GENNOVATE: ENABLING GENDER EQUALITY IN AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION

Case Synthesis Report
The Kinh communities in Ha Tinh and Quang Binh provinces, Vietnam
Report submitted to International Potato Center (CIP)

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This report synthesizes results from two case studies carried out among the Kinh communes in the North Central Region of Vietnam. The two case studies were linked to the collaborative research being undertaken in the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) in central Vietnam (Ha Tinh and Quang Binh provinces under the “Enabling Gender Equality in Agricultural and Environmental Innovation” (GENNOVATE) initiative) and were implemented with the agreement of the International Potato Center (CIP). The results will provide a comparative analysis that cuts across world regions, agricultural systems and cultural domains. The overall study objectives are to:

- Provide robust empirical evidence on the relationship between gender norms, agency and agricultural innovation, and how these interactions support or hinder the achievement of the Intermediate Development Objectives (IDO) across varied contexts.
- Inform CRP theories of change and related research portfolios through identifying the gender-based constraints that need to be overcome in different contexts in order to achieve lasting and equitable improvements in agricultural and natural resource management outcomes.

The study uses the existing Methodology Guide for Global Study, the “Innovation and Development through Transformation of Gender Norms in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management” which was fully translated into Vietnamese with support from Bioversity International. However, the protocol has been adapted to fit with the geographical features of the low land and to the Kinh ethnicity. The existing protocol has also been revised according to the feedback provided by Nozomi Kawarazuka from CIP Vietnam.

Before the fieldwork starts, an Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) research team, with the assistance of Nozomi Kawarazuka, contacted the Project Management Unit of the Sustainable Rural Development for the Poor (SRDP) in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh to ask for assistance with the data collection. Based on the information and suggestions provided by SRDP in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh, two communes were chosen for data collection – the Quang Thach commune of Quang Trach district, Quang Binh province and the Xuan My commune of Nghi Xuan district, Ha Tinh province. The selection of communes for data collection was also based on the geographical location and land area for cassava and sweet potato planting.

Geographical location: two cases are chosen from different geographical locations for comparison purposes in terms of opportunities for economic development. Quang Thach commune is located in a more remote area and has a higher rate of poverty while Xuan My is located close to the national highway and district town and is close to the sea.

Land area for cassava and sweet potato planting: the two communes selected have relatively large areas for planting of cassava and sweet potato.

Later on, one village in each commune was selected. These were village number 3 (Thon 3) in the Quang Thach commune and Phuc My village in the Xuan My commune.

Both are located in the North Central Coast region which is known for its extreme climate (dry and hot wind and storms/floods in summertime) and economic disadvantage.

A shift of the labour force from agriculture to light industry and services, including works in the informal sector, and development of the market economy, has resulted in rural–urban migration in
the region. There are more men leaving agriculture to work in other sectors so that a feminization of agriculture has taken place.¹

With the support of the provincial and district SRDP PMU in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh, the research team has successfully carried out the data collection as planned; from 16th February 2016 to 27th February 2016. In total 8 focus group discussions (FGDs) (male and female) and 13 individual interviews have been transcribed and translated into English and then sent to Nozomi Kawarazuka. Also, two sets of coded data in excel format and two brief case summaries have been completed.

The following report briefly presents the preliminary analyses of the data collected during the field work.

1. Introduction to the community

1.1 Study sites

Site 1. Quang Thach commune (of Quang Trach district, Quang Binh province)

The Quang Thach commune is located on the west side of the Quang Trach district, in an area of hills. The commune is categorized as a mountainous commune. It is 15 km away from Ba Don, the district town. Residents of all of the villages are of Kinh ethnicity, the largest ethnic group in Vietnam. There are 1,022 households with 4,022 people who live in 9 different villages.

The commune is supported by the 135 government poverty reduction program which targets poor and remote communes.

Agriculture is the main economic activity of the local people. The main crops are cassava, pepper, rice and thun (a local onion). Rice is mainly for used for family subsistence because there is limited appropriate land for rice cultivation, but cassava, pepper and thun are used for commercial purposes. Breeding of oxen and chicken are also popular. Cows are used for ploughing and for
commercial purposes. In addition, the people of the villages in these hilly areas grow trees for commercial purposes such as acacia, eucalyptus and cajuput. High-yield cassava is grown (instead of the local variety) which is sold mainly to the starch processing factory located about 35 km away from the commune and also for animal feeding. On average, each household has about 1 hectare of land for growing cassava, which brings them an income of 15 to 20 million Vietnamese Dong (VND) per year (cassava is grown for one season per year). Other vegetables, ginger or curcumin are also planted by the people.

In 2015, a severe drought occurred, and in early 2016, very cold weather destroyed most of the rice planting areas, so the people had to grow green beans and corn instead, which bring a good income to the farmers as the corn is sold to a private company which raises oxen on a large scale.

Since cassava brings in a good income, people hire excavators to dig the forest land, on which acacia used to grow, in order to expand the land area for growing cassava or pepper, which have a higher value.

Agricultural and other services have been readily available in the commune for the past ten years. In the village, there are households that can afford to buy trucks to offer transport services – carrying cassava bulbs to the factory, or construction materials for building houses. Other forms of employment include husking and grinding services (rice, cassava and other products); running grocery stores; and offering other services to meet the demand of the people. At harvest time, traders visit the land owners so that the former can buy agricultural products at the owners’ homes, or even in the fields, so that people do not need to carry their products elsewhere for consumption. Even so, when people bring their products to sell in the market, traders who come from the villages stand on the road and buy products from them. Agricultural products in Quang Thach are known for their good quality; therefore, farmers can easily sell their products (vegetables, poultry, pork meat, etc.) in the market or to traders.

Mechanized equipment such as cutting machines, excavators, grinding machines or sliding machines, tractors, etc. help to save time and heavy labour for agricultural work.

Compared to the last 10 years, the lives of the people have improved significantly. The infrastructure of the commune (inter-commune and inter-village roads are repaired and mainly concreted, primary and secondary schools and health centres have been provided) has greatly improved. Communication has also been improved as the majority of the people own cell phones. Most families own at least one motorbike, which helps to improve the mobility of the people significantly – it is easy for them to access markets or other facilities within the commune or to travel within the district area.

Family incomes have gradually improved, mostly due to the agricultural commercial products and also from remittances sent by family members who migrate to work abroad or in factories/industrial zones in other parts of the country. In addition, both men and women can do secondary work outside of harvest time to earn more income.

Ten years ago there were many households who had to eat rice mixed with cassava or sweet potato, but now they do not have to. Now there is no food scarcity in the commune as the people can sell other products or do work to earn money to buy rice.

As the income improved, parents can now afford the cost of their children’s education, as well as higher education and vocational trainings.
Site 2. Xuan My commune (of Nghi Xuan district, Ha Tinh province)

The Xuan My is an agricultural commune that was established before 1945 and is located in the central area of Nghi Xuan district which has convenient transportation – the commune is few km away from the national highway and about 15 km away from the biggest city of the central region, Vinh. It is also 4 km from the district town Xuan An and is located 3 km from Xuan Thanh beach. As with other communes in the North central region, Xuan My also suffers from drought caused by the foehn (hot and dry wind) which starts from April and lasts until June.

In Xuân My, there are 4,200 people and 2,400 people of working age. The total number of households is 1,150. Investment in children’s higher education has the aim of enabling them to find a better job or for family members to go abroad to work/or for study, which are the aspirations of the parents in the commune.

Xuan My is considered a safe and stable commune in terms of politics and security and is considered to be one of the most excellent communes in Nghi Xuan district. In 2014, Xuan My was the first commune of Nghi Xuan district to reach the New Countryside standards [the national New Countryside program has been initiated by the government and sets a series of standards regarding human resources, infrastructure (schools, roads, electricity, health centre, clean water, hygienic environment), rural development, etc.]. The national program for poverty reduction and the New Countryside program contribute to improving the infrastructure in rural communities, such as inter-commune and inter-village roads, schools, electricity and telecommunication systems that help to increase people’s mobility and access to market services, as well as other social services.

As such, inter-village roads are all covered with concrete; the kindergarten, primary schools and secondary schools and the commune health centre have met the national standards. All households in the commune have access to grid electricity, hence also to the national and local television channels; cell phones are very common; and the internet is accessible, which facilitates communication and information sharing within the commune and with those outside of it. Loans from banks are easily accessible to farmers to invest in production, especially the poor households can obtain loans with a preferential interest rate.

Agriculture comprises more than 40% of the commune’s economy, while trade and services represent 35% and small industry and handicrafts approximately 15-25%. Remittances from those migrants who work abroad or work in factories/companies in other regions of the country also contribute to the household’s income.

Agriculture is challenging because of the poor quality of the local soil (sandy). The commune has 1,150 ha of land and the agricultural land area is about 700 ha. However, farmers have been working to improve to soil since 2007, and in 2010 they began using machinery to properly prepare the soil on a larger scale.

The two main crops are rice (235 ha, for subsistence use) and peanuts (187 ha, for commercial use). Peanuts are the most economically advantageous crop, and are primarily for export to China. Other plants, such as sweet potato, cassava (mostly the high yield variety), baby watermelons, thun (a local onion), corn and beans are also planted by farmers. Cassava and sweet potato are grown mainly for animal feeding purpose. The body and leaves of the peanuts and sweet potatoes are also used (either fresh or in a ground and dried ones) to feed animals. In the commune, there are
families who have not enough land for cultivation, in which case they rent or borrow land plots from other families to work and in turn they will give the owner of the land a portion of the products harvested from that plot. Those families who give out their land to others for cultivation often lack of labour for agricultural production because the main labourers in their family may have migrated to work elsewhere in the country or to work abroad. By giving out their land to others for cultivation they can keep their land from being fallow and at the same time gain some products and help others to improve their income.

Although agriculture has diversified, commercial production remains relatively low. Rice is mainly for household subsistence. The main agricultural crops such as peanuts, thun, beans or cassava and sweet potato still face numerous difficulties. Moreover, early this year, agricultural production in Xuan My suffered from the severely cold weather, especially with respect to rice transplantation and peanuts.

Regarding breeding, Xuan My practices domestic breeding as well as farm breeding, with a focus on hybrid oxen and pig farming. Recently, there were 5 pig breeding farms with the biggest farm having 2,400 pigs. On average, each household raises about 2-3 hybrid cows, which give a very good revenue after one year. Additionally, people also raise poultry (chicken, ducks) for selling and for family use.

Over the last 5 years, despite some difficulties, agricultural production has been relatively stable. However, the family income has diversified to different sources. Besides income from agricultural crops (peanuts, thun, beans, etc.) and breeding (mainly cows), remittances and extra work during leisure time from agricultural production (construction and carpentry for men and other agricultural work for women) or from small businesses (grinding/husking machines, transportation, sales of groceries, trading of agricultural products) contribute to improving the family’s income. In addition, people often do exchange work during crop seasons.

Men are mainly the household heads on legal and administrative documents, and in family registers. Men often have secondary occupations to supplement their income at places close to home. They often stay at home to help with agricultural work in the planting and harvesting season and leave the fields for their women to take care of the crops while they move to other areas for extra work, mainly in construction. For example, Xuan My has 18 teams of construction workers and about 4 carpentry teams which consist mostly of men who do construction work in 4 nearby communes in the district. Young adults most often migrate for study or to the South or other industrial zones, or move abroad to work, leaving the village with mostly elders and women during the day.

1.2 Selection of case study sites

Under the request of the CIP, these two case studies have been linked to the collaborative research being undertaken by RTB in the Central region of Vietnam, namely in Ha Tinh and Quang Binh province, which investigates innovation related to cassava and sweet potato growing practice in the selected sites.

The study aims to select sites which have large areas of cassava and sweet potato cultivation. Also, geographical and economic factors were taken into consideration for comparison purposes: one commune was selected for its relatively remote distance and higher poverty rate, while the other
was selected for its closeness to the national highway and for its much lower poverty rate and relatively more favourable conditions for economic development.

1.3 Focal innovation

Over the past ten years, there have been several transformations to improve the agricultural landscape. Various socio-economic factors create favourable conditions for the emerging agricultural innovations in Xuan My and Quang Thach commune.

People began to diversify their crops based on the preference for more productive and economically valuable crops, such as high yielding cassava and pepper in Quang Thach commune and peanuts and raising hybrid cows in Xuan My commune.

In both of the studied communes, for the last two decades, thanks to economic reforms which have fostered the development of the market economy, agricultural production has been changed from production for household self-sufficiency purposes to production for commercial purposes which have brought changes into many aspects of people’s lives.

For many families in both communities, diversification of income has been an effective means of family economic improvement. In Quang Thach commune, there are a number of middle income families who earn their income from selling peppers, cassava or oxen to traders, at the same time providing farming services (providing fertilizers or other materials, agriculture machines or transportation of products, or trading products in season). In Xuan My, people sell peanuts, *thun* (local onions) and oxen, and some families provide services to add to their family income.

In Quang Thach, during the last decade cassava cultivation has been intensively promoted to provide material for the starch processing factories in the nearby areas. Although farmers may face the risk of a stagnation in starch production from these factories, in the meantime, this is a good product output for many households who are cultivating cassava. The point is that some people have found this to be an opportunity to develop their agricultural services (transportation of cassava, or other products and materials, to the factory for farmers), or to extend their cultivation to a larger scale and hence to improve their income.

To extend the land area for more cassava planting, farmers have shifted a portion of areas of eucalyptus growth to cultivating more valuable crops like cassava and pepper. This change was sparked by the decreased productivity of eucalyptus after over a decade of harvesting it. Farmers invested in hired machinery to dig up eucalyptus roots and to improve the soil quality for new crops. Many households actively transformed the ineffective forestry land to plant high-yield cassava. In addition, cassava, pepper, local onion and other trees such as eucalyptus and cajuput also bring income to households in the village.

Some families concentrate their investments in poultry or animal husbandry. There are households in the commune who recently began breeding on a large scale for family income and household use. Broiler chickens have been raised on a large scale with the application of new techniques and feeding practices which have been learned from outside that are far more effective than raising chickens in the traditional way.
Besides broiler chickens, hybrid oxen are of good value to households for selling and also are used by families for ploughing purposes.

In Xuan My, over the past few years, the commune has expanded and diversified its crops. There is a high demand among farmers for new varieties with high yield in order to increase their income. Residents are eager to try new varieties and local authorities are keen to support their endeavours. People in the commune are encouraged to plant new, short-term varieties which are suitable for the local soil.

Peanuts have been an important commercial crop, especially with the new variety which the farmers can plant even in winter time. In the commune there are 4 trading households who collect peanuts from other households to sell to a private company (Ngoc Duong company located in another commune) to export to China. These households provide variety and fertilizers for farmers: farmers can pay immediately or they can owe money based on the principle of “use first and pay later at harvest time”, although they have to pay interest in addition (equal to a bank’s interest). During harvesting time, these local traders buy peanuts from farmers and sell them to the company.

Besides the traditional peanut season (spring-summertime), the commune authorities encourage farmers to try peanut cultivation in the winter season which also has a very good value.

In addition, hybrid cows are an increasingly common and effective means to increase income and financial stability. On average, each household has 2 to 3 cows. Some households raise 5 or more cows – the sind hybrid cow or rebu hybrid cow. They are new breeds which have been adopted widely for 2 to 3 years now. Before, only one person tried working with these breeds; but people realized that raising these cow breeds is effective and so they started to raise them themselves.

The high value of hybrid cows/oxen encourages farmers to invest more, not only in buying cows, but also to invest in cultivation of peanuts as with this crop, farmers can sell the peanuts and at the same time use the peanut trees, in addition to sweet potatoes, for animal feeding, mainly to feed the cows.

With focus on certain commercial crops such as cassava, pepper and acacia in Quang Thach, and peanut and thun in Xuan My, new techniques of land preparation (making beds for cassava or thun planting), fertilization, choosing the best seed/cassava cuttings for cultivation and new ways of planting cassava cuttings (oblique planting instead of straight planting) are now followed by farmers. The intensive mechanization of agricultural activities helps to save labour and time so that farmers can find work for more cash income. Various machines have been utilized by farmers for grinding or cutting products (rice, cassava, peanut trees, banana trunk), ploughing/raking and excavating, and they use trucks for product transportation. In Xuan My, many families use electric equipment which helps them to harvest the peanuts from the trees quickly, saving both time and labour.

As an example, 10 years ago, farmers in Xuan My had to harvest rice paddies manually. Now, there are several combine harvesting machines which are rented to farmers during harvest time. Farmers only have to put the rice into packages and bring it home. People save a lot of time and labour. Also, farmers have been able to expand rice production coverage and land quality by hiring machines to till the soil. In Xuan My, there are 10 ploughing machines and 7 threshing machines that are available in the commune for farmers to rent for their work in the field. Also, there are families who buy husking/grinding machines to provide services for farmers in the commune. Farmers can bring paddy rice for husking or dried peanut bodies, sweet potatoes or
cassava for grinding. In 2015, the Xuan My commune had a program that supported low interest rates for households buying the machine, who can then form a cooperative group. The program supported 40% of the cost. For example, if the machine is 100 million VND, they will be supported with 40 million VND. In 2015, three machines were supported by this program.

Similarly, in Quang Thach, there have been improvements in access to, and use of, mechanized equipment to improve soil quality and change crop selection and also for agricultural services. This technology decreases heavy labour tolls, saving energy and time, and thus helps farmers make smart agricultural changes. Mechanization techniques include the cutting machine, excavator, grinding machine or sliding machine, tractor, etc. There are certain families who take loans from banks to invest in agricultural services such as through buying a tractor or excavator for land digging, a truck to transport agricultural products (cassava) for farmers or rice/cassava grinding and husking machines and sliding machines to use within the family and also to provide services to other famers.

Also, in the studied communes, agricultural services such as selling chemical fertilizer or pesticide/herbicides are conveniently available for famers with the trader’s tactic of “buy first and pay later in the harvest time”. Traders who are from the commune or other communes and trading companies come to buy products directly from the farmer’s house or fields. Cell phones are a popular communication means for exchanging market and price information, together with convenient transportation (concreted roads and personal motorbikes) that help people to easily access the market for buying and selling agricultural materials and products.

2. Prevailing gender norms

Data reflect the general pattern in the country that women take a greater share in domestic work and child care compared to men.2 The box below summaries the main traditional gender norms that are found to exist in both of the studied cases:

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Women are still expected to behave gently towards their husbands and to accept their husband’s temper because in the end, she is the one who bears all family consequences. Even a key person of Women’s Union (WU) gives such advice to the female members in her community:

I also say that each family has a different situation; as women, we must try our best to put up with it, not speaking loudly; when the husband speaks, we must speak gently. In WU meetings, we also advise the wives that when they [the husbands] drink, they will feel annoyed and hot-tempered, so we women must accept it; everything that happens, whether good [or bad], the woman is the one to bear. We should be gentle and find words to comfort [them]. (woman_KI_B_QT)

When it comes to decisions, men seem to have more rights compared to women given similar opportunities (e.g., inheritance from parents)

It is said that the man and woman are equal in the family, however the man in the family still has more rights that the woman. The man is still a breadwinner of the family, thus important decisions, such as a motorbike purchase, the man still can decide although the woman may not agree. (male_youth_FGD_E_XM)

Sons do things similarly as their fathers do and daughters do as their mothers do.

Because men usually perceive better than women do and men are more determined, the men usually decide most things in the family (men_FGD_D_QT_d4)

Men are the household heads so they have the rights to decide on the family work such as planting crops, raising livestock. However before doing anything, he must discuss with his wife. (men_FGD_D_QT)

There are some types of work that the women decide, mainly work related to inside the house, or small things such as selling vegetables, chickens or pigs. Even a woman with a higher education than her husband, the ability and the right to decide for that wife compared to her husband is only 50/50, no more. Because even now, although women are more equal to men than in the past, people still can feel that the men in the family are more strong and tougher. (men_FGD_D_QT)
2.1 Gender roles in the domestic sphere

Women’s roles – women are key care-takers for chores in the house

For both study cases, i.e., Quang Thach and Xuan My, there are strong gender stereotypes about women’s role in the house. As a woman and as a wife, a married woman is expected to take care of family chores as part of the daily routine, from cleaning the house, washing clothes, feeding animals, taking children/grandchildren to and from school facilities to cooking meals for family members – she should get up in the early morning to cook breakfast for her kids and husband and for going to the market. Returning from the work field at noon time, it is for the women in the house to prepare lunch; then, later in the afternoon, the women also prepare dinner – from preparing food to cooking meals and preparing the tables and washing dishes. Not only the mother but also the daughter should be involved in cooking more so than a boy, even if she is younger than her brother.

A good wife should not sleep much, she does work for other people even until 10 pm. (women’s FGD_C5_QT)

The caring role is strongly emphasized by men, without it, a wife may not be seen as a good one even if she is very good in income generation:

If a woman earns a lot money but does not know how to do housework and taking care of the children, she is surely not good enough but can be accepted. (FGD_C_men_XM)

Among domestic roles, taking care of children and sick family members, including aged parents, is expected and is an important one. For women, taking good care of her husband and children, having full responsibility for family matters and being faithful and tolerant to her husband are characteristics of a good wife; having a good manner and devoting her time fully to the family, not herself.

The following statements are the views of poor women in Xuan My about what a good wife should be:

[a good wife] ..knows to maintain the finances in the family; for big things, the husband and the wife should discuss; other than that, she should know how to manage everyday spending; be faithful to her husband, respect the elders and yield to the younger, devote all her heart to her family. When the husband is angry, she must bear with him despite knowing that he’s wrong; later, when his anger is subdued, she can then discuss the matter with him. She must bear with the husband when he’s drunk. (women’s FGD_C1_XM)

The wife has to bear with the husband when he’s drunk – it is not equal, but it’s the wife’s responsibility. They [husbands] may get drunk several times in a month; we must put up with them. (women’s FGD_C1_XM)

The unpaid work commonly done by the women in their homes are often related to cooking, washing clothes for all the family members, caring for children and old/sick persons, going to the market or to shops for buying food or agricultural materials, preparing animal feed and taking care of vegetables in the garden. Sometime, in the busy season, the woman has to get up very early in
the morning and she is the last person to go to bed; no time for taking a short break such as a nap, as she has to do most chores in the house.

Most housework is done by women. And not only do women do the housework, most also work in the fields... Washing clothes, cooking and cleaning are mostly done by women, only women. Men only work out in the fields, they hardly do housework. They do perhaps a little work in the house. If we [women] are busy then they [men] have to do it, for instance, they cook rice with an electric rice cooker but we women should prepare foods... Going to the market to buy food is women's work too. Most men don't wash the clothes, only women and children do. If they do washing then they wash their own clothes only. When doing housework the women have their daughters helping them. (woman_KI_QT_village_B)

We [women] have to do everything. In the countryside, there’s a lot of work. The husband does the big work, while all the small work is done by the wife. (women’s FGD_C1_XM)

In the family, women participate in almost everything, including taking care of the family, children and animals, even ploughing and raking. Men’s role is only supporting. Housework is mainly done by women... Regarding housework, men only help women with some housework; other than that, they only do big things such as doing extra jobs, or production such as ploughing and raking. Cooking and laundry are mostly done by women; maybe in the morning, after the mother prepares the children, the father can help taking them to school. They only help with such small things. (woman_KI_XM_commune_B)

For domestic matters, the wife is also required to maintain good relationships with relatives of her husband, especially, she should be a good daughter in-law, i.e., she should have good manners and care for her parents in-laws and their relatives (her husband’s sibling and the elderly of the family and their kin).

(see Annex for the Box. “Good husband and good wife”)

Traditional gender roles are taught and learnt at a young age for both boys and girls:

Besides working in the fields, when they’re small, they also have to do housework like cleaning and tidying the house. Washing clothes is usually done by girls. Boys usually work outside, work in the fields. From the past until the present time, it has been done that way so now I follow. (Male youth_FGD_E_QT)

**Men’s roles – a man is the key pillar, a leader in the house**

Data in both studied cases indicate a strong perception that the husband is the leader, the main pillar of the family, both economically and mentally – men have a dominating role over family matters – they are the decision-makers, the bread-winners and the owners of the houses. This perception is reflected among men’s opinions, and it is even strongly highlighted in the women’s statements when they refer to their husband’s roles and responsibilities. This is also clearly reflected in the stereotype “men do big things and women do small things.”

The husband is the one who makes the decisions in most of family matters although discussions among husband and wife are mentioned by participants.
On the contrary, women are expected to do various family chores – ‘the doers,” men in a domestic role often are referred to as the “instructor,” the leader of the house who guides most family activities, such as planning for production, dealing of big things the house (such as selling/and/or buying cows, reconstructing the house) or giving guidance to his wife and children regarding what to do in a day.

He should be a pillar of the family, responsible for all matters in his family. (FGD_C_men_XM)

Men are viewed as the main breadwinners in the home, and the woman plays the role of supporter to him while taking care of all family chores so that the man can focus only on earning income. Even his wife’s education is also mentioned by some women as the husband’s responsibility.

Main responsibility of the husband is to behave as the role model for the family, as the family’s pillar. He should be a good son to his parents and the in-laws. He should demonstrate filial piety to his parents. He should educate his wife to be well behaved and to become a good daughter-in-law. To educate with affection. (FGD_C_women_QT)

Make decisions when building a house; make big decisions, such as the children’s marriages. The husband directs the production work: arranging farm work, which plants to grow, which animals to raise, what it is good to do. And he decides on the livelihoods of the family. (FGD_C1_women_XM)

A responsible husband plans the business and production activities of the whole family. He will coach his wife and his children in cropping and husbandry. (FGD_C_men_XM)

However, men state that they share housework with the wife in case the wife is busy.

[main responsibilities of husbands] ..earning money to raise his wife and kids; sharing housework with his wife; educating his children; and arranging all family matters and assigning tasks to each family member reasonably. (FGD_C_men_QT)

Besides working outside, he shares housework with his wife and his children. For example, when the children are not at home, after working in the fields the husband can clean and tidy the house or wash clothes. For instance, while the wife is cooking, the husband is washing clothes, feeding the chickens or cows. Or being the first one to arrive home from the field and the rice is not cooked, the husband can cook, prepare vegetables so that when his wife and children come home, the meal is ready for eating without waiting since a wife normally comes home later. (FGD_C_men_XM)

**Men and women may have different views about roles of men in the family**

Although sharing similar views about men’s and women’s roles in the domestic sphere, male and female participants seem to be slightly different: while women tend to emphasize the men’s role as breadwinner in the family and being a role model for family members – being hardworking, not drinking and not violent; at the same time they tend to mention more their own roles in the family as the one who “keeps warmth” in the house by comforting family members – her children, her husband and her in-laws – with good care and unconditional faithfulness.

[a good husband] ..loves his wife and kids, is not involved in social problems, not drinking, not being violent with his wife and kids: not beating them. (FGD_C1_women_XM)
Meanwhile, men regard their women’s role in the family as being well behaved – to be a good mother and good daughter-in-law, hardworking and obedient to her husband. For men’s role, they tend to emphasize men as good leaders who should provide good planning for the family and who is a good guider for the family members besides being the breadwinner in the house.

A good wife should be responsible, hardworking and get on well with family members and outsiders... She should be well behaved, and should obey her husband. (FGD_C_men_XM)

Wife responsibilities:

*From women’s views:*
Not only fulfilling the family work, must love and care for him; be obedient, listen to their husbands; the husband come home from work, the wife has to cook food for him; she should be a good daughter-in-law, listening and conform to whatever the parents-in-law say; and she should be nice inside and outside of the family, raising the children with healt and wisdom. (FGD_C_women_QT)

.. She [wife] must listen to what her husband says. The wife must bear it if he hits her. (FGD_C_women_QT)

*From men’s views:*

…the main responsibilities of a wife in the family are to take care of her family and look after her children; besides, she is also responsible for making a living with her husband, contributing her part to generate an income for the family. (FGD_C_men_QT)

Husband’s responsibilities:

*From women’s views:*
Main responsibility of the husband is to behave as the role model for the family and as the family’s pillar. He should be a good son to his parents and the in-laws. He should show filial piety to his parents. He should educate his wife to be well behaved and to be a good daughter-in-law. To educate with affection. (FGD_C_women_QT)

Be the breadwinner in the family: shoulder big responsibilities such as livelihoods and strenuous work. Regarding livelihoods, he should be the leader, and do extra jobs such as masonry. (FGD_C1_women_XM)

Make decisions when building a house; make big decisions, such as the children’s marriages. The husband directs the production work: arranging farm work, which plants to grow, which animals to raise, what is good to do. And he decides on livelihoods of the family. (FGD_C1_women_XM)

[a good husband] ...knows how to take care of the family, his wife and children, sharing burdens with his wife and children; be faithful; knows how to deal with others in the family and outside the family. (FGD_C1_women_XM)

[a good husband] ...loves his wife and kids, is not involved in social problems, doesn’t drinking, is not violent with his wife and kids: doesn’t beating them. (FGD_C1_women_XM)

*From men’s views:*
[main responsibilities of husbands] ...earning money to raise his wife and kids; sharing housework with his wife; educating his children; and arranging all family matters and assigning tasks to each family member reasonably. (FGD_C_men_QT)

He should be a pillar of the family, responsible for all matters in his family. (FGD_C_men_XM)

A responsible husband plans business and production activities for the whole family. He will coach his wife and his children in cropping and husbandry. (FGD_C_men_XM)

Besides working outside, he shares housework with his wife and his children. For example, when the children are not at home, after working in the fields, the husband can clean and tidy the house or wash clothes. For instance, while the wife is cooking, the husband is washing clothes, feeding chickens or cows. Or being the first one to arrive home from the fields and the rice is not cooked, the husband can cook, prepare vegetables so that when his wife and children come home, the meal is ready for eating without waiting since a wife normally comes home later. (FGD_C_men_XM)

Talking about the most important relationship in the family, a woman sees her husband as the most important:

Of course it is my husband. He is above all, he is the most important, the pillar in the family, whatever it is I have to ask him, in such a way he is important. (woman_F_1_QT)

To men’s views – the man should be a role model for the other family members to follow:

In the family, a husband should be a good person, the husband should be serious, an exemplary example for his wife and children to learn. (FGD_C_men_XM)

2.2 Gender roles in agricultural production/livelihood

Women’s roles

In both communes, women actively engage in household economic activities. They do most of the agricultural activities from the land preparation and planting to taking care of crops by weeding, fertilizing, harvesting and processing products, although product processing is not common here. Women take the main care of animal husbandry in the family as well.

For instance, in Xuan My, women have more roles than men throughout peanut production. Women do the seeding, planting, caring for the peanuts, harvesting, washing, drying of the peanuts. They also grind them to make food for cows in the winter. The selling of peanut products is mainly done by women as well.

Outside of these duties, many women do other work to gain extra cash for their families or exchange work with other households during crop cultivation and harvesting time. Or they are involved in a family small business – selling groceries, running a food stall or offering grinding services. Most sellers in the markets are women. There may be one to few men among 100 sellers in a local market. Selling agricultural products in a local market is still considered to be a woman’s task.
Regarding the selling of agricultural products, in most households, it is common that it is the husbands and wife’s joint decision making regarding product price, although in many households, the final decision is still made by the husband. Participants, both men and women, agree that women can decide on their own to sell “small stuff,” such as poultry, vegetables from the home garden, but for “big stuff” such as cows or cassava or pepper, which involve some negotiation, the final decision is made mostly by the husband.

The husband gives his wife a hand if he is at home and if the work needs more labour, such as at cultivation or harvesting time. Participants mentioned the fact that women and men work together in agricultural work, however, their roles and tasks are different – while men are involved mainly in the first and the last stages of cultivation, such as in the land preparation process and harvesting, women are the ones who are involved at every stage and they take the main responsibility for the caring tasks, like weeding, fertilizing and selling products in the market.

Both men and women participate equally and work together. Men and women work together. Husbands plough and prepare soil, wives fertilize and arrange beds for growing. In harvesting, husbands plough and wives collect sweet potatoes. After harvesting, sweet potatoes are mainly used for animal husbandry or in some households, they are sold by wives. (men FGD_C_XM)

Men plough, rake and turn up land. After that, they leave to go out and carry eucalyptus cuttings, the women at home will do the remaining agricultural activities. (women FGD_C_QT)

When growing sweet potatoes, such strenuous work as making furrows/beds is done by the husband, while the planting and applying of fertilizer is done by the wife. The wife also takes care of the plants. When harvesting, both husband and wife do it, or there are agencies that come directly to buy from the farm (and they will do the harvesting). (women FGD_C_XM)

Selling peanuts is more often done by women. Women are the ones to directly produce, process and both trade products that they grow themselves and purchase products; however, in the family, the role of the man is important; big decisions are made by men. (Woman_KI_B_XM)

In terms of attending technical training, which is often conducted by the commune’s extension unit for farmers to learn about new crop cultivation techniques, or about new varieties/breeding methods, it seems that there are more women who attend training instead of their men as compared to the past, when men were the ones who attended most extension training. This change is due to the men’s frequent absences to work outside communities for cash income, leaving the women at home to take care of agricultural work including attending training.

**Men’s roles**

Changes in the family division of labour to adapt to the family circumstances: men try maximize their time at home to help their wives in both domestic and agricultural work because they will leave for work outside the villages for a period of time which may be for a few months. The family labour resources are fully utilized, so when the men and children leave home for work or study, women should take care of most everything in the house, even including ploughing and making decisions.

Applying fertilizers is done by the wife, spraying pesticides is also done by the wife; going to a wedding is also done by the wife. Vaccination is also done by the wife. If the husband is at home,
either the husband or the wife can do it. Other than that, most husbands do extra jobs, so usually women do everything, from spraying pesticides and plant growth accelerating substances, to selling products to individual traders. If the husband is at home, the wife will talk to him in advance; in some households, the husband makes decisions, but the wife makes decisions more often. (Women FGD_D_XM)

Couple are together working on the fields when the men are at home but with shared roles, for instance in planting cassava:

The male will plough the land, making the beds for the women to plant cassava. Heavy tasks are for the husband such as ploughing and women do light work such as planting cassava. The husband carries the fertilizer and the wife drops the fertilizer. (Woman_KI_QT_commune)

However, the perception that men must earn more than women seems strong:

When the wife can earn more money and the husband only stays at home and takes care of the children then he may feel a little bit lower than his wife, feeling that even though he is strong and healthy he has to let his wife earn the living so he feels low self-esteem. (male youth_FGD_E_QT)

It depends on each family. In a family with 2 people, if the wife is working out all day then there must be another staying at home and taking care of the children, doing house work, if both are working outside, then how about the children, who would take care of them? Therefore, the husband staying at home is normal. Only on some occasions, when he is going out to drink or meeting friends,
then his friends may tease him for staying at home and letting his wife earn the living, or saying that he doesn’t know how to do things. (male youth_FGD_E_QT

Table 1. Men and women’s division of labour in agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s roles</th>
<th>Women’s roles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Land preparation: ploughing, raking</td>
<td>- Planting/sowing seeds/cassava cutting.</td>
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<td>- spray pesticide.</td>
<td>- Weeding.</td>
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<td>- Cutting.</td>
<td>- Fertilizing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Harvesting.</td>
<td>- Caring for crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Driving trucks for product transportation.</td>
<td>- Harvesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decide on the selling price of a cow, wholesale products to a trader.</td>
<td>- Animal husbandry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Selling products in the markets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes are evident

It is traditional that women in the North Central region often take responsibility not only in the domestic sphere but also in agricultural work and other work for cash income. And when their men are absent, they may also take over the men’s role as the leader of the family for both family matters and productive activities. Therefore, their roles in the family are highly appreciated by men – as a good and hardworking wife and as good caretaker of the family, although strong stereotypes towards the men’s role in decision making still prevail.

Changes in gender roles for both men and women have been evident during the past ten years following the dramatic changes in socio-economic development in the country and in the North Central coastal region. Women undertake more agricultural tasks as men often leave to work on construction sites or to do other work for cash income. However, their work gets physically easier and less time consuming thanks to the mechanization of some agricultural and domestic activities and thanks to the development of product trading activities.

Nowadays, the farmers of both sites can save a lot of labour time and labour strength with support of various machines – for ploughing, cutting, harvesting paddies, grinding and husking of rice, cassava, sweet potato, peanuts, etc. and they have motorbikes or trucks to transport agricultural products from the fields to home, or they can sell products from whole fields and the trader can collect the products directly from the fields. Women and men can have more free time so they can look for more works for cash income, or they can save labour for agricultural work. With the development of the internet and cell phones, communication with service providers or product dealers has become very convenient, the prices of products are known among farmers and they can easily negotiate with the dealer without fear of being cheated. Husband and wife can discuss the selling or buying of products or materials easily, although one of them is working far from home.

More work for cash income means that the family can afford to buy home appliances and electric tools to use in housework, like an electric cooker or a vegetable cutting machine for preparing
animal feed. Grinding and husking machines are available in each village which help women a great deal to do less manual work at home.

2.3 Gendered decision-making

At any time, the man is always the pillar of the family and decides all family matters. (men_FGD_D_XM)

It is clearly evident through interviews and FGDs in both communities that there is a strong perception of men as the pillar of the house and therefore they are the decision makers for important, “big” things in any aspect of family life, from domestic, work to social matters, although discussion with the wife and other family members are mentioned. Women it seems can decide only “small things” which are mostly related to her caring tasks or her gardening.

[growing] vegetables does not need to be discussed with the husband, we discuss with him only about important things. (women_FGD_D_QT)

Most of the men of middle income households who are at middle age tend to choose level 4 or 5 for level of freedom as in their perception, men should take the lead in family activities, both in productive and domestic matters. Some even mentioned that making a decision is the man’s “right” in the family. In contrast, many women choose level two or three and explain the dependency on parents in-law if they live with them, or on the husband’s opinion and decision making.

Traditional gender stereotypes about men’s and women’s roles seem quite common in the participant’s expressions:

From the old days, big things are the husband's responsibilities. (women FGD_D_QT)

Everything needs consensus with the husband, if he does not agree then the family is not in harmony. (Women FGD_D_QT)

Women can decide to buy a pig, but a cow costs tens of millions of dongs, so I must ask my husband. In general, if it involves tens of millions of dongs, I must ask my husband; for things below 10 million dongs, I can make decisions myself. (Women FGD_D_XM)

Men in this village generally have the right to decide on most things in the family, because he is the pillar of the house. Men are the ones who initiate new things and they make most of the decisions. If the wife agrees with him, she will follow him, she cannot decide on her own. As men are the pillars of the house, he can say ‘today I make a decision on this matter, my wife should agree and follow my decision.’ (men FGD_D_QT)

If he discuss with the wife and she has not yet decided, then the husband can still decide. Because he is a man, his vision and estimation of the situation are better than the wives so if he feels it is right and reasonable, he still can decide. Out of ten decisions, men decide 6 and women decide 4. (men FGD_D_QT)
Because men usually perceive things better than women do and men are more determined, the men usually decide most things in the family. (men FGD_D_QT)

There are some work that the women decide, mainly it is work related to the house, or small things such as vegetables, selling chickens or pigs. Even if a woman has a higher education than her husband, the ability to decide and the right to decide of that wife compared to her husband is only 50/50, no more. Even now women are more equal to men than in the past, people still can feel that the men in the family are stronger and tougher. (men FGD_D_QT)

Men make decisions on what to plant and at what price to sell products. Regarding decisions for selling agricultural products/crops, it seems that in many households, men are still the ones who make the final decision although discussion between husband and wife about the matter seems common in both communities.

Maybe the wife only suggests, while the husband makes the decision. (woman_KI_B_XM)

Men take decisions on most important family affairs. All family members have specific rights that are at a low or high level, the man is still the bread winner, the pillar of the family. He has rights to decide on most of the important issues in the family, other secondary, insignificant matters in the house, such as going to market and household chores can be decided by the wife. (men FGD_D_XM)

Men make the decisions on all important affairs. For example, buying of home appliances is decided by man. The man is a bread winner, the pillar of the family, he is the person who manages all issues in the family, including eating-related matters. The man may not directly go to market to buy food, however, he talks to his wife about what he wants to eat for the meal, then she has to follow him. Or before going to the market to buy food, the wife should ask what her husband wants to eat today, after that she goes to buy the appropriate goods... (men FGD_D_XM)

The important issues in the family such as marriage arrangements, funeral, ceremonies, house building... should be decided by the man in the house. Even the cooking in community festivals/feast is a decision taken by the men in the village. For example, if he wants to sell a family cow to make money to do something, he discusses with his wife about the price. If she accepts, then both will sell it. If she does not agree to sell at that price but the husband feels the price is reasonable, he still sells out. The same happens with decisions on selling other agricultural products, the man gets away from family more often, becomes more sensitive, knows better price information... In summary, both spouses discuss together but the final decision maker is the man in family. (middle-income men FGD_D_XM)

The man and woman equally discuss ‘at the same level together’ but the man still makes the final decision. Reason: because he is still always the breadwinner in a family, the right to make a decision still belongs to the man, over the past 10 or more years there is no change there. (men FGD_D_XM)

The husband acts as a commander – the wife as a doer. This is a poor woman’s statement in Quang Thach who said that she cannot decide things in the family:
I’m useful for the family, so I do have some rights. ..[however] I can’t decide things by myself because my husband is at the top of the family...If I decide to raise a pig I have to talk to my husband. ..[if] my husband says we would build new house this year, then I need to think of how to earn enough economically so that we can build a house. (woman_G_1_QT)

The husband is the decision maker and the wife is the money keeper.

The wife can decide how to feed the family; the man makes money while the woman keeps the money and decides everyday spending in the family. (women’s FGD_C1_XM)

Women can also make decisions like men do; for example, joint decisions are made in building a house or the children’s marriages. Of course the man will make the final decision, but the husband and wife must share with each other. (women’s FGD_C1_XM)

Young women still are dependent on their husband’s parents and on their husbands. A woman answers the question regarding whether she can raise a certain crop and sell products on her own – she cannot do it if her in-laws or husband do not accept her doing it.

I live in my husband's house so I cannot decide yet. If my husband does not agree then I would not do it. (women FGD_E_QT)

However, despite the men leading in the decision making, discussion and gaining a consensus with the wife is viewed as a very important factor.

When a man is going to make a decision on something, he must discuss it with his wife, and come to a consensus. Agreement should be from both sides, if one side agrees and the other not, then the thing cannot be successful. Both should work towards consensus. (men FGD_D_QT)

Both spouses discuss and agree with each other. One spouse cannot decide by her/his own. (men_FGD_D_XM)

In addition, some young women seem to be more empowered and can decide things on their own:

If he does not agree then she still can plant. Because if the man can decide the work then the woman can decide too. (women FGD_E_QT)

As men often migrate to do non-agricultural work for cash income, women hold more power in decision making towards agricultural activities, they can decide on their own when their men are absent and also because they know better, and even make decisions to sell or buy agricultural products/materials. In addition, they attend extension training more instead of their absent men.

Mainly the decision is made by the wife, because the husband is busy working on construction sites. But we must get the husband’s approval. If the husband doesn’t agree, both the husband and the wife will discuss which variety to use. (women_FGD_C1_XM)
2.4 Women’s physical mobility and inclusion in public spaces

In both communities, men and women, regardless of their ages have a high degree freedom of moving in public spaces. Opportunities for men and women to study and work outside the home have been increasing over the past ten years, the trend that young men and women also migrate to work is becoming common.

Traditionally, it is very common that women work outside the home either in the fields or in the market. Nonetheless, during war time, the men were sent to the front and the women stayed at home to take full responsibility for both domestic and productive tasks, and social activities. So women are highly appreciated for their hard work and contribution to family and community development. It is socially acceptable for women, young or old, married or unmarried, to move quite freely and to some extent they can make decisions on their own in some family matters, or they should be consulted with before the men in the house make a decision, although women here still take the men’s leader role for granted and it is their duty to listen to their men.

Most of the participants agree that women, regardless whether they are married or single, can freely move around in their communities without any difficulties. And with socio-economic development, they have more opportunities to migrate to work in other regions or abroad; women’s free movements are encouraged. Figure 1 illustrates a young participants’ view about women’s movements in their local communities, i.e., Quang Thach and Xuan My. However, young men and women in Xuan My give lower rating for women’s free movements compared to those of Quang Thach, as they explained the risks that women may face while moving about at night time – the risk of being kidnapped or abused as Xuan My is more developed and located close to the district beach resort and national highway and they have better access to the media where recently more cases of abuse and kidnapping of women for trafficking purposes have been revealed. Also, young married women who have small kids may not be able to move freely over a far distance because they have to take care of their small children.

Here they can move about freely. But when you live in a family, I can’t say that they can go anywhere they want. Some people are married, so they can’t just go whenever they like. Sometimes they want to go out here and there, but they’re limited, because of their family; they can’t be 100% free. I myself would go if I wanted to, but I’m afraid of many things. (young women, FGD_E_XM)

Most of the young people work as industrial workers or work abroad. They work for garment companies, electronics, bags and packaging companies or leather shoes companies. (young women, FGD_E_XM)

A young woman can walk alone to the market, that is very normal here. A woman goes to market daily, that is very regular. (young men, FGD_E_XM)

It is easy, up to now there are many people who go abroad for work, to go to Sai Goon, Binh Duong or Hanoi to find jobs. So, youths move away to work in the city, that is very popular and easy (young men, FGD_E_XM)
If she is married, and some women also have small kids, then she cannot go freely. Many women have husbands working at home, so they would go quickly and return home to share work with their husbands. If she is going to a market close by then there is no need to ask, if she is going a long distance, then she must inform her husband that she is going to the market. (young women, FGD_E_QT)

In addition, the awareness of parents about the importance of education for both daughters and sons according to their ability to study has fostered a high mobility of women and hence their active involvement in the labour market, especially outside of the community. In the past ten years, investment for children to study to higher education so that they can get a good job after graduation, or investment for children or a family member to work abroad (to work in Taiwan, Singapore, Japan or Korea) has become a strategy for many families to overcome poverty. Evidence of a better life from a certain number of families who have someone working abroad and who sends remittance home for their parents or spouse to construct a house or to buy more land, or invest in a better livelihood has stimulated other families to follow suit, and many families strenuously invest in their children regardless of whether they are girls or boys, or in their spouses to find way out of poverty.

Photo: A woman provides paddy grinding services at home. Photo taken by Van Anh.
When finishing their studies at school, many young women choose to find jobs as factory workers or non-agricultural workers and only some of them choose to stay with parents to work in the fields:

After schooling, women can stay at home, helping parents do crop work (planting cassava, eucalyptus, pepper, etc.) or being workers in factories. A small number of them are hired to sell goods: in clothing or shoe shops in Ba Don town, some become teachers at kindergarten, or sell in a supermarket. (Women FGD_E_QT)

Women now are quite dynamic, if they fail in doing something they try something else, if the income from the work is not enough to support their living expenses then they can change jobs. (Women FGD_E_QT)

As such, opportunities for working for pay have increased for women in the two communities in the last ten years (see Table 2 below) as perceived by both men and women. Women in Quang Thach seem have the same chances compared to 10 years ago, except for young single women. Now young single women can find jobs in industrial zones in other regions of the country. The same is true for women in Xuan My – ten years ago, due to limited job availability, women in Xuan My rarely could find work for cash income but this is not the case now, even for widowed women. However, the men’s perception is that widows seem seldom to work for pay while the women’s perception is that it is common for widows to work for pay, as well as other women.

![Figure. 1. Mean share of every ten women who move freely in the community. Young men vs. Young women FGD in Quang Thach and Xuan My communes, Vietnam.](image-url)
Table 2. Extent to which different groups of women work for pay in their villages today and ten years ago, based on the perceptions of poor women and men (information obtained through poor women’s/men’s focus groups)

Rare (0-2/10 women) =1; Common (3 or more women /10) =2

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<th>Women’s perceptions</th>
<th>Men’s perceptions</th>
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<td>Now</td>
<td>10 years ago</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quang Thach</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A young single woman</td>
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<td>A young married</td>
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<tr>
<td>woman</td>
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<td>An older married</td>
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<tr>
<td>woman</td>
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<td>A widow</td>
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<td>A widow</td>
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2.5 Access to credit

There is a higher availability and accessibility of credit for farmers in general and women in particular – from various credit funds including: the Farmer’s Association and Women’s Union project, the group revolving fund, the social policy bank and the Agriculture and Rural Development Bank and other poverty reduction and development projects targeting poor farmers, especially poor women. Farmers now can borrow a large amount of money (even hundreds of millions of VND) to invest in production or business. A middle income family can take out a loan to buy an excavator or a big truck/van or a set of husking and grinding machines to provide agricultural services to other farmers. However, poor farmers still cannot obtain a big loan as they have nothing to mortgage to the bank.

Better access to credit programs for poverty reduction and for investment for family economic development has been generated favourable conditions for women and farmers in the two studied sites, especially in Xuan My, to invest to their children’s education or migration for employment in industrial zones.
2.6 Inheritance of assets

There is evidence that men and women share inherited assets differently: men get a larger share of important assets like a house or land compared to women.

Regarding inheritance of land, women in both communities believe that they can get a share of the land from their parents, however, many of them often leave their shared land to the family when they get married and move to live with their husband’s family. As for the house, is will be given as an inheritance to the last child who stayed with the parents and it is expected that that child will be the one who is the primary supporter of the parents in their old age. Often the youngest son will stay with the parents and it is rare that a daughter will inherit the house in cases where there is a son in the family. In cases where the parents have died and there is no son, daughters can gather and discuss the division of assets among themselves.

Beside land and the house, other valuable assets such as gold or cash will be partly given to the daughter as an initial capital for their married life.

However, it is uncommon that a daughter will inherit the house from their parents as houses are often left to the son. There may be a case that a sonless couple gives the house to their daughters as an inheritance asset.

People often say daughters and sons are equally treated but if the parents pass away and they have sons, then it is not right, not normal, for the daughter to live in the parents’ house. This has been the case for a long time, not only in the villages, but it is the same in other places. It is not allowed for the daughter to take the parents’ house while their brothers are alive. (woman_KI_B__QT)

If a family gives a share to the daughter, probably it can’t be as big as the son’s [share]. Their conception is that the son will be the person to hold the stick (a Vietnamese traditional funeral custom: when a parent dies, the son will hold a stick at the funeral), so he is favoured...There has been no case in which the daughter gets a bigger share than the son. Mostly the son still gets the bigger share. We talk about gender equality, but in reality it’s not that equal. (woman_KI_B_XM)

That men often control and have final decision making authority over the valuable assets of the family is reflected clearly in the study by how difficult or easy it is that a woman or a man can decide using her/his inheritance money to buy land or a motorbike. Although both male and female participants emphasize the consensus of both husband and wife in a decision regarding how to use the inherited asset, it seems that it is easier for the men to decide on the use of his inherited money compared to the women, as indicated by the words of the participants. Both men and women tend to think that it is difficult, or very difficult, for a wife to make decisions about the use of inherited money while it is easier for her husband to make a decision on his own.

Below are some quotes from participants regarding why it is easy for the husband and it is difficult for the wife to use inherited money on their own. This reflects the existing gendered double standard: it is hard for women to decide on the use of inherited property towards their own interests while it is easier for men to do so. And the explanation revolves around the “advantage” of men making the decisions.
Easy for husband because:

the money is the husbands so he can buy, his wife cannot stop him (women FGD_D_QT)

Because it is his inheritance money he has the right to decide what to buy. (young women FGD_E_QT)

In the family, the ability of the husband to make decision is greater, even if the wife does not agree, the husband still has the ability to buy the motorbike. (men FGD_D_QT)

Easy because this money is from the husband’s parents, given to him so he has a stronger say than the wife in the family and if the husband still wants to buy the motorbike then he still can do it. (young men FGD_E_QT)

The husband is above all; the husband decides on his own money, we must follow. (women FGD_D_XM)

It’s his money, so he can decide to buy [the motorbike]. Even if she didn’t agree, he would still buy it. (young women FGD_E_XM)

Difficult for the wife because:

Everything needs the consensus of her husband, if he does not agree then the family is not in harmony… From the old days, big things are husband's responsibilities. (women FGD_D_QT)

Buying land and a car are two matters that need a huge amount of money, if the husband and wife do not agree then it is difficult. (young women FGD_E_QT)

difficult because even it is her private money, when being husband and wife, the money of the wife is also that of the husband, a shared thing. If the wife tries to buy, then later, when the husband has his private money, he will buy things he wants without asking her and then the family is not happy anymore, it is not like a family, just two strangers living in the same house. (young men FGD_E_QT)

if the husband and the wife are not in agreement, it will be very difficult. (women FGD_D_XM)

Difficult, because that money is yours, but the husband and the wife live together, if he doesn’t agree, their life won’t be harmonious. (young women FGD_E_XM)

It is interesting to note that, while all the middle age and young women in Xuan My believe that it is easy for the men to decide on the use of their inherited money, their men (middle aged and young) are consistent in their argument that the husband and wife should discuss and find consensus over the decision of the asset as harmony in the family is important, that it is difficult for both men and women to decide about the use of inherited money on their own without the agreement of their spouse.

In addition, young people seem to have a more equal view about the decision of the couple over the asset, with emphasis on the contribution of the wife, as some young women in Quang Thach share their thoughts regarding the use of inherited money for buying land or a motorbike:

“Cua chong cong vo” – husband owns property but the wife earns credit for it. Husband and wife both consider thing together and make decisions together.

..it is the same whether it [inherited money] is owned by the husband or by the wife, if the wife does not agree, the husband cannot decide by himself. (women FGD_E_QT)
2.7 Family formation

Women are commonly married at the age of 18 to 20 and men are married a little later, at age 22 to 25. Patrilocal marriage is common practice in Vietnam. However, nowadays, the decision to get married mostly is made by the young couple and once the parents of both sides are informed about the marriage decision of the couple, they will proceed with the necessary formal procedure: the official meeting between parents of both sides where the groom’s parents will ask for approval from the bride’s parents and discuss the official engagement date, betrothal ceremony, wedding day and wedding ceremony.

According to a key informant woman in the commune Xuan My, there is a tendency for getting married at later ages compared to the past, when a 25-year-old woman was considered as “late” for marriage,\(^3\) at present, it is normal for a girl to get married at that age.

And it is common that the man should be the one who makes the marriage proposal. If a woman made it, it would be considered as taking advantage of him or that she may have done a not very good thing:

> When still in a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship, to get married must be both persons’ decision. Usually the man is the one to propose. Women have the right to propose, but rarely do; if we say it first, other people will say that we’re taking advantage, or that we’ve already had sex and got pregnant; the way other people see us won’t be very good. They will judge us as not virtuous. (female youth_FGD_E_XM)

Early marriage exists but is not common in both sites, and often takes place when the girl is pregnant. If the couple is still young and under the legal age for marriage, a customary marriage is conducted (without legal registration). The couple will go for legal marriage registration when they reach the legal age for marriage.

Making a decision to marry is for the couple to decide, not the parents, although getting approval from the parents of both sides is important as the parents are often the ones who conduct the proposal and wedding processes.

> A decision to get married is someone’s own decision. (women FGD_E_QT)

> The issue of falling in love and then getting married is for the young man and women. They love each other and then talk to their parents and the two families meet and discuss about organizing the wedding, finding good days, preparing things for the wedding. (men youth_ FGD_E_QT)

Regarding the bride’s own assets which she would bring to her husband’s family, if her family can afford it, she may be given some cows or calves, or some gold as a source of capital investment in their future life. If her family is poor and cannot afford to give her anything, some amount of

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\(^3\) Semi-structure interview with key informants – chair woman of Xuan My Women’s Union, activity B.
money may be given to her. The engagement gift prepared by the groom’s family varies depending on the consensus of both families and also depends on the groom’s economic situation.

At the present time, an engagement ceremony costs around 1 million VND. The engagement gifts prepared often consist of 5 trays containing several kinds of gifts which often are some tobacco, wine, betel leaves and areca, some amount of green tea, traditional sweeties (like sweetened lotus seeds), some fruit or some amount of cash. These gifts are for the bride’s family to share the good news [that their daughter is going to get married] to their relatives, neighbours and friends.

The cost of the wedding ceremony varies depending on affordability for the family. After the wedding, the young newly married couple stays with the husband’s parents for some period of time, then the parents will try to build a small house for the couple on the piece of land which is inherited by their son/or the couple stays with the husband’s parents and takes care of them in their old age. It is very seldom that the couple stays in the bride parents’ house, this is the case only if they do not have any sons. If the husband lives with his wifes parents he would feel low and uncomfortable. He may be teased by other men in the village.

In the village, divorce is still considered to bring shame to women, although the phenomena seems to be becoming more common at the present time compared to the past. Strong traditional gender norms towards a future wife are obviously expected as expressed by young participants:

Every men wants to marry a beautiful, obedient and good-natured wife matching him in terms of temper. (men youth_FGD_E_QT)

Divorce is still considered to bring shame to women:

Here, there is no case of getting divorced and become poor. Here, however hard it is the couple still stays together, no one divorces (women FGD_QT)

*Living separately from the parents in-law enhances women’s status and empowerment as a joint-decision maker in many cases.*

Once the man becomes a husband he feels a higher level of power and freedom compared to the time when he stayed with his parents. They believe in their important role as the head of a new family that he has to take care of, and they have more power to make decisions in family matters rather than having a role as a dependent person. However, the women only feels that way when her own family starts to live separately from her parents in-law, when she can be more independent in discussing family matters with her husband and sometimes make decisions on her own, although important decision will still largely be made by her husband. For instance, she can be actively involved in discussions and decisions with her husband on how many children they would like to have, and which contraceptive to use for family planning, especially couples of the younger generation.

Husband and wife discuss which contraceptive method to use.

[For a young couple], it is women who make decisions about giving birth, but for older women, their husbands decide. (women FGD_E_QT)

The method of contraception is decided by the women. Because my husband doesn’t agree to use condoms, we have to use [other methods]. (women FGD_E_XM)
For a newly married couple it is common to have the first child within one or two years after marriage. Having children is still considered as a must for a couple, and if the wife delays birth by using conception, the family would try as best as they to encourage her to have a child. A son is still a big preference for the family as a means of security in their old age and as a worshipper of the ancestors and for continuation of the husband’s family line, and married women may face pressure to have at least one son. Here are some of the participants opinions:

Now in the society, most people have only 2 children. There still exists the custom that “having a son is mandatory.” After having 2 daughters, they still want to try to have a son. (women_FGD_E_XM)

Kids are the same but in a family it is better to have a boy. Because the boys will take care of the parents when they are old, the girls grow up and get married so there is no one to care for us, later, boys also take responsibility for ancestor worship. (male youth_FGD_E_QT)

…men prefer to have son who will hold the stick in mourning for his parents when they pass away. If a family only has daughters, there is nobody taking care of the parents in their old age and nobody worships the ancestors since a daughter will get married and move to her husbands family. Anybody who is questioned on the matter always answers that it doesn’t matter if they have a son or daughter, however, deep down, they still expect to have at least one son. (male youth_FGD_E_XM)

People tease anybody who has only daughters, and tell them that they do not know how to give birth, and that the wife cannot become a patrilineal grandmother at the community’s parties. Sometimes, the women themselves tease each other and do not get on well with each other over the matter of having only daughters. (male youth_FGD_E_XM)

Women’s household head/Single headed household

Largely, the husbands were the heads of household in the two studied sites, but there is a small proportion of women who are heads of households. They can be widowed or divorced women, and a very few are single mothers. Those families often face economic difficulties and the children are neglected as the mother goes to work all day long and she has no time to take good care of her children. It is common that many small children are sent to live with their mother’s parents or parent in-law so they can be taken care of. In doing so, the woman can focus fully on working for income while saving time and cash which would other go towards caring services. This agency is also implemented by couples who are economically active and have small children.

After the divorce, children are often sent to live with grandparents and divorcees go to work outside, they do not live here. They go to earn money for their children's living and study, at home there is no work…. Most children of divorced couples stay with their grandparents, and their mother goes to work. It can also be the same for other married couples, sometimes both the husband and wife migrate for work and leave the children to stay with their grandparents. (woman_KI_QT)

Regarding birth control to limit the number of children, it is still considered even, by young men, as the woman’s task:
Women will be the ones to decide when to give birth because giving birth or avoiding pregnancy is a women’s job. Women are the ones who bear responsibility for being pregnant and giving birth, so when they want to, they will do that. Men are always ready. (male youth_FGD_E_QT)

If a woman who does not want to study further but still does not get married by the time she is 25 or older, people may talk behind her back, and suggest that she has a problem, that she cannot get married. Men are the bread winners in the family and may go far from home for work for some years to save money and then get married afterwards. Men in the village often get married later than women do; normally, men get married at the age of 25–33. Men normally go away to work a period of time, gain economic stability, become more mature and then marry. (male youth_FGD_E_XM)

2.8 Domestic violence – “We know we have the rights, but we should bear in silence” (women’s view)

Most of the participants, both men and women, believe that domestic violence is a minor issue in their locality, especially the men. A few women per hundred are abused by their husbands (see Table 3), and the violence happens because the wife keeps blaming her husband when he drinks – a tendency to blame the women for their nagging or views on alcohol or poverty is the cause of violence between husband and wife. Moreover, compared to 10 years ago, the family economic situation has improved significantly, and so also has family life and there is no reason for the couple to get into conflict. Also, people now have better knowledge and information (through the media) and understand these issues. Also, the mobilization of the new countryside entitlement helps to limit the incidence of domestic violence in the village.

Men’s views about the domestic violence of 10 years ago were that poverty was blamed for causing domestic violence, hence with economic improvement, the incidence of violence is reduced.

Previously, they were poor, they didn’t have regular jobs. Now their children have grown up, their economic situation gets better, therefore the rate of violence decreases. (men_FGD_C_QT)

...like my situation, previously, we didn’t have enough food, we could not afford for our children to go to school, I and my wife argued and quarrelled all the time. Moreover, I wanted to have more children but my wife didn’t want to have a third child because of our economic difficulties, so we quarrelled and fought each other. (men_FGD_C_XM)

When we have more money [due to innovation application], there have been then less quarrels and fighting in the family... My husband yelled and hit me less than and that before is the most obvious thing. (woman _F_2_QT)

Women tend to report domestic violence more than men and they are aware of the consequences of domestic violence.

If there is disagreement between the husband and wife then they cannot go to work and then they are poor, the children do not have anything to eat and get malnutrition. (Women FGD_C_QT)
In each village, there is a formal reconciliation group which consists of representatives of different local organizations and local authorities. The reconciliation group will work where conflict has occurred (between families, or between family members).

In terms of domestic violence, there is no serious case. But the women are not yet brave enough to bring it up; for sure there must be hidden cases, for example cases related to emotional abuse. Overall there are no serious violence cases. (woman_KI_B_XM)

Explaining about the few cases of violence in the communities, women believe that they learn about domestic violence through programs and become aware of gender equality and gender-based violence reduction:

Women go to the meetings and know more about equality. In general, they know through TV about domestic violence. Now they know more about the law on domestic violence prevention. Women, if being beaten, must speak out, ask for help from the local organizations. In the commune, if there is a case of a husband who beats his wife and children then he is punished. (Women FGD_C_QT)

Men report the reasons for abstaining from domestic violence, such as “keeping face” because if it occurs, it may affect the honourable title of the village:

If there are many violence cases in the village, this village will not be given the honour of the entitlement of “culture village.” The Party Committee and social organizations will be reviewed; and the village’s economy will go down. (men_FGD_C_QT)

Table 3. Views of men and women about violence in the family in Quan Thach and Xuan My – number of answers per number of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violence</th>
<th>Quang Thach men</th>
<th>Quang Thach women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No violence (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally happens here (1-2)</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>9/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly happens here (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently happens (&gt;4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violence</th>
<th>Xuan My men</th>
<th>Xuan My women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No violence (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally happens here (1-2)</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td>1/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly happens here (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently happens (&gt;4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although participants’ views may somewhat reflect the situation of domestic violence in the communities, there may be unreported cases of violence or some abuse which may not be
recognized as violence as it is reported that keeping silent is a way to deal with violence, although they know they have rights.

We know we have the rights, but we should bear in silence. (Women FGD_C_QT)

3. Agency and innovation in agriculture

3.1 Trends in empowerment

Figure 2 and Figure 3 below summarise the level, and change in level, of power and freedom in the past 10 years expressed by middle income and young men and women in both Quang Thach and Xuan My communes.

The men and women in Quang Thach observed a few improvements in empowerment – for men the change is 0.43 and for women it is a little higher at 0.56. While for men in Xuan My there is no change in their level of empowerment over the past 10 years as it remains at a level of 4.5 and for the women the empowerment level has been improved compared to 10 years ago (with a change of 1.1).

Compared to the men and women in Quang Thach, the men and women in Xuan My seem to report a higher level of empowerment. More women (5 per 9 women) in Xuan My put themselves at level 4 at the present time while 10 years ago, only one woman in Quang Thach put herself at a level of 4, and most of them indicated a change from level 1 to 2 or from 2 to level 3.

Explaining the change, the women in Quang Thach considered the fact that ten years ago they either lived with their parents or parent’s in-law meant that they had a low level of freedom for making decisions or engaging in discussions with their parents. Now they feel they have more empowerment as couples have moved to live independently from their parents so the wife can be more involved in discussions with her husband over family matters and they can make decisions on “small things” such as buying chickens or pigs. There are women who still report a low level of freedom as they are dependent on their husband’s decisions and control over important matters in their family (for instance a decision of whether to sell a cow, or repair the house).

If I want to buy a cow to raise then I have to ask my husband. In my family, my husband usually decides on his own. He is the head of the household so he decides. He also decided whether to buy a motorbike. I don't have the right to decide as much as him. My clothes I can decide. Going out I can decide and he will not say anything. If I going far then I have to tell him, if he does not agree then I do not dare to go. (women FGD_D_QT)

The big things he will decide and I will decide the small things. (women FGD_D_QT)

A woman in Quang Thach explains why she put herself at level 2 or level 3 of the ladder of freedom, It is because of her dependency on her husband and mother in-law for decisions in all family matters:

[put at level 2] ...because I have to ask my husband and his mother’s opinion. I can decide on planting cassava, but for other work I have to ask my husband or his mother. I can decide small things like planting cassava and that I plant myself. For planting pepper I ask my husband to work with me, he
has to hoe the bed for trees. For the family worshipping event I should ask my mother in-law. (woman_F_QT_1)

[put at level 3]… Whatever I do I always discuss with my husband, he decides and I follow...

For big things: For example at home I want to raise a pig or sell a buffalo or cow, if my husband is not at home then I will call him to ask, if he agrees then I sell. For such [small] things like chickens, I can decide to sell them myself if I see the price is good, I don't have to ask him [husband]. Going to the market to buy food I don't have to ask about. For planting cassava or sweet potatoes I can decide to hire people to work for us. (woman_F_QT_2)

However, there are also women in Quang Thach who are quite independent in terms of decision making in the family; they are the ones who put their level of freedom at 4:

I decide buying things on my own. My children I take care of by myself, I buy things for them by myself. I just ask him sometimes. (women FGD_D_QT)

For women in Xuan My, some emphasize the increasing opportunities to be involved in economic activities to improve the family income, so they feel empowered and confident as an equal contributor to the family income as their husband. A woman in a FGD shared that she puts women in her village at step 4 because the woman still should listen to her husband in making decisions over important matters regarding the family, such as buying a cow or constructing a house.

.. to a woman, the husband is the pillar [of the family]. When selling a cow or building a house, she must negotiate with her husband; both the husband and the wife should discuss. The wife can decide on small things like selling chickens or vegetables, there is no need to ask the husband because it would be too complicated. (women FGD_D_XM)

Compared to 10 years ago, there is a change in the level of freedom – women in Xuan My nowadays seem to have more freedom than in the past, they can be involved in decision making processes and make more decisions while in the past they used to follow their husbands who made most of the decisions in the house:

[Back to those time] we only had a little bit of power, while the rest was decided by men; when selling something, we only stood aside; the husbands made the decision and then we only nodded our heads. (women FGD_D_XM)

10 years ago, society was different, now things have changed... Back then, due to economic difficulties, the husbands were strict and the women did not have as many opportunities to learn as now. But now women learn a lot, they have been out and seen other people, so their awareness has changed. I say things and I am able to do things, therefore for many matters I can make decisions. (women FGD_D_XM)

Compared to women in Quang Thach, women in Xuan My seem to be more empowered, partly due to the fact that their men are often away for secondary work for cash income, so the women at home take on their own shoulders most of the agricultural work, including attending training and even ploughing, and they have to make more decisions while their men are away.
More women do harvesting and sell products. Most farm work and animal husbandry is done by women while the men do work outside as masons or work abroad; they rarely participate in works at home. .. Fertilizing is decided by the wife. Harvesting: is decided by both husband and wife, but arranging the time to harvest is decided by the wife. Decisions on which plants to grow are made by the wife. Even if the husband doesn’t agree, the wife can still go ahead and plant.. Farming tools and machines: are operated by men; women only use sweet potato/banana trunk cutting machines or threshing/grinding machines. (Female youth_FGD_ E_XM)

Photo. Machine helps farmers to save labour and time to do heavy tasks.
Figure 2. Level of empowerment for men and women in Quang Thach commune.

Figure 3. Level of empowerment for men and women in Xuan My commune.
There are several factors which have contributed to women’s empowerment in both communities over the past 10 years:

- Increased opportunities for learning and higher mobility:

  Nowadays the standard of living is higher, many companies have been established. Women go out to learn and study, then they go to work to improve their lives and overcome the hard life. (women FGD_C6a_QT)

  In general the commune delivers training for raising pigs, cows, chickens, planting pepper and cassava which help local people to work more effectively. The fertilizer companies also provide training to people. (women FGD_C6a_QT)

  As now there are more devices and equipment to assist women, so women have more time to do hiring work, and to learn things. (women FGD_C6a_QT)

- Improved infrastructure: good roads, affordability of motorbikes as a means of transportation, cell phones for personal communication; electricity and mechanization to save time and labour; more waged jobs (working in factories/companies) for higher income.

- Parents’ willingness and determination to invest in their children’s education – with the expectation that children with a higher education can find better jobs. This expectation is true for both girls and boys without discrimination, so the parents do their best and even borrow money to invest in their children’s education:

  Most people, no matter whether they are a son or a daughter, if they can study well then their parents will support them with the best conditions for study. Many families that don’t have enough money borrow from other people to invest in their children’s education, so that their children can go to school. (male youth_FGD_E_QT)

- When women live on their own separately from their husband’s parents they gain more power and freedom compared to 10 years ago as they have more autonomy in their decisions and do not rely on their mother in-law. And women’s activities have also improved compared to 10 years ago:

  Now at the meeting, women are told about their rights in the family. Now women have a higher priority. Women can work without their husband's permission such as contacting others and buying things for the house. (women FGD_D_QT)

  Now women understand economy more, after the meeting they have more knowledge of planting and raising animals, can work more and earn more money, and when they have money they can buy what they want, if they have a small amount they could buy a chicken or if they have big amount they could buy a cow. (women FGD_D_QT)

However, although discussion among husband and wife is a must, the husband is the person who has the final say in most matters in the family. Here are some opinions of middle-income men in
Quang Thach’s FGD regarding the husband’s power of making decision compared to the wife, although the women’s voices are recognized.

Men in this village generally have rights to decide on most things in the family, because they are the pillars of the house. Men are the ones who initiate things in the family and they make most of the decisions. If the wife agrees with him, she will follow him, she cannot decide on her own. As the men are the pillar of the house, I make a decision on a matter and my wife should agree and follow my decision.

Women now are much more equal to men than in the past, however, most women still are housewives, they have less contact with outside society than men do. Men have more chances to go out and meet other people, so men’s vision is different from the women’s. Therefore, the decisions made by men might be better than those made by women. (Men FGD_D_QT)

Regarding youth in the two studied sites, young people, both men and women, feel less empowered as they are still dependent on their parents – putting themselves at level 2-3, with only some at level 4:

I choose step 2 because most of important things in my house are decided by my parents. Juveniles are not married as they are young and still go to school so they can only decide on some stuff related to educational things, like choosing a university or college or the subject for study. For other problems, mostly, I can only join the discussion with my parents but I can’t decide anything. (Male youth_FGD_E QT)

I choose 3. I can decide on certain matters. For example, I can decide on my education, my career...then I talk to my parents, if they approve, I will follow this decision. Besides, I can decide about my intimate relationship with someone, choosing a lover, choosing a girl to be my wife. What work that I do, where I work. (Male youth_FGD_E QT)

I select step 3 because in the village, the male youth at this age mainly do not get married, they stay together with their parents or go to work far from home. The youth can only take some decisions on himself such as what to do, where to work and his ability for decision making is moderate and the main decisions in the family have to be made with the permission of his parent. Parents are key persons in decision making. (Male youth_FGD_E XM)

At home I can decide to let the children study, pay the school fee for them. For such big things as buying a truck or something, then the husband and wife must discuss, then buy. (Female youth_FGD_E QT)

Overall they’re on step 3, but in a few families, the woman holds the power and the man has only a supporting role; while in some other families, the woman is not allowed to make any decisions. (Female youth_FGD_E XM)

A young woman in Quang Thach explains why she puts herself at level 4:

Step 4: Most women in the village, including my mother and other women around me, have many things they can decide, can discuss with their husbands and totally decide on their own, such as the children's study. For such big things as children getting married, they ask for my opinion and say that I can decide my own future. (Female youth_FGD_E QT)
It seems that young people have more open views of the level of freedom with more participation of both sides, still, their views reflect traditional gender stereotypes that men often decide on “big things.” However, women seem to have a greater voice in decisions in the family regarding selling or buying crops, animals or regarding the children’s care, or even social relationships, as expressed by some young women in Quang Thach and Xuan My.

The husband is the pillar in the family and he can decide on big matters in the family but I still can give him my opinion. For such things as building the house or making house devices he can decide but with the conclusion coming from both husband and wife. I can contribute my ideas/views. If he is away from home I can decide things in the family. If he is at home, I still can decide to sell a cow or pig, or to do cultivation work in an up-hill field. (women FGD_E_QT)

Women can decide on some personal matters such as buying things for themselves, or everyday spending, while big matters are decided by men. (women FGD_E_XM)

Women can decide on their children’s matters. They can decide on their own relationships such as their relationships with the neighbours, relatives and friends. (women FGD_E_XM)

Children’s education is strongly encouraged by parents regardless of their gender and this factor contributes to young people’s empowerment.

Children are given equal study opportunities, here, there is no thoughts of placing boys over girls. Daughters and sons are the same. (Women FGD_E_QT)

3.2 Important agricultural innovations

For both men and women in Quang Thach and Xuan My, new varieties/breeding methods (hybrid cassava, acacia, hybrid oxen in Quang Thach; new varieties of peanut, sweet potato and hybrid oxen in Xuan My) and related new techniques of farming (such as fertilizing, weeding or techniques for animal feeding and caring) are considered as the most important innovations as they bring a higher income and they are easily applied.

For farmers in Quang Thach, high-yield cassava is an important crop beside other cash crops such as pepper, which have been planted in the area for a long time, and acacia as Quang Thach is an up-hill commune. Cassava is cultivated intensively by many families in the studied villages in order to supply materials to starch processing factories located in the region. At the present time, high-yield cassava is still a good source of cash income for farmers. On the other hand, the local indigenous varieties of sweet potato and cassava are not currently preferred, although people recognize them as a delicacy and utilize them as food for preservation at food shortage times. Because of their low productivity they cannot be good commercial crops.

Compared to 10 years ago, chemical fertilizers are used intensively for most crops, including local onions and gingers which were previously used as organic fertilizer.

Most crops are cultivated mainly for commercial purposes, not for subsistence, as before. Only rice is grown for family needs as the land allocated for rice cultivation is small and not sufficient for trading.
Table 4. Most important new agricultural practices over the past decade by different participant groups for the studied communes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quang Thach commune</th>
<th>#1 ranked</th>
<th>#2 ranked</th>
<th>#3 ranked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Poor men, Ladder of Life</td>
<td>Middle class men, Capacities for Innovation</td>
<td>Young men, Aspirations of youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New varieties/breed: hybrid cassavas</td>
<td>New breed of acacia and oxen</td>
<td>new agricultural machines;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raising hybrid oxen</td>
<td>Technique of raising hybrid oxen</td>
<td>New variety of high productivity cassava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(hybrid cassava)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor women, Ladder of Life</td>
<td>Middle class women, Capacities for Innovation</td>
<td>Young women, Aspirations of youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybrid cassava and pepper</td>
<td>Cassava: adding fertilizer and weeding</td>
<td>Planting cassava: adding fertilizer and weeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques of planting cassava: flat planting</td>
<td>Raising livestock and cattle</td>
<td>Feeding techniques in animal husbandry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and adding fertilizer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuan My commune</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Poor men, Ladder of Life</td>
<td>Middle class men, Capacities for Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#1 ranked</td>
<td>Hybrid cows</td>
<td>Techniques of rice cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#2 ranked</td>
<td>New peanut varieties</td>
<td>Techniques of raising hybrid oxen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#3 ranked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle class men, Capacities for Innovation</td>
<td>Young men, Aspirations of youth</td>
<td>Poor women, Ladder of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques of rice cultivation</td>
<td>New machines</td>
<td>Techniques of growing rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques of raising hybrid oxen</td>
<td>Technical training</td>
<td>Techniques of growing peanuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle class women, Capacities for Innovation</td>
<td>Poor women, Ladder of Life</td>
<td>Middle class women, Capacities for Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planting materials</td>
<td>Techniques of growing rice</td>
<td>Planting materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques: for peanuts weeding and basal</td>
<td>Techniques of growing peanuts</td>
<td>For rice: sowing seeds, and transplanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>application of fertilizer</td>
<td></td>
<td>rice seedlings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young women, Aspirations of youth</td>
<td>Varieties: rice, peanuts and sweet potato</td>
<td>Fertilizing techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note on cassava cultivation techniques: the stem is cut obliquely and cassava are cultivated in beds.
Changes of breeding and techniques of animal husbandry have occurred – hybrid cows and raising chickens in closed areas instead of by free range. And new types of feed for animal husbandry, such as ground cassava and sweet potato, and peanut trees and other vegies and rice brands are used to feed cows. Compound processed foods are also commonly used for animal feedings.

The sweet potato plant is important for the development of animal husbandry. In the past, sweet potatoes were used as food for humans; now, people no longer eat them, so they are used for animal husbandry. In the past, people let their cows wander freely to graze; now, this land has been reduced in size; it’s all being used for farming, no more fields for cows to wander, so there’s not much grass for them to graze.

Sweet potatoes can help a lot in developing animal husbandry. Secondary agricultural products are used to develop animal husbandry… Both the sweet potato plants and tubers are used for animal husbandry. Peanut plants are dried and ground for cow’s feeds, while the peanut tubers are harvested...Everyone in the village grows sweet potatoes and peanuts. Sweet potatoes are easy to grow. (women FGD_C_XM)

There is not many difference between men and women regarding the most important innovations – both genders think that new cultivation techniques (rice, cassava or peanuts) and new breeds and new ways of feeding are the most important for them.

However, the young men of both Quang Thach and Xuan My state that access to new machines is an important innovation to them. Mechanization of the cultivating and harvesting processes and the processing products for animal feed (grinding machines, vegetable cutting machines used mainly for animal feed) has become a significant factor contributing to the productivity of farming practices while reducing labour time and workload. Currently, there is a high demand from farmers for the use of machines for harvesting and land preparation and there a certain number of farmers provide such services to other farmers in the village.

In addition, for many families, the improvement in family income over the past ten years was brought about not by a single activity but rather by different activities relating to their livelihoods which have contributed to their economic improvement.

I nnovation has brought us many positive changes, has made our life better. We have become wealthier thanks to many different things such as collecting peppers and cassava, providing transportation services with our truck, offering rice husking and grinding services and lending our land to the Viettel telecommunication company. Each of them contributes to improving our income. (male_ID_F1_QT)
3.3 Qualities of innovators

In the commune, production now mostly aims for commodity market crop varieties or breeding programs which bring high-productivity and these are estimated by the farmers, both men and women, as the most important innovations. One woman in Xuan My said about her peanut crop: “The most important is having good seeds” (FGD of middle-income women, Xuan My). Also, learning new techniques of cultivation is important for farmers. While men emphasize the quality of varieties (such as hybrid cassava, pepper and acacia in Quang Thach, peanuts in Xuan My) and hybrid cows; women tend to emphasize techniques of caring for crops such as by adding fertilizer, or weeding, cultivating crops besides rice paddies and new techniques for feeding animals.
Compared to the older generation, young men and women seem to see new techniques and technology and machines as the most important innovations for them. They believe that technology brings higher productivity while saving time and hard labour. And technical training helps to bring higher productivity, crops grow more and hence income is stable.

Young women and young men are given equal opportunities to learn new farming practices. (female youth_FGD_E_XM)

Although young women and men nowadays are given equal opportunities for jobs and education, in terms of applying new techniques/innovations, men seem better than women and this view reflects a certain level of traditional gender stereotyping regarding women and men’s capacities:

Both men and women have the same opportunities. However, men normally are more sensible and sensitive than women in applying new farming practices or new machines. Women normally use the traditional method more, they will follow what they see somebody else doing if they are doing it successfully. Women normally are less bold than men. (male youth_FGD_E_XM)

It is interesting that learning that new varieties/breeding techniques such as hybrid or new breeds of oxen, or cassava in Quang Thach originally came from people in the village, not from the official extension system. Farmers recalled that they initially learned from each other that the village’s head tried a good hybrid cassava, and people came to ask him for some cassava cuttings from his cassava field for trying cultivation. And later on, even the village’s head did not have enough cassava cuttings to provide to others to try as too many villagers come to ask him for cuttings.

Similarly, news about a hybrid cow or other crop also comes from neighbours rather from extension workers. Farmers of both communities seem to follow innovations which have been successfully applied by other farmers. Sharing information among themselves during conversation with each other, or during exchange work seems to be one important channel.

When we do exchange work together we share with each other and learn from each other. (women FGD_D_QT)

Women who successfully achieve something will help us when we do exchange work. Men also exchange information too. (women FGD_D_QT)

In Xuan My, learning about new crops also comes from scientific institutions such as the Institute for Crop Seeding of the Central Region which provides new varieties of sweet potato for farmers for trial cultivation, or information comes just through watching TV programs, which was the way a couple in Xuan My bought their grinding and husking machines to offer grinding services in their village. Other couples learnt about new varieties (of peanuts) or machines or through private traders who introduced new crops by providing seeds and training of how to do a trial cultivation.

Some people came to introduce ploughing machines; they provided communication and training to us at the commune [centre], and those who are capable can go to the manufacturer to buy them. Women went to the meetings, and then we came home and passed on the information to our husbands, and if we felt we could afford it, the husband would take out a loan to buy it. (women FGD_D_XM)

Successful improvement in earnings from working abroad, selling cassava to factories and larger scale of production have helped to change people’s lives: from living conditions to living style,
from daily diet to access to a range of market and social services; from job opportunities to access to the outside world thanks to the development of roads and telecommunication systems.

Life has changed for women due to the successful application of innovation – this has brought about not only family economic improvement but also women’s empowerment:

I can pay for my children's school fees, buy new things for my family, build a house… My husband listens to me more. If I have plans for planting cassava or decided to buy something, I just talk to my husband and he will agree. For example, if I wanted to buy a motorbike or a cow then we would discuss and he would agree immediately… My mother-in-law is harder on me but she also respects me more. (woman _F_1_QT)

Table 5. Quality of innovators according to views of men and women in the two studied cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s views</th>
<th>Women’s views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quang Thach men</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quang Thach women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are more intelligent, more smart</td>
<td>- Enthusiastic to show us how things work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They have higher economic conditions, having capital to invest on machines, vehicles</td>
<td>- Straight forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are strong and determine to invest to activity</td>
<td>- Happy to help other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are strong and forceful in thinking and doing</td>
<td>- Whole heartedly loyal to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They have good contact with outsider, with companies</td>
<td>- Dynamic and smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They have many experiences, having relations, business nodes</td>
<td>- Know the market price well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are working hard to learn</td>
<td>- Encourage people to follow them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some people keep secret their success and do not share everything with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Xuan My men</th>
<th>Xuan My women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- They own a lot of land</td>
<td>- They are willing to help us, encouraging us to try new varieties to gain more income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are hardworking and diligent;</td>
<td>- They bring productive breeds to the villagers; they also tell us about those that are not productive, so that we know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They tend to diversify their crops.</td>
<td>- They are daring, they gain a good reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are innovative and sensitive in thinking;</td>
<td>- They have wide social connections: they go to Nghe An and other provinces to bring new varieties here. When they hear about good sweet potato or peanut varieties from somewhere, they will go there and bring them here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They are people who like to apply new practices</td>
<td>- They visit places with different models of production to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They have good health that enables them to work, otherwise, they cannot do it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the qualities of innovators, it is interesting that male and female innovators are given similar characteristics, such as a strong will and determination in learning and trying new things, are knowledgeable regarding market information, have good experiences, are hardworking, have good relations/networks. However, women seem to emphasize more the other traits such as being willing to help and to share with others their innovation.

.. they [men and women innovators] are all daring people in terms of thinking and doing. And, there are women who are as self-confident as men are. (women FGD_D_XM)

Also, a female innovator tends to give credit to their husband and to praise their husband’s support in application of the innovation.

The woman who is innovative and the man who is innovative are the same. However, in some families there are some smart women who are innovative but they give the honour to their husband, some women have great ideas but they tell their husbands to do it. (men FGD_D_QT)

In fact the women who are innovative usually give the right to do the innovation to their husbands, if there is no husband, they do the same as the men. (men FGD_D_QT)

There are some views from male participants which reflect a traditional gender stereotype that male innovators have a broader view compared to female innovators and female innovators may not be as daring as male innovators and women are still dependent on their husbands:

They [men and women innovators] both have the same traits as above, however, the difference is that the man is braver, more adventurous and bold in investment than the woman. In any case, the woman in the family is still dependent on her husband. She can do but she cannot decide over her husband…or

Women usually are smaller-minded than men - they calculate in more detail, they think of more details than men. They do not dare to invest as big an amount as men do. In other characteristics they are the same as men. (men FGD_D_QT_d10)

Participants also mentioned some of difficulties which may affect farmers’ innovation, there may be unfavourable climate conditions or quality of crop seed/breeding. Below are some of them:

*Difficulties faced by farmers in applying innovation:*
- Unfavourable weather conditions (frost, cold, drought, storm).
- Seeds/animals fail to grow (experienced by farmers in Xuan My where the seeds of a new rice variety for some reason did not geminate and the local authorities had to compensate 50% of the expenses to cover for the farmers’ losses).
- Dependency on suppliers for seed supplies or production materials.
- Not all the families can get a loan from the bank for investment (for instance, to buy breeding cows) due to the lack of a mortgage, especially the poor ones.
### 3.4 Factors fostering capacities for innovation

**Table 6. Factors that support innovation according to middle-income participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s views</th>
<th>Women’s views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Strong economic conditions.</td>
<td>• Learning from women while doing exchange work, also from the head of the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The husband and wife are supporting each other.</td>
<td>• Husband and wife discuss and husband agrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have wide and strong social contacts.</td>
<td>• Find appropriate crop (for instance, cassava is appropriate: good weather, proper time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Favourable weather conditions for agricultural activities which are suitable to development of crops and breeding.</td>
<td>• Enough labour, fertilizer, breeding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Output of agricultural products are easily sold/consumed such as to the processing factories located close by.</td>
<td>• Good land preparation will bring good productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developed economic market: middle man can collects agricultural products directly at the farmer’s house.</td>
<td>• Easy to borrow money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agencies selling agricultural materials are ready to provide services with later payment.</td>
<td>• Have time to take care of crops in the right season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improved roads are convenient for travelling and commodity transportation.</td>
<td>• The commune supports us with planting materials, fertilizers and nylon covering for cultivating crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Various types of soils which are suitable to different crops.</td>
<td>• Capital access: low-interest bank loans, such as loans to buy cows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important factors for men:</td>
<td>• Husband encouraging and working with wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good output for the products.</td>
<td>• Training is provided for farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Investment capital.</td>
<td>Most important factors for women:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Productivity.</td>
<td>• Husband and wife discuss and husband agrees (1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Capital (2).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical factors that are supporting farmer’s capacities for innovation include:

- The development of a market for agricultural services and trading which help farmers to easily find traders or traders can come directly to farmers for trading their agricultural products.
- Local policy and programs support and promote agricultural production. For instance, improved accessibility to credit from banks and other credit programs with sufficiently large amounts for investment in production, especially production materials and animal husbandry, like hybrid oxen. The local government and poverty reduction programs offer preferential loan of low interest rate for farmers.
- Favourable infrastructure (improved roads for good transportation, convenient communication for information exchange and learning) within the community and between other communities.
Flexibility of agricultural services providers who are ready to meet farmer’s needs for materials such as seeds, fertilizers and other products for crop care against disease and collection of payment later during harvesting time.

Development of agricultural production leads to farmers’ high demand for agricultural materials (seeds, breeds, fertilizers and agricultural machines, etc);

Improved access to training provided by extension programs or by trading companies providing seeds or agricultural materials such as fertilizer, pesticide/herbicide.

Good opportunities for young people to work and learn outside the community, they can leave home for study or work in other regions or go abroad, and they can bring home not only money but experience and new knowledge about practice and crops.

Appropriate training provided to farmers. Even now they can learn from each other about new crops or practices.

Having good social relations/social network.

Men’s and women’s views on supportive factors for innovation are slightly different. While men are concerned more with capital and output availability for their agricultural products, women mentioned the support of their husband as the most important factor which supports their capacity for innovation besides the capital for investment.

Happiness in the family is the most important thing. If the husband doesn’t feel comfortable, the work won’t go well. (women FGD_D_XM)

…My husband's support is the most important. (woman _F_1_QT)

### 3.5 Factors that hinder innovation

Regarding factors which hinder the capacity for innovation, men and women mentioned the lack of capital, pet diseases, unfavourable weather conditions, quality of soil and market price instability. Many participants reported that the cold weather/frost that occurred in early 2016 ruined most of their vegetables and crops such as rice and winter peanuts (see Table 7 for a summary of hindering factors for middle-income men and women in the studied sites).

Women mentioned also the lack of training (for cassava cultivation) and lack of a labour force while the men were concerned about the debt that farmers who provide agricultural service may face if other farmers cannot pay them in time.

For women in both the studied villages, the husband’s agreement is an important factor which influences women’s practice of innovation. Unlike their men, women in both studied communities considered their husband’s disapproval as one of the most hindering factors, besides a of lack of capital.

If the husband does not agree then the family would have to leave the land bare. (FGD_women_QT)

[if] the husband doesn’t agree [to open a business] he would not allow his wife to do it. (women FGD_D_QT_d32)
If the husband doesn’t agree, they won’t do it [to try new farming practice]. (women FGD_D_XM_d27)

Table 7. Factors hindering innovation according to middle-income participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s views</th>
<th>Women’s views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of capital.</td>
<td>• Husband’s disapproval. The husband does not agree. If the wife does not agree and the husband agrees then she still has to follow her husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complicated pet disease situations.</td>
<td>• No capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Severe and unstable weather conditions, natural disasters (flooding, drought) which affect productivity of cropping and livestock.</td>
<td>• Not suitable weather, cold, too much rain or too much sun also are not good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of land for production.</td>
<td>• No fertilizer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unstable market: product price fluctuations, production depends on the processing and consuming factories/traders.</td>
<td>• Lack of water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The status of deadweight debt (farmers could not pay service providers in time leading to inability to pay loan).</td>
<td>• Not having attended the cassava training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of animal feed.</td>
<td>• Pests; animal epidemics (pig/cow diseases).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Without an irrigation system, farming is dependent on nature. Farmers cannot control water sources.</td>
<td>• Unsuitable soil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Bad quality seeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Lack of manpower because family members go abroad or work for companies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most hindering factors for men                                            Most hindering factors for women
| • Lack of capital.                                                         | • The husband’s disapproval (1).                                                                                      |
| • Unstable output for products.                                           | • No capital (2).                                                                                                    |
| • Climate.                                                                | •                                                                             |
| • Pet diseases.                                                           | •                                                                             |

3.6 Gendered experiences with a focus on innovation

There are certain new practices which are followed with the new crop varieties such as hybrid cassava, winter peanuts or hybrid oxen which have been applied by villagers in their efforts to seek for commodity production. Be they implemented by farmers under either local programs or by farmers themselves through learning from other villagers, new farming practices have brought some apparent changes in villager’s lives.

Among various innovations, diversification of livelihood activities to minimize the risk of losing investments is seen a smart strategy by the farmers. Pooling the family income from different livelihoods based on both farming and off-farm activities, family members, husband, wife and their working children, have to optimize use of their time to gain high effectiveness from their
work, and then the traditional gender division of labour has slightly changed to generate the best profit for the sake of the family income.

However, women are expected to encourage and follow her husband’s decisions for innovation, and this indicates that in the family, the traditional gender imbalance where the men still dominate in decision making and decide to adopt an innovation based on his will even without his wife’s agreement start to emerge. If the wife is the one who initiates the innovation however, she/the family cannot apply it without the husband’s agreement.

For example,

The wife decides on pigs and chickens, the husband decides on cows and the trees. (women FGD_D_QT)
Fertilizer - the wife can choose on her own. (women FGD_D_QT)
Pesticide spraying - the husband will decide and sprays. (women FGD_D_QT)

If a wife or a husband would like to try a new crop, she or he would discuss with the spouse, however, the wife would not do it without her husband’s agreement and the husband would still carry on with his idea even his wife goes against it.

If my husband does not agree then I would not do it. (women FGD_E_QT)
…women only ask their husband and the husband goes to ask the extension worker. (women FGD_E_QT)
The husband will ask for his wife's opinion, if she disagrees, he will still plant that crop. (women FGD_E_QT)

However, patriarchal attitudes remained, for instant, some women still consider that men selling vegetables is not appropriate and it would lower his status because he is doing women’s work. Giving opinion about an assumption of how men and women think of a men going to the market to sell vegetables picked from his home garden:

…If he has a wife and children, people would think: there must be something wrong with the wife and kids, or he is a petty person, that’s why he goes to sell. The husband does the wife’s work, while the wife doesn’t have work to do. Selling vegetables is the wife’s responsibility; if he has a wife but she lets him go to sell vegetables, there must be something wrong with the husband. (women FGD_D_XM)

Traditional gender norms persists even among young people’s way of thinking – that if a man cares about a small job or small money matter it is not a good image for him:

Usually small things are done by women. If a man sold vegetables in a typical household, it wouldn’t be a nice image; it would show that he even kept the money from selling vegetables; such is not a good image... He can sell a cow. (Female youth_FGD_E_XM)

In a family, men and women are equal; women have more power in deciding small things and men in deciding important/big things. (Female youth_FGD_E_XM)
Below are the changes which are found in hardware and software in both studied communities.

**Hardware changes:**

- In the last ten years, there have been a lot of new varieties and new agricultural practices which were brought in that have significantly changed farmers lives in the two studied communities.

- Different varieties of crops have been introduced in the two studies villages such as: high-yield cassava, new varieties of sweet potatoes; a winter peanut variety; hybrid cows. So, farmers have changed their cultivation practices, from production largely for subsistence to production for commercial purposes. Farmers who grow forest trees like acacia, when they plant the new kind of acacia, they transform a part of their forest land into land for cassava cultivation to improve their income in a shorter time period.

- In addition, available output for agricultural products, such as starch processing factories, or peanuts for export, encourage farmers to trial new varieties and new production practices.

- Labour-saving machines and equipment have become more and more common, which helps a great deal in the farmers’ work, both domestic and productive, and women benefit significantly from them too. However, whether and how the women’s role changes and how women use their saved time and labour is another issue for discussion.

- Fertilizer and pesticide/herbicides are easily accessible to farmers through private and cooperative services. Farmers can easily purchase them from shops which sell agriculture materials. Even more, some farmers who provide agricultural services such as goods transportation or who wholesale products can provide fertilizer and pesticides to farmers on the basis of “use first pay later” after cropping.

- Improved local infrastructure and growing affordable transportation vehicles such as motorbikes help farmers a great deal in transportation of agricultural materials or products to and from the market. Mobile phones are owned by most of villagers and they make communication among the people easy. Now farmers, both men and women, can easily call each other to learn about business information and price updates, or to order agricultural materials or other services.

- Capital/credit for loans are available and easily accessible for farmers through different channels – from poverty reduction programs or other programs supporting agriculture and rural development through the Agriculture and Rural Development Bank or the Social Policy Bank. Farmers can get loans to invest in their production with preferential interest rates. Women can also borrow money from the Women’s Union program targeting improvements in women’s livelihoods. At the present time, farmers can borrow a much larger sum of money for their investments in production or business compared to previous years.

- There are new programs for rural development and poverty reduction.

**Software changes:**
With improved roads, transport vehicles and communication systems in the commune, farmers now can conveniently access a wider range of services, such as purchasing agricultural materials such as seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, or even expensive machines or trucks. Different agricultural extension programmes run by the national and local governments are intensively implemented by the agricultural research institute for trial of new root crops such as high-yield cassava or sweet potato or winter peanuts.

Different training programs are conducted for transferring new cultivation or breeding techniques, or new practices of caring for new crops and animals, such as a new way of making land bedding for sweet potatoes or cassava oblique cutting or planning peanuts in winter time. In the two studied areas, it seems that both men and women are given equal opportunities to attend training. Nevertheless, women tend to attend those technical training programs more than men as in many households, men are often away from home for off-farm activities. Besides official training, farmers are actively engaged in learning and sharing experiences from neighbours or undertake self-learning.

Intensive training on new techniques of cultivation, self-learning and sharing among farmers are common means of learning about innovation. Learning from working abroad and in other regions of the country (opportunities) also takes place.

Chances for studying are equal for men and women. Both are invited to local science and technology training courses conducted in the locality. (male youth_FGD_E_QT)

Business networks – farmers/traders/scientists – fostering productivity and selling products is becoming more open and more accessible to households. In addition, with the development of mobile phone communication, most women and men have their own cell phone, so getting updated prices and other market information becomes much easier and takes place more frequently compared to the last 5 years.

Another factor supporting software change is the efforts of local government to target socio-economic development and poverty reduction through forming policies enabling a good environment for economic investment and rural development which in turn create opportunities for jobs, both in farming and in off-farm activities. Exchange labour systems among male and female farmers in the community are continually enhanced as a way to save labour expenses.

Compared to the older farmers, young farmers seem more dynamic in applying technology and mechanization in their farming activities. They seem more active and daring in trying new ways of doing thing or taking up new business ideas.

However, technical innovations and mechanization in agricultural production seem to favour men more than women. Men utilize and own valuable equipment (tractors, trucks, cars, motorbikes, ploughing machines and other machines/equipment). Truly, mechanization can help women a great deal in meeting women’s practical requirements (saving time for cooking, preparing animal feed, transportation of products, finding wood for fuel, travel time on bikes etc.) but it does not yet meet their strategic needs to change their level of education, opportunities for better jobs or improving their income. The gendered relations between women and men are changing in a very slow process, i.e., women still have less access to and control of resources than men do. Men still dominate in decision making in the family and men still largely hold important positions in the community.
Here is a view of a young man explaining why most machines are utilized by men:

Both men and women have applied scientific technology innovation now, but for using machines the strength of women is not as good as men so they them use less than men. Men think quicker than women in things related to machines and techniques. Women are more skilful in detailed work so animal raising is more suitable for them, raising animal’s fits most for them. (male youth_FGD_E_QT)

From another perspective, it seems that innovations make for a burden on women – more cash income opportunities and saving more time from use of machines means that women may have to work more intensively, and have no time for themselves. They may have to work harder and longer time at home, while having less time for rest or recreation.

Innovations do not bring equal opportunities for all farming families. Unlike the richer and better off families, poor and close to poor farmers, including women, usually benefit least from innovation as they cannot afford to buy or to rent machines/equipment to invest in more effective and productive crops. If they are able to, it is not on a large scale; also they cannot borrow a large amount of money because of the mortgage policy.

Rich people plant pepper and cassava, so do poor people. But rich people have resources to invest more, so their productivity is higher. Poor households don’t have money to invest, their productivity is lower. (men FGD_C_QT)

3.7 Changes in gender norms

Although traditional gender stereotypes still strongly exist (see more in the above section “Prevailing gender norms” in the report), results of the study find that the traditional gender norms are changing in certain ways, both in domestic and productive aspects. Changes in gender norms seem to occur more among the younger generation regarding their views about sharing domestic work between the husband and wife, or their views about men’s and women’s work. The change is manifest not only in the participant’s views but also in their reporting of the “switching” gendered division of labour between husband and wife, for instance a husband would not mind giving a hand in doing house chores, such as taking care of a small child or feeding animals, tasks that were thought before to be women’s tasks. Instead, women can plough the land with a cow while their husband and son are away. On the one hand, these changes may indicate that, compared to men, women have more chances for equality and in practice they become more engaged in economic activities and household decision making processes and participate in social life. On the other hand, it may indicate that women now have to work harder, take more responsibility, but yet their power in household decision making may change only slightly or even remain the same compared to the last 10 years.

Changes which are present in the two studied communities regarding traditional gender norms and stereotypes are summarized in Box 3 below.
More equal decision making in young couples:

Now most of the young women in the village are equal (to men), men or women can both do it [housework]; [men] now are not as macho as in the past. (Female youth_FGD_E_XM)

There is now no more discrimination in jobs for men or jobs for women. Whoever does it is fine, men can plough and so can women. Women can grow rice and men can do the same. Both of them discuss and work and do not regulate which tasks are for men and which tasks are for women. (male youth_FGD_E_XM)

Sex before getting married is tolerated more than in the past. Pregnancy before marriage is accepted by the groom’s side. This change is due to an increasing tendency of infertility (or difficulties in conceiving) among married couples.

In the past, when a woman give birth to only daughters, the men would beat her up and shout at her. Now society has changed; sons and daughters are the same; in the countryside, people are in harmony more than in the past. (Women_FGD_C1_XM)
Now there is a case of pregnancy before marriage. At the present, this possibility is more openly accepted and the rules are not so strict as in the past. If a woman gets pregnant, then the couple informs the man’s parents, they will accept. (male youth_FGD_E_XM)

3.8 Trust/social cohesion in the community

Generally, the level of social cohesion in the community has remained good over the past 10 years. People often give a high score when ranking the cohesion level. The majority of participants highly appreciated the community’s mutual affection and assistance to each other, such as by lending money, doing exchange work or lending each other a cow for ploughing land. They also help each other in cases of mourning or sickness, or in a family event.

Now women help each other when they are in need. If I am in difficulty, she can lend me some money. (woman FGD_D_QT)

Now with the exchange of work, we go to work together and we get along with each other better. (woman FGD_D_QT)

We visit sick members. If children drop out of school, the education promotion group will visit the family. Women also donate money to help. (woman FGD_D_QT)

Everyone is supportive, friendly and we are united. When someone is sick, we go to visit them; when there are events such as weddings… we also exchange labour. (woman FGD_D_XM)

Even in a FGD conducted for middle-income men in Xuan My, all participants emphasized the strong cohesion in their community as expressed by one of them:

When any family member is busy with family affairs, other members will give a hand to help and share in the work. When a family member organizes a marriage or funeral, people in the community come to visit, talk and help. And the same happens for other families, others will come to help. (men FGD_D_XM)

Participants largely recognize the roles of organizations such as the Women’s Union, the Farmer’s Association and the Veteran Association which contribute considerable efforts to unite people in common activities and as result, enhance the level of cohesion in the community.

The local organizations have more programs, cultural and sporting activities for them to understand and unite more… there are interest groups, a credit team, an exchange work team who usually help each other to work at the meeting and everyone gathers for eating cheerfully and closely. (men FGD_D_QT)

However, there are some people who mentioned that the level of cohesion nowadays is not as strong as 10 years ago, there occur conflicts between neighbours while competing for trade, or land disputes among family members, but all agree that such cases are quite rare in the community.

Ten years ago people’s lives were hard, people had equal lives so they loved, protected, shared with each other… Now life is more developed, more discriminated in terms of the rich and poor, people compete with each other in working so protection and helping mutually are reduced a little bit. (men FGD_D_QT)

It was better in the past than it is now. Because back then, we didn’t have money; we struggled to make a living, so we were together in hunger; we even shared a sweet potato. Now we’ve got
money, but brotherhood is lost, fatherhood is lost. (This participant chose option 1 for the “Now” question) (woman FGD_D_XM)

Box 4. Women’s agency to escape poverty by borrowing more land for cultivation – benefit both sides (land owner and land borrower) – case in Xuân My.

In the village, there are a certain number of families whose main laborers have migrated to work abroad or in other regions for several years and their entitled lands are often left uncultivated. Mrs. P discussed with her husband the possibility of taking the opportunity to borrow land from those families to extend their agricultural work, because her family has not enough land area. Upon her husband’s agreement, she borrowed land from her relatives who migrated to work in the south for several years. Having more land, she cultivated more peanuts, sweet potatoes or local onions. After harvesting, she often brings a part of the harvested products to the land owner’s family. Some families give land to her without needing any return products. They say that she works on their land and that means that their land is taken care of and its soil will not be impoverished, so when they come back to the village after a few years, they can continue to work on their land without needing to improve it.

Since working more land, Mrs. P and her husband have become busier with agricultural work but in return, the family’s income has considerable improved. Her husband helps her more in agricultural work such as ploughing the land, weeding, and fertilizing, etc. She grows more sweet potato and peanuts so the family can raise more cows as they can grind sweet potatoes and peanut trees to feed cows. They can sell more cows, peanuts and local onions and earn sufficient to pay the loan which they took out to cover for their three daughter’s education fees and expenses in Hanoi, and for their youngest son who is studying in secondary schooling.

4. Social and economic mobility

4.1 The ‘Ladder of Life’

All recognize significant changes in the lives of village residents over the last ten years. Most families in the communes have improved their economic situation; many families have become rich or better-off. Ten years ago, a large proportion of the villagers lived in poverty, facing food shortages a few months a year, lacking means of transport, means of production and experiencing poor living conditions.

Nowadays, the situation has apparently changed: there is only a small number of families that still experience poor living conditions, and even these families do not experience long-term food shortages as before, poor residents still can borrow money to buy rice to eat or they still can find work to do in order to buy rice and food each day.

Poor families are reported as lacking labourers because members of the family either are in their old age, are newly married, are disabled, suffer of chronic sickness or the family falls into debt
due to accidents. Especially, there are some families who are poor because they have large debts as they try to borrow money to pay expenses to a middle person in order to pay for their children to study or work abroad. Borrowing a large amount of money for their children to go abroad to work or study (to Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea or Japan) is seen as one strategy to escape poverty by many families in the two studied sites, as in return they hope for remittances sent by the family member from abroad so they can pay off the debt and improve their lives.

However, the gap between the rich and poor seems bigger today than in the past 10 years.

Views of men and women on those who become better off or rich in their villages include differences in the types of houses and assets, areas and quality of land, production tools, means of transport, clothes and access to healthcare and other social or credit services. Rich and better off families have more choices and opportunities for production investment or can diversify their economic activities, while the poor families face limitations in most aspects, especially labour shortages due to disability or severe illness or old age and hence they lack of opportunities for innovation. Poor farmers do mostly work for others in order to earn enough money to cover their daily subsistence.

Rich families are considered to be those who have resources to invest in diversified production, buy more production equipment and try new varieties and breeds. They are often pioneers in the application of innovations in the commune and become role models for other farmers in the community.

The richest families in the commune today can live in a beautiful house and have valuable assets (fridge, air conditioner, washing machine, large screen and smart TV, and expensive wooden furniture, own several expensive motorbikes and expensive smartphones). For poor families, they live in an old or small house without any valuable assets. They may also have a motorbike or cell phone but only cheap ones. For production tools, they can own a truck or car, production machines such as tractor, complex harvesting machines, excavators.

The rich families can diversify their income sources, not solely from agricultural and animal husbandry on a larger scale, but also by providing services to other farmers. With time, they earn more profit and start to invest in a good and profitable business. They can afford for their children to study in higher education and even send them abroad to study.

Some families use remittances sent by their children or spouse working abroad or in other regions to invest in buying a truck or production machine to provide services to other farmers and gradually they can use the money earned to invest in other economic activities such as raising oxen or chicken broilers.

**Poverty trend**

Participants from both Quang Thach and Xuan My indicated that on the five-scale Ladder of Life, whilst 10 years ago many poor people were on step 1, today, no one is on step 1. In Quang Thach, men and women identify the same level for the community poverty line (CPL) as step two and they share similar poverty trends although men place slightly more village residents
today below or close to the CPL than their counterparts do (regarding the proportion of the population under the poverty line, men put 5/20 today compared to 16/20 ten years ago; women put 4/20 today compared to 15/20 ten years ago). Men and women in Quang Thach though that no one in their community was rich ten years ago, and today, men think 1/20 and women 3/20 are rich, a slightly higher proportion.

In Xuan My, men put the CPL between step two to three while women put it between step thee and four which indicates their different perceptions of the poverty threshold of the community – women think that there are still more people in poverty today compared to what men think (8/20 compared to 4/20 according to the men’s view). So, women in Xuan My believe there is a lower number of rich people in the population compared to men (regarding the richest population in the community, women thought there was no one rich ten years ago and believe that 2/20 are rich today; and men put 2/20 as rich ten years ago and 5/20 today) (see Table 8).

Table 8. Distribution of households across the steps of the Ladder of Life in relation to the community poverty line (CPL) in Quang Thach and Xuan My.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quang Thach commune_Men FGD</th>
<th>Quang Thach commune_Women FGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEN steps</strong></td>
<td><strong>Distribution today</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cpl=community poverty line
It is interesting that the women in Quang Thach and Xuan My have clear differences in their thoughts of the proportion of the population in the community who have moved out of poverty in the past 10 years: women in Quang Thach thought that 73% of their village people had moved out of poverty while this was only 53% in Xuan My women’s view. Quang Thach is a more remote community with less economic development compared to the Xuan My community which is located close to the national highway and has better conditions for economic development than Quang Thach. People in Xuan My engage in off-farm activities much more intensively than those in Quang Thach. That is why their women’s view about the community changes are different in the two communities since in Xuan My, people’s lives may have been improved earlier and better than those in Quang Thach.

In contrast, men in both communities believe that a similar proportion of the population has moved out of poverty in the last 10 years (64% in Xuan My and 69% in Quang Thach).

Several factors have contributed to life changes in the two communities: efforts from the government to reduce poverty through various policies and programs – improving infrastructure (electricity, roads, communication channels, schools, health facilities, etc.). Xuan My is the one rural commune which has been entitled as the New Countryside;

**What role do agricultural livelihoods—and related resources, knowledge, learning and networks—play in how men and women position households on the ladder?**

It is apparent in the two studied sites that there are farmers who are pioneers in applying innovation in their communities. By starting new practices, planting new crop varieties or using new animal breeding methods which have been learnt and brought from outside, they have successfully improved their family’s economic situation and become role models for other families in the villages. For instance, the head of the village in Quang Thach was among the first farmers in the village who tried growing hybrid cassava. Other villagers, seeing his success, started to ask him
for cassava cuttings to grow in their fields. In Xuan My, hybrid cows and winter peanuts are innovations which have been gradually applied in other households in the village in the last few years. As discussed above, successful livelihoods are closely related to changes in both “software” and “hardware” and to social networks over the last ten years.

The position of a family on the Ladder of Life is much influenced by the family’s access to labour and capital for investment, technical training (which is provided by the local extension system, by poverty programs or by private service providers) and information. It also depends on how strong willed the farmer is towards innovation application, and their skills, experiences and social communication networks.

As mentioned above, the higher the family’s position on the ladder, the greater its resources, such as capital or land, and the better the market networking they have and therefore they have opportunities for making good investments in buying a good variety of crops, using fertilizer and buying machines for production. Also they can diversify their production activities, make good plans for their future economic development and have more opportunities to learn from others. Families who are under or close to the CPL however are described as facing a lot of difficulties, they lack a labour force, lack land, lack access to bigger loans for investment and lack access to market information, also, they are often in debt and are striving hard to work just for basic subsistence.

Men on a step above the poverty line have more favourable conditions to apply a new farming technology than those who are below the poverty line. Having more capital and experience, they take initiatives to apply more new innovation and to use new technologies/techniques than those on the poverty line.

4.2 Moving up the Ladder

Participants list various assisting factors which contribute to their moving up the ladder – improving their household’s economic status over past ten years:

Enabling environmental/outside factors:

- Various programs/policies for rural and agricultural development have been intensively implemented, including credit and preferential programs which provide significant support for income generation. These foster easy access to credit – farmers can get a loan for a larger amount (50 to 100 million VND).
- Significant improvement of the infrastructure system – grid electricity, roads, especially the inter-communal/inter-village road systems, schools, health centres.
- Development of an industrialized zone – factories/companies = more paid jobs, so people have more opportunities to improve their income.
- Popularized TV, internet, mobile phones – access to more knowledge and information.
- Open market for goods trading – sell products on a larger scale.
- Development of trading networks – traders come to buy products at the farmer’s homes and/or carry products directly from the fields so that farmers can save time and labour for carrying harvested products.
- Land accumulation to support mechanization of agricultural activities (using machines for ploughing and harvesting).
o More job opportunities: hiring for work such as ploughing, weeding, secondary jobs for cash income such as carpentry, construction works.

o Open labour export and migration to other regions for work becomes an important source of income for the family and also an important source of production investment.

Community/family related factors:

o Family members and relatives support each other.

o Renting/having more land for cultivation.

o Husband and wife help each other in work and doing family chores.

o Sending children or a family member to work abroad or migrate to work and their remittances used for family investment (in production, business, etc.).

o Change crops to new and high-yield varieties and which have good commercial value (such as hybrid cassava, pepper, hybrid cows).

o Get loans with preferred interest rate from poverty reduction programs through banks, or borrow from relatives to invest for children’s study or for children or spouse to migrate to work in factories/companies. Some can borrow money to invest in production (more fertilizer or mechanized labour saving work).

Personal factors:

o People are eager to learn and to understand new cultivation techniques and they have more opportunities to access and utilise them for higher productivity and better income.

o People are more active and are smarter. They go outside and have more social relations. They are more open-minded, active, dynamic and have a higher level of understanding (see more in Box 4 “Women’s agency to escape poverty by borrowing more land for cultivation”).

o Farmer’s intensive application of new technology, new varieties in crop cultivation and breeding. Using high-yield, good quality and high economic value varieties.

o Hardworking, eager to learn and apply new cultivation practices and new farming technology.

o Dare to get a substantial loan for investment in farming or animal husbandry.

o Working hard for cash income for the family (both husband and wife) and saving hard (from doing hiring work, limiting expenses).

People can access and apply technology in production; hence they have higher productivity and better income. (men FGD_QT)

Poor families are described as working very hard in order to escape poverty, as a female farmer said, “do paid work all the time.”

do paid work: assist on a construction site, take care of gardens, husband and wife work together, etc. (women FGD_C_QT)
Two or 3 years ago and up to the present time, hard-working people can lift themselves out of poverty. Being rich or poor depends on the person’s willingness to work...if they are hard-working how can they be poor? (women FGD_C_QT)

Women raise pigs, chickens; sell vegetables in the market to contribute to their households’ economy. ..They do hackwork and save money gradually. (men FGD_C_QT)

For women there are also some other factors in the process of moving up the ladder. Many women confide that not only should they work hard, they also should mentally support their husband and children to work hard and they also should overcome low self-esteem by actively communicating with neighbours who have economically improved their lives to learn from them; and actively attend meetings and training to learn about new techniques, new crops/new ways of doing things.

The decision to rent land is made by both the husband and the wife; for example in my family, it’s decided by the wife – I encourage my husband to do it. (women FGD_C2_XM)

I don’t know about other villages but in this village, being rich or poor depends on the women in the house. Women make the work plan, go for paid work and encourage their men to go with them. Women here are more responsible than men. (women FGD_C2_QT)

A poor farmer shares his thoughts about how it is for men to move up ladder:

…a man should be hardworking and hard learning. He should learn new techniques in cultivation and new advances in technology and apply them in production... They dare to take the risk of borrowing money for production investment... Outside of the seasonal time, in their free time, they actively do other jobs such as bricklaying to earn more income for the family... They can get a loan from the bank to apply for working abroad, or they go to work for companies or work in industrial zones. (men FGD_C2_XM)

Supporting each other and helping each other is perceived as a way to get the family moving up the ladder economically.

Both the husband and the wife discuss together to do this and that, encourage each other to work and economize on living expenses. (women FGD_C2_XM)

Currently, qualifications and awareness of women are improved, they also bravely applied the scientific and technical advances into production, thereby increasing family incomes.

.. both spouses discuss and agree together before starting some economic activity; learn well and support each other, helping each other work in order to bring the family up. (men FGD_C2_XM)

4.3 Remaining stuck or falling down the Ladder

Participants discuss the main reasons that men or women remain trapped in poverty because of old age or a lack of ability to work either because there is a seriously sick person in the family or because labour is lacking, that is why it is very hard for them to escape from poverty.
They don’t succeed in animal husbandry because they didn’t have [money] to invest, and they don’t have knowledge. They borrow a lot of money to pay for their children’s schooling, so they are not brave enough to invest; and nobody lends them money to invest any more. (women FGD C_XM)

Several factors which were frequently mentioned by participants as the main causes for men and women being stuck on the ladder:

- Lack of a main labourer: or main labourers are chronically ill or disabled, or are old aged persons.
- Lack of land or capital for investment. Lack of capital so they cannot invest efficiently in production activities, therefore their productivity remains low.
- Accidents due to serious sickness/illness which use most of the family’s expenses and labour force.
- Family business failed and the family has fallen into debt and it is hard to pay the debt. Or crop/animal husbandry failed due to epidemic diseases and the family has fallen into large debt.
- Having many children and the parents have to pay a lot for the children’s educations and therefore they remain in poverty.
- Family cannot pay off the debt (because their working outside family member fails to send remittance home – borrow money for children or spouse to go abroad to work or work/doing business in another region but for some reason they cannot send remittance home).
- Criteria of poor threshold changed so there are certain households that fall back into the poor category.
- Cannot get a loan from the bank because they have nothing to put up for mortgage.
- Doing paid work although both husband and wife earn just sufficient to cover the basic family’s needs but not production investment.
- Unfavourable weather conditions or animal/poultry epidemic. For instance, the very cold weather that occurred at the end of 2015 ruined the early transplanted rice and other crops and animals. It seriously affected the farmer’s livelihoods as many of them failed to pay off their loans from the bank.

Moreover, men are blamed by women for drinking and laziness as reasons that hold the family in poverty. This reason is for men only, not women in the studied sites:

Among 10 men who drink, 9 would be drunk. Despite being poor, men from poor families still drink. Some men hit their wives whenever they drink. They are not willing to work for others. They can smoke cigarettes but not hug women. People who usually smoke cigarettes would work hard in order to earn money to buy cigarettes, their wife or children cannot afford to buy cigarettes for them. (women FGD C_QT)

Women here mostly are hard-working, the problem is the husbands, so the families could not escape poverty. The husbands just go to drink and get drunk, if the wife after work can't cook the meals in time he may beat her. He sometimes destroys all the items in the house, so how can they become better off in such a situation. (women FGD C_QT)

Married to a husband who did not know how to work efficiently. Wife relies on husband who is the pillar of the house, if the husband can work well, it is OK. If the husband just keeps drinking, her life would be tough. (women FGD C_QT)
Husbands may lose money from gambling, and then have to sell their houses to pay their debts; when their wives complain, they beat them. (women FGD C_XM)

Men in poor households, although they are poor often drink as they feel bored, they do not go to do paid work. (women FGD C_QT)

Men in better-off families often help their wives, but in poor families the men tend to hang around, the rich ones usually work hard. (women FGD C_QT)

Sometime, because of the gendered perception that the man is the pillar of the household, the breadwinner in the house, men are blamed for not working hard enough:

Women here mostly are hard-working, the problem is the husbands, who do not work so that the families cannot escape poverty. The husband just drinks and get drunk, if the wife, after work, can't cook the meals in time then he may beat her. He sometimes destroys all the items in the house, so how can they can become better in such a situation? (women FGD C_QT)

4.4 Roles that gender norms, agricultural innovation and household cooperation/conflict play in poor people’s mobility

Compared to 10 years ago, agricultural innovation has truly brought about significant changes in people’s lives in the studied communities. New crops, new varieties and breeding have together given families a higher level of economic productivity than ever before. Applying more modern machinery allows them to gain a higher productivity.

In order to move up the ladder, both men and women in poor families have to work very hard, utilizing fully both their time and strength. However, lacking both labour and land, and having no appropriate assets for a mortgage to obtain a larger loan for economic investment, their agricultural cultivation effort are just enough for family subsistence.

As a result, poor men and women may not benefit from technology and innovations as much as those who are in better economic circumstances simply because the latter can afford to invest. Notwithstanding their lack of labour force, as explained in a FGD of middle-income men in Xuan My:

Men all participate in local training, however men in poor households have no opportunity to investigate and apply technology as described in the training. But men in average and better-off families are able to invest and apply the training. In addition to local training, the latter also have the chance to learn from and visit other areas, and then they may apply new technology and improve their productivity.

Men who are a step above the poverty line have more chances to apply new technologies for cultivation than the ones below the poverty line. Thanks to having more capital and experience they can take the initiative to apply more new innovations, new technologies/techniques than the ones on the poverty line.

(men FGD_XM_C29)
Recently, in the community of Xuan My, men and young people, both men and women, have started to leave home to study or to find work in the many industrialized zones which are located in the region or in other regions of the country, such as the central highland or in big cities, leaving the old aged men and women at home to take care of the agricultural work. Further, many young couples, when migrating to work in another region or abroad, leave their small children with their parents to be taken care of.

In those families, which are quite common in the village, women stay at home not only to take care of the agricultural work, they also take care of their grandchildren, feeding them and taking them to kindergarten or school. For some families who have little land, they take opportunities to rent more land to do agricultural work. On the one hand, because they are working hard, the family economy has improved, and the family gradually has become better off. On the other hand, women

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Box 5. Investment for a family member to working abroad – a farmer’s dream of changing life and escaping poverty – a case in Xuan My commune.

In the locality, there are many farmers who migrate to work abroad and send remittances home to cover for their family's debt, to reconstruct the house or to buy home furniture and appliances, and motorbikes, etc. In those families, their economic circumstances have improved significantly. Other farmers in the commune are thus determined to send their children or their spouses to work abroad as a means to improve the family's standard of living. They borrow money from the bank in order to cover for the travel and other expenses. A few of them have failed and returned to their home village but they still long to find another way to migrate again for another try. Farmers are migrating to work abroad or in other regions of the country in order to save capital for investment when they come back home. In a family with two children, parents borrow money to cover the cost for the first child to travel abroad to work. When the parents use remittances to successfully pay their debts, they start to borrow again to help their second child to go abroad to work. In many families, it is the wife who tries very hard every day to survive whilst dealing with the family's burden of debt.

Mrs. A is a woman living with a disability. She is weak and almost unable to do manual work, so she sells fruit and small things to earn a living. She has no land and besides selling fruit, she works for pay by taking such work as tending cows for other farmers in the village or other light work to earn money to raise her daughter. Her daughter was born during her affair with a married man living in the neighbouring village. She gets good support from her brother and sister so her child can continue to study to a higher level of education. She learnt that her daughter has a rare blood disease, however, she still wanted her daughter to go to Japan to study and she hoped that she might find a job there. She has taken out a loan with a preferential interest rate and borrowed more from her sister and brother so that her daughter can travel to Japan to study and work there. She also had to borrow money for her daughter’s treatment and to buy an air ticket for her daughter to fly back home for treatment (getting a blood transfusion and then flying back to Japan again). Although her daughter is now studying in Japan and she has already found a job in order to send remittances home to pay some of the debt, she now bears a big debt burden of about 100 million VND and she has to borrow more in order to pay other debts. Still, she believes that sending her daughter to Japan is the "best" way for her and her daughter to escape poverty.
have to work harder as they work more on the fields and at the same time, have responsibility for 
more care-related tasks.

Participants also mentioned about the role of wife in discussing and supporting her husband to 
adopt innovations for change. As mentioned above, before applying any innovation, the husband 
and wife often discuss the matter and consider if or how they would adopt the innovation.

A woman believes that the women in the house play an important role in supporting the family to 
move up or down the ladder:

Men in better-off families often help their wives, but in poor families the men tend to hang around, 
the rich ones usually work hard. I don't know about other villages but in this village, being rich or 
poor depends on the women in the house. Women make the work plan, go out for paid work and 
encourage their men to go with them. Women here are more responsible than men. (women 
FGD_C_QT).

Box 6. More burden to women as men and young people migrate for work outside (care for 
grandchildren).

Recently in the community of Xuan My men and young people, both men and women, often leave home 
to study or to find work in the many industrialized zones which are located in the region or in other 
regions of the country such as the central highland or in big cities, leaving old aged men and women at 
home to take care of the agricultural work. Besides, many young couples, when migrating to work in 
another region or abroad, leave their small children to be taken care of by their parents.

Therefore, in those families, which are quite common in the village, women stay at home not only to take 
care of the agricultural work, they also take care of their grandchildren, feeding them and taking them to 
kindergarten or school. For some families who have little land, they take the opportunity to rent 
uncultivated land to do more agricultural work. On the one hand, because they work hard, the family 
economy has improved, and the family gradually has become better off. On the other hand, women have 
to work harder as they work more on the fields and at the same time, have responsibility for more care-
related tasks.

5. Summary of main findings

5.1 Gender norms and agricultural innovation

a. How have local gender norms affected and been affected by the community’s experiences 
with agricultural innovations
Social and economic changes, together with the migration of men and young people to look for cash income and the open market economy bring opportunities for planting commercial crops such as hybrid cassava, peanuts or of breeding hybrid cows and using new practices of cultivation and animal feed. The growing application of machinery to agricultural production and transportation are contributing to changes in men and women’s division of labour both in the house and in the production fields. The gender division of labour between men and women has been partly changed to optimize the family’s labour force to meet the needs of the different tasks of farming and off-farm activities. Lacking male labour, women seem have to engaged more in agricultural work, from cultivation to caring for and selling agricultural products. Women take more responsibility for agricultural tasks than in the past. Specifically, they can be involved more actively in the negotiating process of selling agricultural products while their men are away. The development of communication tools such as the cell phone and better transportation means like motorbikes and cars, which have become common, help to facilitate the link between farmers as producers and traders. Women can stay at home and call their husband who is away from home to discuss their plans, and upon his agreement, to make plans for what crop to grow or what price to sell the cow for.

Technology and improved infrastructure such as electricity, roads and convenient transportation help women and men a great deal in saving labour and time on domestic chores and heavy work, leaving them more time to engage in income generating activities, hence improving their economic lives.

Easy access to media and other channels of information, access to credit and remittances sent from other members of the family help farmers to invest in larger-scale agricultural production or to open small services.

However, although the gender division of labour has started to change, the power relations between men and women seem to lag behind: men are still considered to be the main decision makers in all family matters, and women are still expected to play the role of supporter and doer following the husband’s decision, even though discussion between husband and wife may be a regular part of the decision-making process. If the men in the family are not in favour of applying an innovation, it is unlikely for the women at home adopt it, even though she is capable of doing so.

b. How have the leading local innovations been tapped into and strengthened
Local innovations (such as hybrid cassava in Quang Thach and raising hybrid cows in Xuan My, increased application of machinery in agricultural production, new practices of cultivation and animal feed, development of market networks between producers and traders, access to new knowledge about technology, etc.) together with improved infrastructure, have created more opportunities for both women and men as individuals and as families to improve their lives, both economically and socially.

c. What key factors most affected poor women in their capacities to learn about, access, adapt and benefit from agricultural innovations? What key factors most affected poor men’s capacities for and benefits from innovation? More specifically:
In the last ten years, there have been dramatic changes in socio-economic conditions as well as technology in the studied communes and in the region as a whole.

- Government policies and national programmes for poverty reduction and rural development, including the New Countryside Development Program, have put substantial effort into building infrastructure in communities (transportation, roads, electricity, schools, health centres, telecommunication systems). Improved access to electricity and roads laid under development programs enable farmers to more easily trade their products and also improves their ability to purchase agricultural materials and tools/equipment.

- Different agricultural development programmes and projects provide information to farmers about new crops, varieties, animal breeding and new cultivation techniques.

- The national and local policy on poverty reduction, together with program implementation which creates favourable conditions for farmers and especially the poor and women to access credit programs, and an open market help to establish networking between farmers and private traders, including traders coming from within the communities. Development of social and credit service programmes make it possible for farmers to access loans provided by the government and by private companies with low interest rates (such as the loans provided through the Social Policy Bank or the Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development under the “Programme for Poverty Reduction” and through two important collective organizations for men and women: the Farmers’ Association and the Women’s Union).

- Introduction of new varieties, seeds and breeds by the agricultural extension programme, research program as well as by private service companies. Farmers have high flexibility of paying for such innovations (buy first, pay later, or pay with products at harvesting time); making it convenient to obtain the necessary inputs and it is also more convenient to harvest outputs (traders collect products directly from the fields). These services make farmers feel encouraged to carry out their agricultural activities as products are taken care of by traders. At the same time, farmers may face the risk of increasing levels of dependency on traders for both seeds and agricultural materials and products which may disadvantage their income.

- Motorbikes and cell phones have become important transportation and communication tools for most farmers and their families.

- Intensive utilization of machinery in agricultural activities saves labour and working time, and increases productivity.

- Networks of relatives and friends and traditions of helping each other create favourable conditions for farmers to learn about successful innovations and experiences from each other and to implement innovations (borrowing machines, getting loans with no interest rate, lend out uncultivated land for the poor to cultivate by doing exchange work).

**d. What contextual factors and innovation qualities contributed to excluding, or perhaps adding to, the drudgery, indebtedness, insecurity or otherwise harming—poor women or men?**
Harvest losses due to diseases and natural disasters (the frosty weather and flooding that has occurred in the last few years) contribute to slowing down the process of poverty reduction. For better off families, they can quickly recover their production, but for the poor and close poor farmers who have very limited resources, this pushes them deeper into debt and they are sometimes unable to pay this off for quite a long time.

In addition, some families cannot pay the loans which they borrowed to cover expenses for their family members to go abroad to work or study because their family member working abroad failed to work due to an accident or being cheated.

Other factors such as illness or lacking labour in the family also discourage farmers from adopting innovation.

e. How do the experiences of better off groups with innovations differ from the poorer groups in the community? How do the youth’s experiences differ from the older generations?

Better-off farmers have better opportunities for innovation as they can access more loans from banks for investment; can afford labour-saving machines to help with their production; can hire people to work in their fields; can invest to diversify their production; and they dare to diversify their income generating activities. Besides, better-off families can afford to invest in their children’s education in travelling further afield to learn new things.

The poor however can only rely on their manual labour and work very hard. They can rely also on support from the government or relatives to invest in their agricultural production. However, if a natural disaster or unfavourable weather or epidemics occur, they may lose their investment and face debt again.

Young couples who marry and leave their parent’s house to start a new life in their home village often face difficulties of lacking land for cultivation and lacking capital for investment. And they often have small children. They often do paid work to cover for living subsistence. Many of them prefer to migrate to look for paid work as a way to save capital before coming back home. There are young couples who migrate to work leaving their small children at home for grandparents to taking care of and they send remittance home.

5.2 Local innovations and women’s and men’s individual and collective agency

In short, there have been substantial changes in the lives of people in the two studied communities in the past ten years due to application of innovation in agricultural activities including new cultivation practices, new crops and varieties that bring higher productivities. Development of infrastructure like roads and electricity, have increased access to credit and agricultural technology
as well as agricultural services that encourage farmers to enhance their agricultural production for commercial purposes.

Access to information, to new knowledge and to different services have improved incomes and the conditions for development in the region, acting as a catalyst for people to gradually change their lifestyles and some gender norms, especially gender roles in the domestic and production spheres. Mechanization of agricultural activities and enabling of the social and policy environments for economic development contribute a great deal in the change of gender roles towards optimizing time and labour in each family and help to enhance women’s status in the family: women are more involved in discussion over decisions in family matters and they can make decisions when the men are away. Also, women in those sites also can take over even heavy work duties such as ploughing and carrying goods if men in the family are absent and the family cannot afford to rent for ploughing.

However, gendered power relations seem slow to change as men are still the main decision makers in the family and women still largely play subordinate roles as doers. The deepest gender stereotypes, i.e., men’s dominating power in decision making and guiding the family still strongly exist. The traditional gender stereotype still prevails: “men do heavy work and women do light work,” men do hard and heavy work, such as ploughing, land preparation, carrying agricultural materials or products, harvesting; and women do light works, such as weeding, fertilizing, feeding animals, planting, making animal feed, harvesting, selling products.

Intensive utilization of technology and mechanization both in domestic and agricultural production play very important roles in helping farmers with heavy work and improve labour productivity. Technology can help women to be secured from heavy manual work and make the work highly productive. However, technology may not save women from working for a longer time because they always maximize their time working in order to make their family become better off economically. For the wife, the children and husband, not themselves, are the top priority in their life. The husband is still considered as the pillar of the family and the owner of the house. Although a woman can be the one to adopt and implement innovation, they still step back and give the honour of having done so to their husbands as the leader and decision maker in the family.
### ANNEX. LADDER OF LIFE
#### POOR WOMENS GROUP IN QUANG THACH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>Rich</th>
<th>Better-off</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 -</td>
<td>Rich</td>
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<td>• Rich people like Mr. Son get loans to plant pine forest; in 2 years, he harvested and sold at 150 million VND per year.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Families plant pepper, cassava, eucalyptus: 3-4 hectares of land. Selling pepper, cassava, eucalyptus for 40-50 million VNDs/year.</td>
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<td>• Have cows. Raising poultry on a large scale (hundreds of chickens). They sell chickens to earn 50 million VNDs annually.</td>
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<td>• Both husband and wife worked hard to earn income so they have everything.</td>
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<td>• In their house there are wardrobes, TV, fridge, motorbikes.</td>
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<td>• Their children finish high school (grade 12). If the children study higher, then the family may become poorer because of the fee for studying. If the children stay at home and work for their parents’ business then they are rich.</td>
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<td>• Families have grinding machines. Some families do business. They buy cassava, eucalyptus, pepper from other people or offer transportation services to bring products to the factory for sale.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They own ploughing machines, grinder machines, excavators, trucks to carry eucalyptus, cassava.</td>
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<td>• Live on friendly terms with neighbours, helping others.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They lend money to those relatives or neighbours who are in need, then those people can work for them to pay back or they sell cassava for those lenders.</td>
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<td>• They employ others to work for them.</td>
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<td>• Each family has only 2-3 kids. The poor ones have more children.</td>
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<td>• They don’t usually work far from home, just work in the village.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They also bring new breeds of cassava, banana to grow in the village.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They eat more vegetables, meat, fish, fruits. They have all healthy foods in their meals.</td>
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<td>• They can afford to buy more medicines, going to check their health regularly. They tend to buy any kind of tonic or supplementary foods they know about.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They go to the hospital in Hanoi, provincial hospital or to hospital in Hue to check their health.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They are hard-working. The richer, the more hard-working they are. The rich are more hard-working than the poor.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They have good relationships with the starch processing factory. They know and have timely updated information about the market price.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They donate money to public works/social activities such as supporting the village football team or laying the village road. They also give money to the village funds.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Being loved and respected by others.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Better-off</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Those who served in the army or those who are teachers of kindergarten, elementary, secondary schools or work in the commune have a retirement salary. &quot;They have a salary so their life is easier, agricultural work is very hard.&quot; They can work in the government organizations, or work for private companies. After working hours at the office, they go home and do housework. On Saturday, Sunday, they also stay at home and plant potatoes, cassava. They also sell products such as banana, green tea, thun.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In some families, children still cannot find jobs after graduation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They participate in many social groups at the commune and village levels. They have a salary so they join the salary group, soldier group, retirement group, etc. They join different social groups and organizations. They have more time to play volleyball.</td>
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<td>• Their family still have members do paid work, for example the wife is a teacher, the husband does paid work. They may plant eucalyptus, pepper and cassava. They raise cows but few, approximately 2 cows, no pig, chickens are raised for family use, not for sale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• They have a family member who works abroad (Korea, Israel, Lao, Japan) or they used to work abroad (so have saved money to invest to production).</td>
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### COMMUNITY POVERTY LINE (step 2 to step 3)

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<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>#HH 2005</th>
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<td>3 - close poor level</td>
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<td>● Have some land to plant potatoes, cassava, around 1 ha.</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Majority of them still do paid work. They work as assistant workers in construction sites, or do paid work carrying eucalyptus or cassava.</td>
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<td>● Did not receive government support to build the house. They can build their house on their own.</td>
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<td>● They borrow money from the bank to invest to do business or to build the house and pay it back later by doing paid work. It is not that they have saved money to build the house.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● They raise cows, pigs, chickens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● They plant pepper, eucalyptus, cassava, potatoes but not many.</td>
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<td>● Some families have children studying at university. They borrow money for their children's study, for house building and then they work to pay the debt. The children's study costs a lot of money, but in some families, their children cannot find a job after graduation and they have to do paid work or do farming work.</td>
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<td>● They are hard-working and therefore they can escape poverty.</td>
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<td>● Their meals are better, with meat, fish, but not as good as the rich people.</td>
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<td>● They can afford to travel for sightseeing to visit Uncle Ho's home town, or Uncle Ho’ mausoleum in Hanoi with the Women’s union, Farmer Assoc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● They have TVs, motorbikes, cows. Some families have wardrobes, a set of table and chairs in the house.</td>
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<td>● They live in harmony with neighbours, good relations with family/relatives, they are happy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● They join the Women’s Union, Farmer Assoc. They join the group of tontine (revolving saving money) to cover expenses – it is the way they save for buying a new motorbike or paying the debt of building the house. Each group has 10-12 members. Men join male groups and the women have female groups. They join the group and contribute 500 or 1 million VND per month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● They can find work for pay easily, such as carrying eucalyptus which is available for whole year around, only work on cassava is seasonal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● They eat 3 meals a day. Some families may have rice or instant noodles for breakfast. They mostly do paid work so in the morning they may eat at the food stall so they can go to work early: eating porridge, bread, sticky rice...</td>
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<tr>
<td>● If a daughter gets married then she may receive 1 or 2 pieces of gold or a cow from her parents. If a son gets married, their parents try build a house for him [so the new wed couple can live separately from parent’s house].</td>
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</table>

- Their meals have sufficient food: meat, fish, crab, shrimp, beef ... Families who are close to poverty never have enough money to buy beef.
- They support their children to study at university, college level or vocational school, even going to study abroad. In some families, children after graduation can find jobs and live and work out of the village.
- They are good at socializing and have good relationships with others villagers. Here everyone knows each other.
- They travel for sightseeing more frequently than people at the lower steps: they go to Nha Trang, to Hanoi, to Bana Hill too.
- They can afford to buy tonics, traditional medicine. Those working for the government are tidier, have time to take care of their body.
- Their clothes are better, with luxury jewellery. The children dress in a fashionable way.
- They support their children to study at university, college level or vocational school, even going to study abroad. In some families, children after graduation can find jobs and live and work out of the village.
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<td>2</td>
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<td>poor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family has only old aged, disabled persons; or their children often get sick.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have little land or no land for production, even no land to build a pigsty to raise pigs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do paid work (carrying eucalyptus cuttings, making holes for cassava, planting rice for others. Some collect fire wood, making coal to sell using the cart or bicycle for transportation. They do heavy and manual work such as carrying cement packs).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>They are not very hard-working.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Children have a primary level of education. Family can only afford their children’s study until grade 9.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They cannot provide money for the children to buy lunch at school.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They do not have much food to eat. The quality of the food is poor. Nowadays, people do not have to eat rice mixed with other roots [cassava, sweet potatoes], people of poor families still eat rice, but they just have less food than the rich.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They receive government subsidiest for electricity, medical insurance. They cannot afford tonics.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are given loans with a low interest rate from the bank to invest in production. Sometimes they have to borrow money at high interest.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men usually drink although the family is poor.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have no machines to use in work.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have a TV too but it was given to them by someone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They do not travel, they just visit neighbours in the village. If they do not work they are hanging around a lot, if they are hard-working how can they be poor?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They do not feel low self-esteem, they communicate with others, talk to other people normally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Their children get married at an early age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is plenty of land, but people do not know how to exploit the land, no knowledge on how to plant for a good harvest, just planting crops with poor outputs. Planting cassava, eucalyptus but they do not know where to sell products and people farm on limited land areas, only 1-2 sào.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The market is far. In the morning people walk to the market to buy some cassava cuttings or to sell cassava, walking from 2 am until 6 am to get to the market. Most the food comes from the home garden. People go to the market every 10 days, mostly buying fish sauce or salt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the want to borrow money, they do not know where to borrow.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People mostly have a low education level or are even illiterate. If the house is close to a school then it is better, if the house is in far from the school then the children are even illiterate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have many children, some families even have 9 or 10 kids.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is only one bed in the house for sleeping, they do not have any other furniture. The house is made from thatch and soil.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ploughing manually by hand. No cow.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Going to the market is the furthest distance they travel. They use oil lamps. No electricity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using stream water, at that time there is no well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The husband often hits his wife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The family raise some chickens for food subsistence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat mixed rice with cassava, bobo [a kind of wheat]. They have only one meal in a day but there is no rice to eat, mostly sweet potatoes or cassava.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough clothing for children. The kids at 4-5 years old even wear a shirt without trousers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is plenty of land, but people do not know how to exploit the land, no knowledge on how to plant for a good harvest, just planting crops with poor outputs. Planting cassava, eucalyptus but they do not know where to sell products and people farm on limited land areas, only 1-2 sào.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not enough clothing for children. The kids at 4-5 years old even wear a shirt without trousers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does not exist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LADDER OF LIFE

### POOR MENS GROUP IN QUANG THACH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>Rich</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>#HH 2005</th>
<th>#HH 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5    | • They often are government officials who have a regular salary. When they retire, they have pension. Their income is high and stable.  
• They have a lot of land. They have working labour; hence they have enough to open small services such as truck transportation, carpentry work.  
• They have a nice big house with expensive furniture.  
• They have many expensive assets such as cars, motorbikes (scooter values 40-50 million VND), a nice big fridge and a nice big television.  
• They have a higher education level. They can afford for their children go to college or university. Their children have a high level of education.  
• There are more production machines and facilities: ploughing machine, grinding machine and electricity generator.  
• They wear beautiful clothes which are on trend.  
• They often travel to Tet or on other holidays. They can hire a car to travel.  
• They have wider social relationships. They are people who are determined and have the will to be rich.  
• Rich households also participate in technology training courses. They are capable of applying technology to production. In addition, they can go outside of the village for learning and visit places with good production models.  
• Their diets have better food. They eat abstemiously and have more nutrition in their diets. They have 3 meals per day. They can go to restaurants to eat. They can buy what they like to eat. They don’t have to worry about food. In their fridge, food is always available. In addition to rice, meat and fish they can drink milk and eat fruit. | Did not exist | 1 |
| 4    | They have a nicer and more secure house, they have a permanent house.  
In their house, there is modern furniture and equipment such as: TV, fridge, motorbike, sofa, electric bicycle for their children to go to school.  
They can afford for their children to go to college or university.  
They have more land.  
Their children are better off than poorer peoples. Their children have an electric bicycle, money for breakfast, more nice clothes, a watch and mobile phone.  
Rich and fairly rich households have savings.  
They have more social relationships. They know how to do business, they know how to access capital to invest for production.  
They have a larger land area than poor households and nearly poor households; hence they have more opportunities to invest.  
They know how to manage their work.  
They buy machines for production: sawing machines, weeding machines, banana trunk slicing machines. Poor households or nearly poor households use knives to cut weeds and they are paid 180.00 –200.000 VND/day. But fair households buy machines, they are paid 400.000–500.000 VND/day for cutting weed. They have capital so they can open a business such as a groceries shop.  
They have money to hire more labours.  
These households mainly do business, they have the ability to study or travel.  
They have 3 meals per day. Their meals have enough nutrition and many fresh foods. | 1 | 5 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They eat good food and wear beautiful clothes. Compared to a rich household, a fair household has about 70 to 80% of the former’s assets.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>They have more food and dishes in their diets. They have preserved food in the fridge. They have more fresh food. In times of scarcity, they don’t have to worry about food because they have enough food. They have money, and they can hire more labours or they provide services to have more income.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3 - average

- When planting or breeding any variety, people above the poverty line learn from each other. They can find successful people to learn from and they will apply what they learn in their own households. In addition, they can visit places with new and good models, apply technology to production more than poor households.
- They have more land to cultivate. They have more land than the poorest.
- Their houses are still temporary ones, but they are better. In their houses, they have coloured TVs, cheap TVs and old motorbikes. They can buy some furniture such as a fridge, TV, motorbike, but most of them are second hand. Rich people buy new furniture and they sell their old furniture to these people.
- They have more production equipment such as a hoe, harrow, rake, etc.
- They have a more stable income than poor households.
- In addition to household work, they also do hard work such as working on a eucalyptus farm or harvesting cassava. But they have more work to do than poor people.
- Their diets are better than those of poor people, but are still not stable. Some meals have good dishes, some not. They have more food than poor people. If somebody hires them, they will have good meals on that day. If not, their meals will be worse.
- They have more clothes than the poorest people. For example, rich people can buy a 500,000–700,000 VND clothes set, these people can buy a 150,000 VND clothes set. Rich people have many clothes; people in this step have fewer.
- They still don’t have enough production equipment. They have a hoe, harrow but they haven’t had a cow yet.
- They also invest for their children to go to school, but not to as high a level as rich households. Their children often finish high school. Many households on this step can’t afford for their children to go to colleges or universities. Their children will stay at home and go to work.
- They don’t have enough money for travelling. They don’t have many social relationships.
- They invest in production more than poor households. They also invest in fertilizer and taking care of crops more than poor households, but not as much as rich ones.
- People on the step above the poverty line can participate in technology training courses. In one year, there are many training courses on many different topics organized by organizations such as the Women Union, Farmers Assoc., etc. Hence, poor people and those over the poverty line people can take part in these training courses.
- People also have knowledge. They also participate in technical training courses but they cannot apply them to production because they lack machines and equipment for production. They have only little capital, little equipment and they seldom go outside for learning.
- They have 3 meals per day. They just have enough food to eat but have more food than poor households. For example, poor households can eat meat once per 10 days, these households can eat meat once per 6–7 days.
- They don’t have savings. In times of food scarcity, they also do hard work to earn more money for their wives and children.
- They are stronger; they work more so their income is better than poor households.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>#HH 2005</th>
<th>#HH 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY POVERTY LINE (step 2 to step 3)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
People under the poverty line don’t have the ability to travel and learn from other people. Poor households contain mainly elderly or weak people, they don’t have capital, they can’t go out to learn from other people.

- They don’t have any or have little land area.
- They don’t have a regular income. They just do hard work.
- Children can’t go to school. They have to borrow money to let their children go to school. They can’t afford daily living expenses.
- They live in temporary houses with a small area which bad smelling. The house gates are not safe. For example, a rich house owner can spend 15-20 million to build a gate, but a poor house owner can only spend 500.000-700.000VND or 1 million VND for a gate.
- They do not have good health for working. Their households lack labourers.
- They have a low level of education. They don’t know how to apply technology to production.
- Households have handicapped people or elderly people over the usual working age.
- They have little or low value property. For example, rich households have an expensive bicycle, motorbike, poor households don’t have bikes or have old and cheap bikes. Rich households have beautiful and trendy beds; poor households only have normal beds.
- They have simple diets with not much food. Food is not always available at every meal. Their meals only have rice, vegetables, there are not many dishes. Sometimes, they have to eat instant noodles. Some households don’t eat breakfast; they just eat 2 meals per day.
- Income per month is very low. For example, Mr. Canh is very weak. He can’t do anything. His allowance is 300.000 VND/month, he does some small but hard work. His total income is about 600.000VND per month. The government have a program to support poor households to take out a loan. But people who are over 60 can’t take out this loan because they are over the working age.
- They have fewer social relationships. Poor households don’t have enough money to go out. They don’t have money for travelling for sight-seeing.
- Their children only go to school and come back home to eat. They don’t have money for their children to have breakfast outside.
- They often do hard work of whatever type people ask them to do. It is not regular. If nobody hires them, they will stay at home and relax because they don’t have a lot of land.
- They lack work equipment. Some people have a hoe but they don’t have a harrow or vice versa. When they need it, they have to borrow equipment from others.
- They don’t have money to invest in production; hence their productivity is relatively low.
- They have to borrow money and they are not capable of paying their debts. In the scarce season, they don’t have enough food; they will take food from shops in the hamlet and they will pay later.
- Poor households still have agricultural knowledge, such as planting peppers, bananas. They have gained this knowledge by participating in projects and training courses. Both rich and poor people participate in training courses. In terms of production equipment, they just have a hoe, harrow, rake, knife, cart, etc. They don’t have any machines.
- Governments pay attention to poor households, they pave the way for them to take part in training courses but after the training courses, they don’t have the resources to apply what they have learned. Poor households today are very different from poor households 10 years ago. They are provided with knowledge but they lack the health to work, they don’t have production equipment, they don’t have capital, so they can’t apply knowledge to their production practice.
- They have 3 meals. They can eat as much rice as they want but they eat it with fish sauce or anything which they have in the garden like vegetables, papaya. They can only eat meat once per 10 days. They go to market once per 10 days. If there is a wedding party or anniversary feast of a funeral, they would eat meat as much as they want.
- In times of food scarcity, men often do hard work. They do whatever people hire them to do to gain more income. Rich people invest money in eucalyptus farms, poor people work for them to earn income.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>#HH 2005</th>
<th>#HH 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor 10 years ago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|      | • They didn’t have secondary occupation, they just stayed at home  
|      |     • They just had a shieling, no permanent house.  
|      |     • They could starve. They had to eat rice mixed with sweet potato, cassava. They didn’t have enough rice to eat every day.  
|      |     • They didn’t have enough clothes, they had to wear worn-out clothes. They didn’t have enough warm clothes in winter.  
|      |     • They lacked production equipment, they had to borrow everything.  
|      |     • They didn’t know how to produce and do business. Perhaps they had more land than now, but they didn’t know how to cultivate it efficiently, they didn’t know to apply technology to production.  
|      |     • They didn’t have vehicles.  
|      |     • They didn’t have valuable furniture in their houses, no TV or radio. | 8         | Does not exist |
### Ladder of Life

**Poor Women Group in Xuan My**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 - Rich</td>
<td>Did not exist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They have ample financial resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They are self-confident.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They have 4-5 acres of farm land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They live in solid/permanent houses of 100 m², having all household conveniences such as tables and chairs, beds, wardrobes, TVs, motorbikes, washing machines, air conditioners, fridges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They work as construction contractors. They provide construction formwork rental services, work as carpenters, they have a farm to raise chicken or ducks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They grow a lot of peanuts, sweet potatoes and cassava.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They have experience of which plants to grow and which animals to raise to gain profit; they have more capital so they invest more. They are confident enough to take out loans for business, so they have a lot of experience. They own machines and rent out machines to other farmers. They don’t lend money at excessive interest rates; people here work in agriculture, nobody lends money at high interest rates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They have trucks to carry goods/products.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They own shops – they have grocery shops, gasoline shops or motorbike repair shops.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Work as cassava collectors/traders and/or they purchase goods to sell to the villagers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They work abroad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Their children complete the 12th grade; some go to university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They also often travel to other provinces such as Hanoi, Haiphong, or to other countries such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They work a lot; they are hard working. They have experience in business. They know when the right season is. They go out in society a lot so they can learn; they can learn from experience; they pass on their experience to us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They know how to do calculations in business; if they see something that brings a higher income, they will do it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They have cows and buffaloes, ploughing machines, harrowing machines, grinding machines, rice hulling machines, rice harvesting machines. They have 3 cows or more. Some have 8 cows.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They treat the neighbours on equal terms. They often help others. When someone is in difficulty and asks for help, they also give in-kind and financial support. They are friendly with everyone; they are not selfish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They have tap water, or they buy water filtration machines.</td>
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<td>- They use gas for cooking or electric cookers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They eat better than poor households, but they eat normal food, not luxurious food. They have 3 meals with enough nutrients: rice, “pho,” “bun” (types of rice noodles); they eat tasty foods, tasty meat and fish; while poor households eat smaller fish they eat big fish, beef and pork, fresher and tastier food (fresh and clean vegetables, home-grown food, chicken). They buy ozone detox machines (for vegetable &amp; fruit washing).</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They can afford to eat luxuriously, they have everything to eat: beef, big fish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 - Better-off</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Solid/permanent house, having conveniences such as TV, fridge, table and chairs, motorbike, 3 or more cows, a lot of chickens and ducks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They have a lot of land; 2-3 acres. They know how to make use of the land. They rent/borrow other people’s land and pay the land owner [10% of profit?].</td>
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<tr>
<td>- They work as farmers, or traders, sell goods; most work as masons, and sell food (pork, chicken) at the commune market.</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEP</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>They also grow rice, peanuts, sweet potatoes, cassava, fruit trees and plant varieties brought here by the projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They try other ways to gain a higher income, such as raising hybrid cows, growing new varieties of rice, peanuts, sweet potatoes. They also apply science and technology. They learn from rich people about where to buy new varieties. They are brave enough to try new varieties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have manual ploughs and harrows. They own some machines, or they can afford to rent agricultural machines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have capital from their own savings; some people take loans from the VBSP. They take loans for job creation to invest in buying cows and calves and new varieties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Their children have a proper education; the parents find jobs for their children. They find jobs in companies for their children, or take loans to send their children abroad to work/study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have many connections [in the community]. They treat their neighbours on equal terms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They grow their own vegetables, chickens, pigs (food is parboiled only; they don’t have a detox machine). They have 3 meals a day.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**COMMUNITY POVERTY LINE (step 2 to step 3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 - close poor level</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are near-poor households. Their financial situation is a bit better, but they lack manpower; they are old and senile. They have sickly family member(s); they don’t have too many children.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>They have little land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have manual ploughs and harrows; they have cows; single-story houses, but the houses are a bit better than those of poor households.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have started applying new technologies. But still they rarely apply science and technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have a TV, electric rice cooker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Their children go to school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Households with a lot of children are usually those with either only daughters or only sons. For example, if they’ve got 3 daughters, they want to try to have a son.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little capital. Few animals (2 cows).</td>
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<tr>
<td>They use rice husks, peanut cases and other agricultural burning materials as fuel. They use water from drilled wells.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have 2 meals a day. They eat pork, small fish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They don’t have enough food to eat for 2-3 months [a year].</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEP</td>
<td>#HH 2005</td>
<td>#HH 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>poor</td>
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</table>

- They have a difficult financial situation;
- They live in single-story houses, temporary houses. They don’t have any [valuable] assets; no nice table or chairs, no motorbike, no gas cooker, no electric rice cooker.
- Family member(s) may be sickly or have serious illness.
- Have many children.
- They are old people.
- Some people can’t have children but due to sickness they spend a lot of money for medicine and treatment, so they become poor.
- They often “buy now and pay later.” They receive financial support from the government [beneficiaries of the social protection program].
- They raise only a few animals.
- Some households have children who drop out after secondary school to work for pay.
- They work for pay on coffee or rubber plantations; working far from home. Some people go to Hanoi to work as car mechanics.
- They are shyer than other people; they lack self-confidence. They rarely hang out with rich/better-off people.
- They are friendly with everyone. They still participate adequately in the WU, Farmers’ Association and other organizations; they receive support from the organizations on holidays.
- They don’t dare to take loans.
- Their crops are bad; they can’t invest much, so their yield is low.
- They rarely apply science and technology or new varieties/breeds.
- They don’t have much agricultural knowledge; they only copy the people around them; they are not very creative. They still attend training.
- Many people have a lot of land, but don’t have enough health to work, or don’t have enough manpower.
- They work as hired labourers; they work on farms; they rarely raise animals, or do it only on a small scale: 1 cow. They grow rice, peanuts, sweet potatoes and cassava, but only a little.
- They have ploughs and harrows, but manual ones; they have only 1 cow. They have ox-carts, ploughs and harrows. Their knowledge is a little bit better than used to be the case.
- They use cassava plants and peanut cases as burning materials.
- They use water from dug wells.
- Lack rice, lack money for food. They don’t have enough to eat for 6 months a year.
- They do not have fresh food to eat; they eat home-grown vegetables.
- They have 2 meals a day: lunch and dinner. In the morning, if they have to work hard, they eat instant noodles; if they only do light work, they don’t eat breakfast.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Does not exist</th>
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</thead>
</table>

- They don’t have cows or buffaloes; no plough or harrow.
- Houses with a thatched roof and walls made of clay and straw.
- They have poor health; they lack manpower so they can’t grow food for animals.
- Have many children; the children didn’t have a proper education because the parents don’t have money to pay for their schooling.
- The children don’t have enough clothes to wear; they have to ask for clothes from other people; they don’t have warm clothes in the cold weather.
- They grow rice, sweet potatoes and peanuts, but the productivity is poor because they don’t have technology, or money to invest.
- Their knowledge is poor. They don’t have access to scientific knowledge.
- The new varieties/breeds are not available to them, so their productivity is poor.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>#HH 2005</th>
<th>#HH 2015</th>
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</table>
| • They don’t have many relationships with the neighbours or society, because they are poor and in difficult economic situations, so they don’t want to go anywhere; they don’t want to have relationships; they don’t have anywhere to borrow money from.  
• There are no rich households from whom they could borrow money.  
• Women’s Union is already available and loans are also provided, but these people are not confident enough to take a loan; they don’t dare to venture.  
• They have only carrying poles, hoes, “xe tho” (pack-bikes).  
• Dig sweet potatoes and catching snails and crabs to eat. In general, they have to find food themselves. They borrow from the others and work for other people. Have 2 meals a day: one meal with rice and one meal with vegetables and sweet potatoes. Rice is not enough, they have to eat rice mixed [with cassava/sweet potatoes]. |
### LADDER OF LIFE

#### POOR MENS GROUP IN XUAN MY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>5 - Better-off</th>
<th>4 - Average</th>
<th>3 - close poor level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To have a nice house, a multi-storey house or a one-storey house but big, a large, beautiful and carefully painted house.</td>
<td>- They have a lot of land for production</td>
<td>- Their houses are bigger than the poorest but are old, temporary flat roofed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- They have a lot of land for cultivation and production.</td>
<td>- Big, large and nice house. They buy home appliances and furniture: motorbikes, TVs and fridges. Expensive TVs, good scooters (about or over 20 million dong/scooter).</td>
<td>- They have some assets in house: TV, motorbike, fridge (they are normally cheap or old or given by someone).</td>
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<td>- They are normally highly-educated, qualified, active and creative people. They are classy, clean and tidy in dressing.</td>
<td>- They can buy many machines for agricultural production such as rice cutters, rice threshers, cassava slicers, water pumps ...</td>
<td>- They wear cleaner and tidier clothes. They have more clothes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- In their family, there are family members who work abroad and send money back home.</td>
<td>- They have other family members who work abroad.</td>
<td>- They normally have many children; they have to spend a lot to cover for their children’s education and living costs that makes it difficult for them to improve their financial situation.</td>
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<td>- They are in good health, rarely sick. When they are sick, they have enough money for treatment.</td>
<td>- These average households afford for their children to study at university or college and the study costs sometimes make the economy of the family weaker.</td>
<td>- In the family there may be very sick or disabled people that leads to a lack of labour.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- In their house, they have more luxurious, expensive and convenient home appliances and furniture: large modern televisions, washing machines, air conditioners, fridges, expensive motorbikes, cars, etc.</td>
<td>- These people have money to be able to visit and study outside of the village, they then apply science technology in their production.</td>
<td>- They sometimes have the chance to go out of the village for visiting, studying and travelling.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Their children are well educated and normally graduate from college, university. After finishing education, they get stable and successful jobs and work for government agencies.</td>
<td>- They are confident in communicating with outsiders.</td>
<td>- In the family, they may buy a cow for production but these cows are small, week and are bought at low cost.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- They have a lot of capital, they can afford to invest in production more than others. They have money, they are brave in investing, they apply new technology to production then get higher productivity.</td>
<td>- They are sensitive to the market, they usually apply new technology to production to get a better effect.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- They are sensitive to the market, they usually apply new technology to production to get a better effect.</td>
<td>- They often go out of the village to visit and study new technologies/techniques.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Better-off families also eat 3 times/day, there is more meat and fish in the meal. Moreover, they have sugar, milk, candies, cookies and fruits for extra food. They change dishes more often.</td>
<td>- In their houses, there are many machines to support production: cutting machines, cassava slicing machines, harvesting machines, etc.</td>
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<td>#HH 2005</td>
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<td>#HH 2015</td>
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<td>STEP</td>
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<td>Poorer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In the family, they have money to buy some simple machines used in agriculture: potato slicing machines, water pumping machines, rice cutters, rice harvesters, cassava slicers, etc.</td>
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<td>Their meals have reasonable nutrition. Those over the poverty line eat 3 times/day, they have more dishes in a meal, they have more meat and fish and they more frequently change dishes.</td>
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<td>COMMUNITY POVERTY LINE (step 2 to step 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>They normally have many members and share a house. Their houses are old and small, temporary flat roofed houses.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In their houses, there are no or very few valuable assets: old black and white TV, old and cheap made-in-China motorbike.</td>
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<td>They have little land for cultivation and production.</td>
<td>They have little land for cultivation and production.</td>
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<td>They do not complete their education, drop out of school early.</td>
<td>They do not complete their education, drop out of school early.</td>
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<td>The poorest households in the village are normally those of the elder people who have no one to take care of and/or support them. Single member households often lack labour due to illness, or they are too old to work.</td>
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<td>They have no job or there is a lack of jobs.</td>
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<td>Those below poverty line normally have very few or no agricultural tools, if they do, they have just simple tools such as a hoe, knife, sickle, plow, harrow…They rarely go out of the village to exchange information and study so they do not know how to apply advances of science and technology in production. They do not have mechanized tools.</td>
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<td>They have very few chances for going out of the village to learn from society, or for exchanging information, studying and travelling.</td>
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<td>Insufficient clothes for wearing (wear 1–2 pieces of clothing for the whole week).</td>
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<td>Their meal is normally having insufficient nutrition. They have little food and it is simple (with no variety).</td>
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<td>There are 1–2 dishes, less meat or fish but mainly vegetables. They normally go to market once a week. Meat and fish are cooked with much salt in order to preserve them for a longer time. It is rare for them to change dishes, insufficient nutrition in their meals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poorer</td>
<td>They lived in small, mud-walled cottages and dilapidated houses.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There are no valuable assets in the house.</td>
<td>There are no valuable assets in the house.</td>
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<td>They have no extra work to increase their income except farming.</td>
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<td>They ware old patched clothes.</td>
<td>They ware old patched clothes.</td>
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<td>There are seriously ill and disabled people in the home and not enough labour for production.</td>
<td>There are seriously ill and disabled people in the home and not enough labour for production.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There are no or very limited agricultural tools for production, if needed, they have to borrow from others.</td>
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<td>They have no chances to go away from the village for visiting, studying or sightseeing.</td>
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<td>They do not have enough food and they have to borrow money to buy food, or borrow rice from others; they eat rice mixed with maize, sweet potato, cassava.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Does not exist