

Participatory Action Research

How does SPERI doing the research of Traditional Up-Land Rotational Farming which has been practicing by Indigenous People in Mekong Region

Part A: Participatory Research on Traditional Upland Farming System.

Step 1: Group villagers under different themes:

- 1. Herbal Wisdom in community health care and bio-cultural diversity preservation theme:**
Invite healers to share their knowledge of herbal medicinal plants by mapping the village landscape on A0 paper showing location of plants, giving their names and describing their uses, time (season and time of day) of harvesting, what part of plant harvested (flower, bark, leaf, root), how it is processed, and what customs, beliefs, ritual and ceremonies are associated with the harvesting and using of medicinal herbal plants.
- 2. Customary Law in Upstream Water and Irrigation Governance theme:**
Map location of major water sources, water management and irrigation devices for irrigating rice fields and how watering and irrigating is managed according to knowledge of seasonal rainfall, water currents, direction of wind, and the possibilities for mini hydropower systems.
- 3. Local community seeds saving theme:**
Map location and altitude of seed sources (parent trees) and describe seasons and practices of seed collection and seed saving for spiritual practices and nursery.
- 4. Landscape characteristic re-position and transect mapping theme:**
Map constructed terraces and describe methods of contouring (e.g. slope measurement) for positioning contours for distributing and conserving water flows. Map and describe ecological services and food sources offered by different landscape features (peak mountain forests, slope forest and up-land farming fields, streams, rivers, etc).

Step one is people led 90%. The researchers' involvement is 10% listening, observing and learning, asking question for further explanation, and taking notes of key words

Step 2: Compiling information and making risk assessment

From what the researchers have learnt from Step 1, information needs to be compiled and questions formulated to facilitate farmer responses to potential and actual challenges to and vulnerabilities of ecological functions, cultural practices and values, and sustainable economic resources caused by outsider 'development' scenarios: (for example, industrial cassava to replace traditional up-land cultivation, the building of build hydropower dams, cow farms for milk for TH company or meat for Korean company etc). It is the researchers' duty to formulate questions for raising awareness and facilitating responses from the farmers, using information gathered in Step 1. Farmer solutions to problems and challenges are recorded by the researcher. Researcher can suggest solutions and record farmers' responses to them. For example, creating a nursery to compensate for the loss of seed bearing trees as well as to provide the necessary legal instructions such on detailed articles of the Forest and Land law to help farmers to know how to defend and respond to outside interference.

Farmer providing input and revising in this step is 70%. The researchers' involvement is 30% for listening and feedback by questioning for further explanation, and taking notes of key words

Step 3: Assessing Villagers capacity to defend their internal structure and governance system

In this step, gain from farmers their views concerning the value of their traditional farming system and their capacity to resist the pressure to engage in industrial monocrop cash crop farming. Assess farmer capacity to defend traditional system (strong, weak, advantages and threats).

Researcher input 50% formulating questions and conducting interviews; farmer input 50%

Step 4: review of all information

Review and digest all information from Steps 1, 2 and 3.

In this step, the researcher input 70%. Farmer input 30%.

Step 5: Write report based on research results

Using all information received, describe the situation in the area. Key concern is tailoring all information and mapping evidence for stakeholder analysis matrix which involve: 1) Local villagers via thematic interest theme; 2) Local specialized response, 3) Local authority; 4) companies; 5) YIELDS-AGREE. (Matrix for stakeholder analysis)

1) Effect indicators: If the village no longer has a traditional water management and irrigation system, access to forest for medicinal plants or local seeds, what are the **effects** of this? E.g. the village is no longer self-sufficient. They have to buy seeds, no longer have knowledge of herbal medicine, spirit of herb, no space to practice customs of rituality and ceremonies. All cultural spaces lost to cassava plantations.

2) Impact indicator. E.g., Farmer dependency, loss of customs and local knowledge, loss of identity wisdom and custom because no longer have space for upland farming (Industrial Cassava occupying all territory for chasing after cash).

Soil health decline, loss of biodiversity, water pollution, animal sickness, dying of buffalos and cows, loss of livelihood, increase in borrowing and debt, mortgage of land to buy water and food, increasing level of exploitation by traders.

In this step, the researchers finalizes the all information 90%, farmer keep checking 10%

Part B. Policy Analysis

Bring all information learned from the farmers in different thematic teams, listening, and plenary discussion and meetings in order to analyse the government policy on industrializing agriculture.

Using 500 ha of Up Land in one *commune as a detail Case study being displaced from traditional cultivating/farming to industrial cassava production provides data base for calculating* the ecological and livelihood cost of thousands of hectares of industrial cassava and hundred factories located in upland Northern, Central, Central highland Vietnam and causing downstream poisoning (chemical pesticide, herbicide) and degradation the humus soil layers ecosystem, and destroying natural flora and fauna supporting the billions of microorganisms necessary for soil fertility for all living things including human life. Moreover, causing CO2 imbalance from tree loss because they cannot survive without ecological services of soil microorganism energy.

Part C. Argumentation

Do we want a profit-motivated capitalist with individualism associates privatization of land and labour, or do we want ecological cultural social democratic society prioritizing social voluntary and solidarity towards community self-reliance and wellbeing in natural landscape identity?!/./.