socio-economic conditions in general and households’ livelihoods in particular. Hence, the situation of the southern uplands is “a social laboratory” to realize the examination on controversial issue mentioned above.

2. Theoretical Background

The study adopts the property rights institutions and the livelihood approach as its analytical framework. Property rights to land and other natural resources are considered as “a bundle of rights” and associated duties that ensure rights holders to claim benefit stream from natural resources under the protection of some authority system (Bruce and Fortmann, 1989; Bromley, 1991; Bruce, 1998; Maxwell and Wiebe, 1998). Property rights in general and property rights to natural resources in particular affect powerfully economic performance and economic development by influencing the incentives of actors to create new wealth or dissipate (Libecap, 1989). In narrow sense, in any rural

or agrarian economy, access to and rights in land and natural resources are central to an analysis of livelihood strategies and livelihood security societies (Doward, 2001b).

Recently, development research in most transitional economies has oriented to intensively focus on links between land privatization, land institution change and rural livelihoods. There are rich empirical studies show that most importantly land privatization via land titling has enhanced the well-defined and secure private property rights (Sanjak and Cornhiel, 1998) and changes in property size (Cleary and Eaton, 1996). Deiniger and Feder (1998) further investigate that well-defined and secure private property rights to land as precondition that would increase the incentives for long-term investments in production, improve transferability of land to cultivators who have resources to make better use of it, or to facilitate land transfers, stimulate the land market and increase the supply of land on market, to be a mechanism for redistributing land and making land more accessible to landless and land poor farmers, and induce the ability to use land as collateral to increase access to medium and long term formal credit markets for undertaking investments. Many other studies also arrive at the same conclusion. As a result, the land privatization strongly leads to grow agricultural production, productivity and income (Awood, 1990; Sanjak and Cornhiel 1998; Deininger and Feder, 1998; Maxwell and Wiebe, 1998; Feder and Nishio, 1998, and Barrow and Roth, 1990).

However, the abovementioned benefits of land privatization via land titling having on rural livelihoods remain still ambiguous and inconclusive in many cases. It is particularly true. Many empirical studies investigate that even though land titling has prominently reduced insecurity, it may not result in increased investment or higher agricultural productivity. Farmers with secure tenure may not invest for many reasons. It is argued that in addition to ownership security, farmers' investment decisions are affected by a number of factors, such as alternative investment opportunities, accessibility of production inputs, the farmer's present debt structure and overall profitability, of farming and availability of capital (Stanfield, 1985, Pogiola, 1999:4). In many cases, where land reform is attempted and land is allocated to the poor, they may face problems of a

lack of capital and knowledge to develop it. They may lack experience in farm management and find it difficult to market their crops (Cleary and Eaton, 1996). Moreover, land titles may not give farmers better in access to formal credit markets. Financial institutions have often been reluctant to offer credit to small farmers, on the one side (Stanfield, 1985; Cleary and Eaton, 1996), and many farmers are reluctant to borrow against land even if credit are available, from fear of foreclosure and losing their land should adverse agricultural conditions prevent them from paying their loans because of lacking insurance markets, on the other side (Stanfield, 1985; Carter, 1993; Cleary and Eaton, 1996). Thus, land tenure is only one amongst many influences on agricultural production (Sikor et al, 2003). Productivity is more often due to access to technology and product markets (Sikor et al, 2003; Cleary and Eaton, 1996), physical infrastructure, effective credit systems, marketing institutions, and level of economic development (Feder and Nishio, 1999). The benefits of land titling therefore depend on the broader political economic context (Sikor et al, 2003).

3. The study setting

3.1 Selecting and describing the study villages

Three villages with certain extent to similar and different characteristics were chosen with the purpose to draw up a picture of what effects land privatization has brought to local people's livelihoods and how people react to this process by their livelihood activities. These villages situated in the buffer zone of Cat Tien National Park in the southern uplands of Vietnam with their ecological system representing roughly for that of southern uplands of Vietnam in which plain, medium and low hills are mixed. At the time of the study, Ma village has around 1494 people who divide into 322 households. The average household size is around 4.6 people. Though village population is small and live in the homogenous area, ethnicity is far from being uniform. The village population belongs to seven different ethnic groups who have different histories to the village. Of them, the Ma and Stieng are two dominant groups who are classified as indigenous minorities and have a long history of settlement in the village. Meanwhile, population of Kinh and Tay Village is

smaller than that of Ma village is. By 2004, the Kinh village has 887 people living in 161 households. The average number of people per household is 5.4. Tay village is a bit less populous than Kinh village is. It has around 764 people split into 149 households. The average size of household is around 5.1 people. In these two villages, ethnicity is rather homogenous.

In term of economy, like many remote villages in the southern uplands of Vietnam and the buffer zone of Cat Tien national park, these three villages are categorized as a poor group. A large number of households fall into poor and poorest categories. Evidently, in the Ma village, there are 65.96% of total households considered as poor households. Tay village's economy is also not brighter. About 54.66% of Tay village's households belong to the poor and poorest groups. Among three villages, the poor situation in the Kinh village is not as serious as of the first two villages, but a number of poor households still remain at high rate (37.5%). It is worth to note that a large extent relying on agriculture and forest for making living is a common livelihood strategy among households. Statistically, eighty percent of their income earns from agriculture and forest products. On average, there are 6.2% of land households, 28.5% of households lacking capital, and 44.6% of households without permanent house.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The study draws on diverse sources of data including both secondary and primary data. A wide range of secondary data sources is documented in forms of published literature, official statistics, legal and policy documents, and monographic studies are selectively gathered. Primarily qualitative and quantitative data is mainly collected from interviews with 43 key informants and a survey of 121 sampled households. Moreover, primary data is supplemented by direct observations and informal discussions with various groups of actors.

The combining qualitative and quantitative approaches have intentionally employed in this study for data analysis. The descriptions and explanations on the process of land privatization, livelihood practices and trends as well as effects of land privatization on rural livelihood

diversification have been basically developed on secondary and primary sources of qualitative and quantitative data in a manner in which qualitative and quantitative discussions have been applied simultaneously to assist each other. Whereby the bias trend and subjection in data analysis could be reduced and creditability of data analysis could be raised.

4. Effects of land privatization on rural livelihoods

4.1 Land allocation and titling

Following the Doi Moi reform policies launched in 1986, the government of Vietnam has undertaken radical land reforms towards land privatization. Initially, the 1988 Land Law was issued to dismantle cooperatives and to distribute land and production decision making to individual households. In order to keep the process of economic reform, Vietnam's National Assembly passed a new land law in July 1993 (Sikor, 2005). This law aimed at finalizing in the changes in land use rights of farm households by substantially widening the bundles of rights to landholders in associated with land allocation and land titling. According to Sikor (2002) the land allocation and land titling program has been expected to be finished within few years. However, land allocation has produced a diversity of outcome. It proceeded straightforward in some areas, but uneven in other areas, particularly in the uplands. This consequence was caused by the constellations of factors lying in both land legislation and local practices.

Thus, empirical observation shows that land privatization in these three villages have been uneven and rather difficult process and mainly undertaken assignments of land tenure certificates (LTC) to farmer households. The empirical study indicates that the final step of land privatisation has remained uncompleted at the village and household levels, despite of having been started for a long while. Precisely, agricultural land privatization in Kinh and Tay village has initiated since 1997 and still been underway. Statistical data indicates that by the time of fieldwork, there were 127 HHs (78.88% %) with 125.09 hectares (88.03%) assigned LTC in the Kinh village and 118 HHs (78.67%) with 153.84 hectares (80.97%) of total agricultural land granted LTC in Tay village (**table**

1). The rest of households have registered with the communal land allocation committee, but their application has not been yet qualified. In contrast, the land privatization in Ma village has proven a rather uneven process. It has been taken place at slow pace. By the time of fieldwork only first several steps of LTC issuance, such as establishment of cadastral mapping, the land allocation committee, and land registration have been carried out. The remaining steps to finalize LTC issuance have been underway. The empirical investigation persists that this unexpected result of implementing land privatization in these villages has been due to several important factors, such as, divergent results of implementing previous land policies, local conditions, lack of coordination between line agencies, the central government and local authorities, constraints of finance, technique, low-skilled land administrators, inflexibility and impracticability of land legislation, and high transaction costs incurring in the implementation of land allocation.

Table 1: Agricultural land allocation and titling in three study villages

	Total area	No. of HHs owned agr. land	Total agri. land (ha)	Agri. land with LTC		HHs with LCT	
				Area (ha)	Percent	Number	Percent
Ma Village	1100	314	305	0	0	0	0
Tay Village	250	150	190	153.84	80.97	118	78.67
Kinh Village	227	161	142	125.09	88.03	127	78.88

(Source: The compilation of secondary data collected 2004-2005)

In sum, the empirical examination on land privatization in the buffer zone villages in the southern uplands has well reflected that the enforcement of land privatization in the uplands has been a difficult process and resulted heterogeneously across villages, even individual households. More importantly, in many cases land privatization has solely ratified the informal rights to land that already practiced by land users rather than readjusted landholding among land users as stipulated in the law. The land privatization thus legitimized the informal rights existed.

4.2 Patterns and trends in upland livelihoods

In the present study, a method for income calculation and categorization of income sources of households in the southern uplands is primarily adopted from a principle of Vietnam Living Standard Survey and Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey. By this classification, the

household income is divided into 7 categories (table 2). As indicated, currently virtual all households in the study villages (96.69% of the sample) are involved in some crop production in which annual crops are the most important ones. Crop production makes up 44.47% of net household income. Livestock production is also carried out by a large majority of households (90.91% of sample), and contributed the second large share of net household income (18.39% of net household net income). With regard to inland fisheries, approximately one-fourth (22.31%) of the households involve in fish raising, but it is accounted for just 2.44% of net household income. Fish raising is ultimately for household's own consumption. There are few households to raise fishes for a commercial purpose. A number of households involving in forestry activities pose the fourth rank among other economic activities. It is accounted for 76.03% of total households who have practiced forest products gathering in which the collection of firewood, bamboo shoot, and bamboo volume is the most common. Recently, forest plantation is also being practiced. Altogether, these forestry activities contribute about 9% of net household income. Apart from relying traditional economic activities relying on agriculture and forestry, off- and non-farm economic activities have been currently turned up in livelihood strategies of households. A large number of households (81.82%) reports that they have engaged in some kinds of wage labour. Of which, off-farm wage labour and public employment are the most popular. Finding jobs in factories and other services has also come to be. Another source of non-farm income is stemmed from self-employment in non-farm enterprises, usually micro-enterprises. The household survey figures out that 15.7% of households operate of one or more non-farm enterprises which provide them 8.34% of net household income. In addition, a minor number of households (1.65%) report their earning from renting out land that constitutes about 0.21% of net household income.

The empirical investigation suggests that different forms of diversification have become the mainstream in livelihood strategies across households. Their livelihoods have been gradually increased a number of income sources and the share balance among different their income sources.

The table 2 indicates that a number of income sources among households have steadily raised from 3.17 in 1997 to 3.88 in 2004, on average. Apart from increasing a number of income sources per households, a number of households pursuing livelihood diversification have also substantially raised up during a period between 1997 and 2004. The common tendency identified in livelihood strategies among households is the slight drop in a number of households practicing crop production and a share of crop production income in the net household income. Thus, a number of households with crop production are slightly reduced from 100% in 1997 to 96.69% in 2004 and on average a share of crop production income is deducted 11.56% between 1997 and 2004. Contradictorily, a number of households engaging livestock production, fish raising, forestry activities, enterprises, wage labour, and other transfers has virtually increased. Of which the proportion of households with livestock production, fish raising, enterprises, and wage labour has swiftly raised up.

Table 2: The share of net income of different sources among households

	Percent of HHs	Net income 1997		Percent of HHs	Net income 2004	
	involving 1997	Million VND	%	involving 2004	Million VND	%
Crops	100	9.79	56.12	96.69	13.14	44.47
Livestock	76.86	3.25	18.63	90.91	5.43	18.39
Fisheries	10.74	0.38	2.16	22.31	0.72	2.44
Forestry	71.90	1.81	10.40	76.03	2.67	9.02
Enterprises	3.31	0.74	4.25	15.70	2.46	8.34
Wages	54.55	1.85	10.60	81.82	5.13	17.35
Transfers and other	0	0.00	0	1.65	0.06	0.21
Total income		17.44	100		29.54	100
No. of income sources		3.17			3.88	

(Source: The household surveys in 2004-2005)

A share of income sources in the net household income has also grown relatively. Notice that a tendency to increase gradually the balance among shares of the income of different sources in the net household income has been also apparently observable. Moreover, total net household income and net income of each income source among households have been almost increased while the share of net income of each source has not gone the same trend. The share of net income seems to decline slightly in crop production, to be likely stable in livestock production, forestry activities, and

fish raising while to drastically rise up in enterprise and wage sectors (**table 2**). This tendency in economic activities has recently become a common phenomenon across rural areas in Vietnam.

Of course, looking more closely at the distribution of, a number of households involving in economic activities, net income of each income source in the net household income structure, some extent of similarities and differences in economic activities among three income groups of households are distinctively remarked (**table 3, 4**). Total net household income has dramatically increased in the upper and middle income groups and gradually expanded in the lower income group. Nevertheless, the differences in economic activities among three income groups of households are clearly distinguished. A number of households in the upper income tercile carrying out fish raising, enterprises, wage labour, and other activities have rapidly increased in comparing to that of the other two income groups. In contrast, a number of households in the middle and lower income groups finding their income in wage labour have swiftly raised up and have steadily increased in enterprises and forestry activities. Moreover, the distinction in economic activities among three income terciles is also made by their income source diversification. The upper income group has engaged in a large extent of economic activities (4.12 income sources per households on average) as compared to the following income groups (4 and 3.47 income sources per households, respectively). The lower income group is considered as the group with the least income source diversification. The increase of income source between 1997 and 2004 also skews from the upper to the lower income groups. Somewhat surprisingly, this finding seems to be against the idea that the poor households tend to diversify their livelihood in order to reduce risks associated with fluctuations in income from any given source.

Table 3: Variations in a number of households involving in economic activities

	Upper		Middle		Lower	
	Percent of households		Percent of households		Percent of households	
	1997	2004	1997	2004	1997	2004
Crops	100	97.56	100	97.62	100	97.37
Livestock	90.24	97.56	95.24	95.24	57.89	78.95
Fisheries	12.2	36.59	19.05	19.05	10.53	10.53
Forestry	68.29	78.05	78.57	83.33	68.42	76.32
Enterprises	9.76	26.83	0	14.29	0	2.63
Wages	63.41	80.49	47.62	85.71	63.16	86.84
Transfers and other	0	4.88	0	0	0	2.63
No. of income sources	3.34	4.12	3.19	4	2.97	3.47

(Source: The household surveys in 2004-2005)

In addition, income structure of households across three income groups has substantially changed between 1997 and 2004. Declining the proportion of crop production income and expanding the share of enterprises and wages appear obviously among households of three income groups. This tendency has recently been a mainstream of change in income structure that is investigated in most parts of rural areas, including southern uplands in Vietnam. Yet, it is not correct to say that changes in income structure and level of increase or declination in the share of each income source in the overall income structure are completely identical among households of three income groups. The income structure and the tendency in changing the income structure are quite different among three income groups (table 4).

Table 4: Income structure of households by income tercile

	Upper				Middle				Lower			
	1997		2004		1997		2004		1997		2004	
	Million VND	%	Million VND	%	Million VND	%	Million VND	%	Million VND	%	Million VND	%
Crops	15.86	57.44	23.15	46.16	8.8	58.39	10.48	43.25	4.33	47.63	5.27	39.95
Livestock	5.64	20.43	9.75	19.44	2.47	16.39	4.24	17.50	1.53	16.83	2.09	15.85
Fisheries	0.57	2.06	1.26	2.51	0.23	1.53	0.55	2.27	0.33	3.63	0.33	2.50
Forestry	1.64	5.94	2.94	5.86	2.06	13.67	2.95	12.17	1.73	19.03	2.05	15.54
Enterprises	2.19	8.29	5.73	11.43	0	0.00	1.4	5.78	0	0.00	0.12	0.91
Wages	2.29	8.29	7.34	14.64	1.73	11.48	4.61	19.03	1.51	16.61	3.31	25.09
Transfers and other	0	0	0.16	0.32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.03	0.23
Total income	27.61	100	50.15	100	15.07	100	24.23	100	9.09	100	13.19	100

(Source: The household surveys in 2004-2005)

4.3 Effects of land privatization and household assets ownership

Generally, the study has empirically investigated that land privatization has significantly influenced on livelihood strategies of households in the surveyed sample and some extent to the

whole village, as well. Land privatization has opened up new opportunities for households to release their resource potential in order to improve their livelihoods.

Table 5: Growth of net household income between households with and without land title

	Households with land title			Households without land title		
	Net income (mil. VND)		Growth (%)	Net income (mil. VND)		Growth (%)
	1997	2004	2004-1997	1997	2004	2004-1997
Crops	11.73	13.58	16	6.83	12.46	82
Livestock	3.55	6.71	89	2.79	3.48	25
Fisheries	0.42	0.83	100	0.31	0.55	75
Forestry	0.52	1.74	236	3.79	4.08	8
Enterprises	0.37	2.38	543	1.30	2.60	99
Wages	2.01	5.84	190	1.60	4.05	153
Transfers and other	0	0.09	-	0.00	0.02	-
Total income	18.18	31.19	72	16.31	27.04	66
Total income sources	3.26	3.86	18	3.04	3.90	28

(Source: The household surveys in 2004-2005)

The descriptive data in table 5 highlights that a total net household income of households with land title is higher than that of those without land title. The household surveys add more supplementary evidence that 70.73% of upper income households and 56.1% of middle income households who land has been assigned land title in 1997 while only 52.63% of lower income households with land have been granted with land title. If deconstructing the growth of sectoral income, the average income and average income of each income source in the quintile of households with land title rose suddenly, except income from crop production, in comparing to that of households without land title. This result is consistent with a story developed on qualitative data from interviews with the key informants and the head of sampled households. According to their interpretation, land privatization via land titling has opened the door for land users to access formal credits with low interest by using land title as collateral. Virtually all sampled households report that they have got medium or long - term loans from institutional credits to invest in their production. Access to credits is thus very necessary for farmers to be able undertaking investments, because even they have incentives to undertake investments in their production, but it would not be made possible if they do not have productive capital. The statistical test also vigorously affirms the statement above. Correlation between variables on land title and household's land collateral based-

credit access as well as between variables on credit access and net household income is statically significant while that between variables on land title and net household income is not correlated.

In conventional interpretation, the impacts of land privatization on changes in rural income structures are primarily derived from shifts in control over production links from cooperative to individual households and an increase of households' production decision-making. However, this interpretation is not virtually fit into the situation of the study villages and extent to many other southern upland villages because the process of collectivization in the southern uplands had not been fully implemented as other regions in Vietnam. Households in this region have therefore gained partly their production and product consumption before de-collectivization implemented. Accordingly, they had more freedom and incentives in production in comparing to households of other regions as the production brigade had not exercised fully their power.

The effects of land privatization to household livelihoods by linking to grow in formal land transfer markets are ambiguous. Thus, land allocation and title do not activate formal land transfer and land rental markets as one might expect while informal land transfer markets are much more actively. The comparison land transfers before and after land allocation and titling provide the firm evidence that most land transfers happened before land titling. Furthermore, the empirical study suggests that almost land transfers after land titling is unofficial. Three main factors such as complicated administrative procedure and taxation, conservation regulation, and undeveloped economy hamper official land transfers.

Together with land privatization, market liberalization and socio-economic development programs have also affected relatively on households' livelihood strategies. With regard to market liberalization, according to the key informants and the head of households, market penetration has dual effects on households' livelihood diversification. Positively, increasing demands of agricultural products for export and domestic consumption has forced households to intensify and diversify their products for markets. For example, many households in the sample have tended to grow fruit trees,

pepper, vegetables, and corn, and to raise livestock, particularly pig, cattle, goat, and commercial fishes. Negatively, the variations in price of agricultural products have also pushed them to leave not marketed crops, such as, coffee. Moreover, increasing goods demands, such as daily consumed items, agricultural inputs, rice processing, and handicraft weaving etc. due to income growth of villagers, some households has started to developed micro-enterprises. New opportunities for off-farm and non-farm wage labour have also opened to villagers. Some of villagers can find their off farm jobs within their village or neighboring villages as well as seasonal or permanent jobs in factories.

The frontier development programs for the uplands and the typical program for improving socioeconomic conditions of residents in the buffer zone have significantly influenced on households' livelihoods. The recent infrastructure improvement has brought to households to integrate into larger regional economy. As villagers stated, they are now better in access to input and output markets. Agricultural extension programs are also crucial in fostering villagers' production. Together with expansion of technological markets into the region, agricultural extension has provided villagers more chance to intensify their agricultural production and diversify their economic activities. Another program, natural conservation, has in fact impacted adversely on villagers' livelihoods. The empirical finding shows that conservation by establishing protected areas directly influences households' access to resources. This influence is not equated to all households, but only for those who heavily rely on natural resource for making their livelihoods. Other crucial effect of conservation to households is the threat to their security of land use rights granted.

Finally, the empirical findings persist that land privatization has not equally distributed benefits to all households. The entitlements that households could gain from land privatization are largely contingent upon their initiative assets, such as human capital, landholding, political position, and opportunities of accessing to low interest credits, productive inputs-outputs markets as well as government's subsidies by different development programs. Evidently, approximately 30% of households in the upper income groups have not assigned land title or more than 50% of poor

households in the lower income group have been assigned land title. This proves explicitly that land privatization is only the initial condition and households' productive assets ownership is the determinant that allows households to actualize benefits from land privatization.

5. Summary and conclusions

This study has examined the process and effects of land privatization on southern upland livelihoods in three villages in the buffer zone of Cat Tien National Park. With this purpose, several important investigations from the empirical study are summarized as follows:

i) The empirical examination on land privatization in the buffer zone villages in the southern uplands has well reflected that the enforcement of land privatization in the uplands is a difficult process and largely heterogeneous across villages, even individual households. Thus, land privatization legislation is though developed and implemented uniquely through national-wide, its effects has been widely differentiated and contingent very much on local contexts. It is also important to pay particular attention that the land privatization in the southern uplands has only targeted to ensure land tenure security of land users while its priority objective to maintain a minimum basis of equity through readjustment of land holdings among households has not been absolutely achieved across southern upland village because the process of collectivization in the southern uplands seemed to not be completely enforced and agriculture continued on a family base, land remained privately owned; even though in some upland localities land was mostly collectivized, but land allocation was required to reconstitute the former land owners.

ii) Land allocation as an initial determinant that influenced on livelihoods of upland farm households by three mechanisms: security effects, collateral effects, and transaction effects. Of which, the first two mechanisms were the most influential ones found by the study.

iii) Market conditions, technological accessibility, and conservation regulations have also influenced on livelihoods of upland farm households, significantly.

iv) Differences in households' initial assets: farm size, labour, education level, political holding, capital savings, ethnicity that enable them to benefit differently from land allocation. In other word, land privatization does not equally distribute benefits among households.

v) By differentiating benefits from land allocation, development programs, and other conditions, farm households have pursued different livelihood patterns which combined a wide ranging of activities to earn both cash and in kinds. The trends of income strategies were differentiated among three income groups. The low income households tended to rely on subsistence farming and wage labour for making their livelihoods. The middle income households diversified their income sources while high income households increased their income by developing commercial agriculture and involving in business and other rural services.

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