BACKGROUND

Famous for old Shan Tuyet tea trees, Sung village is located in Cao Son commune – one of the poorest communes in Da Bac district, Hoa Binh province. Currently, Sung village has 79 households, with 380 people (185 women). Poor households account for 22.7 percent while near-poor households for 57.3 percent. All village residents are Dao ethnic people whose livelihood depends mainly on agriculture and forestry.

The model “Cooperation in management of Da river protection forest and development of Shan Tuyet tea in Sung village” was piloted from 2019 to 2022, with financial support from Mekong Regional Land Governance.

OBJECTIVE

The project aims to enhance management of the Da River protection forest and to improve the local livelihoods.

Expected outcomes:

- Cooperation mechanism/plan of forest protection and management between Da River Protection Forest Management Board, local authorities and communities is smoothly implemented.
- Communities benefit from the cooperation mechanism/plan, and the value chain of long-standing Shan Tuyet tea is efficiently developed.
- The model’s success is capitalized and replicated in other locations.
ACHIEVEMENTS

Securing land tenure for the community

Given the successful mechanism of forest co-management, Sung villagers can take part in protecting and benifiting from 360 hectares of protection forest, which will be taken back due to unefficient use.

Livelihood improved

The Shan Tuyet tea production and trading cooperative was set up with 15 household members. They harvested in 2021 three tea crops and produced 270kg of dried tea (including 70kg of old tea and 200kg of grade 1 tea)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tea sales turn-over</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Profit</th>
<th>Household member profit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>112,000,000 VND (about US $4,800)</td>
<td>76,940,000 VND (about US $3,300)</td>
<td>35,060,000 VND (about US $1,500)</td>
<td>2,300,000 VND (about US $100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, household members got 3,000,000 VND (about US $129) from sales of selling fresh tea buds to the cooperative and some allowances for processing tea. In total, the average income of cooperative members are 6,000,000 VND (about US $258).

Capacity Building

Further to the training course on forest management skills, together with the forest protection and management team, representatives from Sung village developed a forest protection and management plan in August 2021. They became more confident to express their opinion, made recommendations to the Da River Management Board on forest co-management and protection.

In the meantime, Shan Tuyet cooperative members nominated the cooperative leader, developed a business plan (both action and financial plan) and promoted marketing to generate their products.
Applying modern techniques:

Modern techniques of fertilization, care to tea trees and tea collection were introduced to and applied by cooperative members. These techniques were also shared to other households to increase the quality of tea products.

Improving marketing:

Previously, tea products were mainly sold to regular clients and tourists. Now the market has covered restaurants, resorts, and government agencies. The cooperative also established a network of sales and explored the online trading through Zalo/Facebook channel. Advertising is also taken into priority with promotional clips and stories.

The cooperative managed to create their own logo, labels, traceability systems (QR Codes) and national Barcode. The products also got the quality control certification issued by government agencies.

People’s participation in forest management and protection:

360 hectares of protection forest along Da River were allocated to Sung villagers for co-management and protection.

Patrols were carried out once a month by forest protection groups. In order to save time and manpower, group members integrated patrols with tea picking or animal husbandry. Though forest violations are not detected, they all know how to stop incidents and report immediately to responsible agencies (rangers, fire department).

Good agroforestry practices:

In addition to nearly 50 hectares of old Shan Tuyet tea trees, villagers have tried to further plant the young ones in the forest land. Since Shan Tuyet tea are shade tolerant trees and fed with organic fertilizer, safe aforestation was enhanced.
LESSON LEARNED

Community and management of forests/resources:
The community should be involved in the demarcation of community, production, and protection forests which helped to reduce encroachment on forests and forest land. Capacity building and awareness raising on natural resources management for the community must be a top priority.

Self-governing community:
Shan Tuyet tea cooperative was set up based on villagers’ expectations. Households discussed and worked to improve the tea products. Vulnerable people such as women and poor residents should be empowered to participate into collective works (from planning, producing to patrolling). Local communities should involve in demarcation of community, production, and protection forests which helped to reduce encroachment on forests and forest land.

Involvement of local authorities:
Local authorities should play a vital role in connecting multi-stakeholders and participating in establishment and implementation of the co-management model.

Attention to indigenous knowledge:
Sung villagers have known tea processing and production for generations. Inheriting and drawing lessons from processing smoked tea - a popular traditional tea in the 90s of the 20th century, Sung village residents gradually improved the production process, making Shan Tuyet tea grown in mountain Bieu an original product of Hoa Binh province.

Suitable communications:
Communication products (posters, handbooks, leaflets,...) should be simple, easy to understand and meet the people’s needs. Social and cultural background of the local people should be carefully taken into consideration. Stories and clips need reflecting the daily life of the community as well as their opinions.

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