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**Agrarian Transformations in Vietnam:  
Land Reform, Markets and Poverty**

STEFFANIE SCOTT

Department of Geography, University of Waterloo, Canada

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# Agrarian Transformations in Vietnam: Land Reform, Markets, and Poverty

Steffanie Scott<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Redistribution of agricultural land has been the main element behind Vietnam's impressive record of poverty reduction since the early 1990s. Around the world, the past 15-20 years have witnessed unprecedented transitions from planned economies and collectivized agriculture to market economies and household-based farming. In dozens of developing countries, land policies have shifted towards an individualization and privatization of agricultural lands. Such policy reforms have emphasized a well-functioning institution of property rights, including secure land rights through titling and a land market, designed to provide incentives for investment and productivity gains (Alchain and Demsetz 1973; North 1990). Such 'productivist' policies are being implemented by international financial institutions and development agencies in countries that are moving away from collectivized agriculture (such as China, and former Soviet bloc countries). They are also found in countries with significant communal property regimes (such as in Mexico's *ejido* system, and within more informal systems of communal land tenure in many parts of Africa and India). The productivist model differs from a distributive model, which was more typical of land reforms in the 1960s and 70s, of re-allocating land to the poor upon expropriation or acquisition from large landowners.

Like a number of other developing and transitional socialist countries, Vietnam is experiencing a privatization and individualization of rights to agricultural land. No longer do agricultural collectives determine what to grow and who will work where. Through a series of far-reaching reforms in land policy in the 1980s and 90s, farming households were allocated long-term land use leases and granted rights to transfer, exchange, rent, mortgage and inherit agricultural land. Land laws have been central to the overall policy reforms in Vietnam's *doi moi* (renovation) process. In contrast to other countries which are either dismantling a system of collectivized production or formalizing a system of customary tenure, Vietnam has the challenge of addressing *both*. Its lowlands and rice production were collectivized, but many upland and ethnic minority areas resisted this campaign. Allocating lands in the latter contexts have led to pressures of enclosure and displacement of peoples from lands traditionally used for grazing, foraging, or cultivating.

Given the high proportion of the population that continues to reside in rural areas, agricultural land is a vital asset in the livelihoods of millions of Vietnamese farmers. Vietnam's agricultural land area of 7.4 million hectares comprises only 22 percent of the country's surface area, with rice cultivation occupying over half this area. The population density averages 214 persons per square kilometre and the average area of cultivated land

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<sup>1</sup> Dept of Geography, University of Waterloo, Canada. Draft of paper presented at the 'Land, Poverty, Social Justice and Development' Conference, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands, 12-14 January 2006.

per capita is just 0.11 hectares, comparable to that of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and one-third the size of China or Thailand (ADB 1997). Vietnam's level of urbanization continues to be among the lowest in Asia, at less than 30 percent of its 80 million inhabitants, though this figure is rising rapidly. As large cities are experiencing disproportionately faster economic growth, the rural-urban income gap is growing fast. Poverty continues to be a predominantly rural phenomenon in Vietnam, at approximately 45 percent of the rural population, compared to just nine percent in urban areas (see Table 1).

This paper traces the implications of key agrarian transformations—particularly the reforms in land policy and emerging land relations—for livelihood security and vulnerability. Part of a broader societal transformation and globalization of economies, these new development trajectories include commercialization of farmers' produce, contract farming, cooperative sector reform, rising landlessness and tenant farmers, and the end of exclusive dependence on land for earning a living. The economic and property rights reforms in Vietnam have stimulated a diversification of rural income sources and the beginnings of an agricultural land market. These fundamental shifts in the nature of rural and peasant livelihoods and production relations are resulting in greater economic opportunities, but also marginalization and vulnerability for some regions and some rural residents.

Given the high population-to-land ratio in Vietnam, appropriate land management is a high priority for economic development (Lan 2001). Rural policy reforms have faced inherent tensions in attempting to balance economic objectives with social and regional equity. These tensions have been encountered in a range of policies, linked to land use changes, rezoning, compensation for land acquisition, land policy and property rights reforms, land and resource conflicts, land tenure, equity issues and land concentration, land markets and land prices, land leasing, contract farming, collateral, cooperatives, common property resources, gender, ethnic minorities, and land inheritance.

This paper is organized as follows. The first section provides an overview of land distribution and land relations over recent centuries in Vietnam, demonstrating the various influences on land concentration and attempts to address inequalities in land tenure up to the period of collectivization in the 1950s in northern Vietnam and following reunification in 1975 in the southern part of the country. The second section explains the reforms associated with decollectivization through the 1980s and 90s, in particular the allocation of land to households and introduction of a market for land rights. The following section outlines the trends in exercising these rights in rural areas. As reiterated in various parts of this paper, Vietnam is a country with significant regional differentiation. The fourth section touches on the experience of land allocation in upland and ethnic minority areas in relation to customary land. The trends in social and spatial differentiation in landholdings are the theme of the fifth section. The final section before the conclusion highlights the changes in farmer cooperation through the shift from state-led agricultural collectives to (voluntary) service cooperatives through Vietnam's decollectivization experience. This section also sums up the key implications of this shift for livelihood vulnerability among small farmers.



## Historical overview of land relations in Vietnam

Over the centuries, land distribution in Vietnam has been far from equal and attempts to reform the land tenure system have wavered. As early as 1397 evidence can be found of efforts to ensure equity and prevent the concentration of landholdings. During the Tran dynasty, Le Quy Ly prohibited the holding of more than ten *mau* of rice lands to anyone except those of royal blood (Dao 1993). Following the disruptions of the Ming Chinese invasion (1407-1427), the land tenure system became very unequal. In response, emperor Le Thai To (1428-1433) adopted an 'equal field' system (*quan dien*), to ensure some land was distributed to all. Originating in China, this system, also known as a 'personal share land' system (*khau phan dien*), stipulated that those of the same rank and social status were to receive equal amounts of land. Personal share land was to be redistributed on an egalitarian basis every four years (Long 1973: 5-6). Beginning in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, Le Thanh Tong promoted the 'southward expansion' (*nam tien*) to take over new lands in central and southern Vietnam following a series of military conquests. Yet, even with this spout to release the steam of population concentration in the Red River Delta, land accumulation continued in the centuries following this initiative, and central authorities' enforcement of land reform laws at the village level was rather weak.

In 1708, Vinh Thinh pronounced restrictions on large rice landholdings. Later in the century, thousands of northern villages were abandoned due to famines, floods, wars, high taxes, and expropriations by landowners. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Tay Son brothers left an inconclusive legacy of land tenure reforms. Some argue that latifundias were done away with while others suggest the system remained unchanged. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Emperor Gia Long reinstated the Le land system and later eliminated lands concentrated in the hands of high officials, princes, and nobles. In the reign of Emperor Minh Mang many unused private lands were reverted to communal lands (Dao 1993).

Besides the 'personal share land' that was redistributed every four years in accordance with family size and land area, land concentration was further constrained by a system of communal landholdings. Communal or public lands (*cong dien*) have a long tradition in Vietnam, sustained by the worship of tutelary deities and rituals in each village's communal meeting place, known as a *dinh*. The *dinh* was an essential part of every village or commune in the Red River Delta (but was less common in other parts of the country). Although there was significant variation in the types of communal lands in each village and through different historical periods, there were roughly four categories of ricelands (Long 1973: 8):

*luong dien* (or 'salary land'), given to soldiers as part of their salaries; *tro suu dien* (or 'tax assistance land'), used to help the poor pay their taxes; *hoc dien* (or 'study land'), used for paying teachers and supplying students with education materials; and *co nhi* and *qua phu dien* ('orphans' and widows' land'), which was for helping orphans and widows.

While they were not subject to sale, communal lands could be rented for up to three years. The lands were managed by the village council of notables (*hoi dong tien chi*) and village chiefs (*xa truong*). These two groups also represented the village to the emperor in issues of taxes, labour obligations, and other matters.

The communal land structure has been criticized by political economists and Vietnamese policy makers for encouraging inefficient production and agricultural stagnation, thereby impeding modernization. High rents and debts were thought to

prohibit farmers from purchasing additional fertilizers for improving the fertility of their land (Dao 1993). Moreover, owing to the perceived insecurity of property rights (as per the evolutionary theory of land rights outlined in Chapter Three), communal lands further inhibited migration—as peasants feared they might forfeit their rights—and inhibited improvements in land—owing to fear of the land being repossessed by others, such as those dominant in the village (Vickerman 1986: 30). Vickerman noted a parallel in these two senses with problems in agricultural cooperatives in the post-revolutionary period. In this view, then, a permanent allocation of landholdings would offer greater prospects for efficient production for poorer and better-off farmers alike.

In 1875, the rates for land tax across the country were equalized to alleviate the burden for peasants in the northern region, which was particularly prone to natural hazards. Opinions vary as to the extent of culpability of the French colonial system for rural immiseration during the colonial period, but generally the French seem to have exacerbated an already existing process of polarization and growing landlessness (Duong 1966). In the 1860s and 1870s in Cochinchina (*Nam Bo*, the southern third of the country), French colonizers offered all communal and abandoned lands to French citizens and collaborators. But Dao (1993) noted that the French were less interested in ownership or management of lands *per se* and more in raising revenue to support their administration and military.

Henry (1932) calculated that, in Tonkin (*Bac Bo*, the northern third of Vietnam) by 1931-1932, 90 percent of landowners laboured on land smaller than five *mau*, an area that in aggregate comprised about 37 percent of the territory of Tonkin. Communal land comprised twenty-one percent of all land in Tonkin and 25 percent in Annam (*Trung Bo*, the central third of the country), and only three percent in Cochinchina. During the colonial period, some communal lands in northern Annam had disappeared, aggravating the unequal land tenure there. Nguyen Van Vinh (cited in Dao 1993: 90) estimated that in the same period, 53 percent of all families in Annam, and perhaps two-thirds of rural producers in Cochinchina were landless. According to Henry (1932), 2.5 percent of landowners controlled 45 percent of the agricultural land in Cochinchina, and 72 percent of the rural population controlled only 15 percent of the lands.

An early policy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was to issue an order to reduce land rents and cancel all debts for rents owed by tenants, although the implementation of this order met with difficulty. By 1949, a new system was developed to temporarily allocate rice land, with priority given to tenants of the same land. Between 1953 and 1955, a series of rent reduction and land reform campaigns took place in successive waves (Moise 1983). Poor peasants and labourers were the main beneficiaries of the land reform. Excesses of the 1953-1955 campaigns and purges were later acknowledged in the 'rectification of errors' in 1956, which led to the returning of appropriated property to some households that had mistakenly been classified as landlords or rich peasants.

Land reform in itself could not address the problems of high population density and low productivity that plagued northern Vietnam and underlay rural poverty. The prospects of developing economies of scale and increasing output made collectivization an appealing option for Communist leaders. These goals were sought more through agricultural collectives than state farms. Unlike in other socialist countries, state farms in Vietnam were never a central element of agricultural production. The majority of state

farms that did exist were located in upland plantation areas for tea and forestry enterprises. The state sector supplied only two percent of total agricultural output (Nguyen Xuan Lai 1967) and occupied only four percent of agricultural land.

Table 2 presents a summary of the successive stages of collectivization and the increasing scale in both the number of households and the number of hectares per collective at the national level. Although motivation for collectivization was high at the outset, by the late 1960s and into the 1970s it had waned considerably. This is explained in part by the end of the war in 1975, after which point people were no longer roused by pleas to support soldiers at the war front. Moreover, the costs and difficulties of monitoring each member's labour contributions (via the workpoint system) was a particular organizational disadvantage for large-scale collectives. Workpoints tended to be allocated on the basis of workdays rather than quality of labour.

An emerging body of research documents villagers' discontent with collectivization in Vietnam. Farmers north and south cite poor management as a key reason for the failure of collectives. Kerkvliet (1995) discussed five key problems with the system of collectivized agriculture: the lack of incentive to work diligently, the lack of upkeep of collective property, the stagnation or deterioration in living conditions, the administrative burdens, and the undermining of family production units.

### **Dismantling collectivized production: Vietnam's land policy reforms**

Whereas global and national land reform movements of a quarter century ago sought to provide stability and tenure security for farmers who feared eviction, today's land reforms have less of a social justice orientation. Radical land reform movements have lost a good deal of momentum over the past two decades. Following the ideas of Hernando de Soto (2000), set out in his book *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, recent land policies around the world have emphasized a market-assisted land reform model in which greater transparency in land market operations and lower entry costs are expected to help the poor gain maximum benefit from their land assets.

Unlike the land reform processes of restitution or distribution in shares that was common in some former Soviet republics (Macours and Swinnen 2002), Vietnam's land reform entailed physical distribution of farm land (or land use rights) on an equal per capita basis to rural households. The country's land policy reforms in the 1980s and 90s followed World Bank market-based prescriptions to facilitate land markets of formerly collectively managed lands and to enhance security of property rights through guaranteeing farmers' rights to exchange, transfer, lease, inherit and mortgage their long term land-use leases. Farmers accessed land first through an administrative allocation of formerly collective lands, and were then (as of 1993) able to exchange land through a market allocation to gain more land or consolidate their plots to farm more efficiently. In 2003, the Land Law was revised for the third time since its introduction in 1993. This simplified the land classification system and regulation of land usage, and facilitated the further development of the market for land-use rights, further commercializing subsistence farming. A summary of the reconfiguring of agricultural household status and functions through land allocation and property rights reforms is presented in Table 3.



By 2002, approximately 90 percent of agricultural land and 50 percent of forest land had been allocated with certificates issued, according to General Department of Land Administration figures (Bui Quoc Toan et al. 2004: 4). The national average farm size is 0.7 hectares across Vietnam, but just 0.3 in the Red River Delta, the most densely populated region (see Map 1). This constitutes an important constraint on production, and aggravates rural under-employment.

Slow allocation and certification of agricultural and forest lands has been a point of contention in the implementation of the new Land Law, potentially limiting people's confidence in land tenure and hampering the development of a land market. The granting of certificates has been held up for a number of reasons, including confusion over guidelines, lack of funding, inaccurate documents having to be reissued, and the lengthy process of doing accurate cadastral surveying, particularly in the north. In areas where the forest land allocation is not completed, some households planted trees on bare hills in the hope that it would be allocated to them as a result. Surveying, allocation and certification of forest land has been slower than that of agriculture due to a number of factors: lack of funds, deficiencies in the law, poor administrative capacity and poorly trained staff to process applications and map the complicated terrain. In the Central Highlands, delays in the issuing of land-use certificates increased the amount of unofficial land trading and led to deception and illegal occupation of land.

The egalitarian distribution of agricultural land was considered a necessity to avoid exacerbating rural unemployment and curb the influx of rural migrants to the cities. In an effort to make the allocations of agricultural land egalitarian, every household tended to receive pieces of land of different qualities, often ending up with many small plots. However, such fragmentation, while equitable, can impede mechanization and labour productivity and increase travel time between plots. In the northern midlands and mountainous region, the average number of plots per household was 11, although the survey reported a maximum of 42 scattered plots in some households, according to an Asian Development Bank survey. Plots were less fragmented in southern provinces, due to the larger-scale production and more even land quality compared to parts of the north as well to allocation being based more on a *de facto* restitution (ADB 1997: 25). To overcome the excessive fragmentation, the state and international agencies have been encouraging the amalgamation of plots, which has been slow process to implement. Ha Nam province in the Red River Delta reduced the maximum number of plots from seven to just two through consolidation (Thanh et al. 2005).

Paralleling the process of land consolidation (of numerous smaller plots by the same owner) has been a process of land accumulation (concentration into larger farm sizes by acquiring new plots), as some people sell their land off and move into non-farm employment or become wage labourers. This is discussed in more detail in a later section of this paper.

### **Exercising New Land Rights: Land market sales and rental**

Despite the legalization of land market transactions since the passing of the watershed Land Law in 1993, rural land markets have not developed as quickly or extensively as anticipated by some analysts. Even the rental market for agricultural land

is not well developed, and tends to be only based on short-term arrangements. Only about 5.1 percent of annual crop land in 1998 was rented (Ravallion and van de Walle 2003).

Differentiation in rural Vietnam is based less on land than on commerce and various forms of assets, including livestock. The number of official land transfers, exchanges, and leases to date has been small. Transfers in the south have been somewhat higher, linked in part to the greater market integration, the larger diversity of alternative livelihood opportunities, as well as to the *de facto* restitution of land to former owners, leaving a number of farmers landless. Commenting on the lack of options for farmers wishing to expand their production Henin (1999: 218) describes how, in the northeastern uplands province of Lang Son,

leasing hill land privately is rarely an option. First, land-rich families are reluctant to part with hill land that carries productive trees, and second, renting barren land to grow trees is economically unattractive because of the relatively slow process of growing trees.

The reluctance of farmers to sell (or, rather, to transfer their land-use rights) is a characteristic common across much of northern Vietnam. This underlines how identity is linked to people's attachment to their land. Moreover, agricultural land is viewed as a vital social safety net. As in many parts of the world, land is more enduring than other assets and is more reluctantly sold on the market (Agarwal 1994). This is a concern to economic planners, who consider the low number of land exchanges to negatively affect labour efficiency, productivity, and incomes.

The lack of legal literacy concerning land rights has also had some bearing on the low number of land transfers. This raises questions about the state's administrative capacity for implementation of land allocation and certification. Some have criticized the degree of confusion and misinformation over the legal significance of land-use certificates, even among local authorities. Others have complained of the lack of consultation, inadequate information, and inconsistencies in implementation. People have little legal recourse to redress grievances regarding the allocation process (such as being asked to sign blank forms). Women in particular knew little about new policies, since they rarely attended village general meetings. Moreover, only with the 2003 Land Law revisions were wives' names mandated to appear on a household's land use right certificate. Nevertheless, there have been numerous accounts of women being disadvantaged in accessing land, through inheritance, marriage and migration to a different village, remaining unmarried as an adult, or being a single parent (Scott 2003).

In an Asian Development Bank-sponsored study (Mekong Economics 2004; ADB 2004), surveys were carried out in six provinces of North, Central, and South Viet Nam to examine the extent to which formal land use rights and land markets have enabled poor households to extract maximum value from their land assets. The study found that most land transactions took place in formal rather than informal markets. However, a number of issues continue to restrict equitable participation in the rural land market. First, relatively high land use levies to issue land use right certificates for residential land has prevented many poor households from receiving a formal land title. Land use levies charged for registering certain changes in land use can also be costly for the poor. Second, substantial informal fees charged by commune authorities in some areas for formal land transfer weigh particularly heavily on the poor. Third, inaccurate surveying and measurement of land plots, particularly in the early days of land allocation, create

difficulties for poor people seeking to use these certificates in the formal market. Fourth, weaknesses in the system of registering transactions and updating cadastral records may gradually reduce the accuracy and value of the land administration system. Overall, the study's findings suggested that increased efficiency, greater transparency and reduced costs in the formal land market may benefit the poor more than traditional 'protective' interventions aimed at restricting market transactions. This may be the case in many parts of the country, but more specific adaptations in the approach to land rights may be needed for special instances such as customary tenure, as discussed later in this paper.

In a sub-section of the above study in two provinces of the Red River Delta, Bac Ninh and Hung Yen, 90 of the 133 documented land transactions were formal (especially sales and mortgages), and 43 were informal (especially leasing) (ADB 2004). This ADB study found that the poor participate little in land transaction markets because (1) they depend on land for the production of food and generation of income; (2) they want to keep residential land since it is their only asset to pass on to children; (3) they do not have sufficient capital to buy or rent in land; and (4) poor people tend to be too risk-averse to mortgage land. The study also revealed that the informal market tends to be used (1) when transferred land does not have land use right certificates or legal documentation (i.e., it is not mapped); (2) to avoid paying tax (even a low rate); and (3) because unclear unofficial fees are required for some formal procedures. Given the extent of the informal markets, there are often huge discrepancies between local authorities' and farmers own reports on the land area they hold.

These findings parallel those of a study in the Mekong Delta in the early 1990s (Chung 1994) which showed that overall, few farmers leased out their land (only seven percent), half of whom were low-income farmers. The low-income farmers who did lease out their land opted to do so due to lack of investment funds, plots too small and dispersed to farm effectively, lack of labour, and deciding to take on other businesses.

While the rural land market has been somewhat slow to develop, the market for rural lands close to urban centres and within cities themselves has become quite dynamic. Property speculation has been rampant in Vietnam's major cities and the hot real estate market has seriously affected prospects for affordable housing for the poor, including rural migrants. A Vietnam Investment Review (2005a) article reported that:

Land and home prices in Vietnam's big cities were so high that most people cannot afford them. A square metre of street-front land in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City's downtown areas might fetch [US]\$5,000, and a square metre of an apartment runs from \$300 to more than \$1,000. It would take decades for people with an average income of \$1,500 to \$2,000 a year to buy a house or apartment in the two cities. Nguyen Thanh Luu, the director of Markcom Research and Consulting Company, said only five percent of the population could participate in real estate transactions; the rest have been priced out.

In an effort to make the land market return to order, the Ministry of Finance announced a new tax system on land traders to curb the skyrocketing prices caused by land speculation. Changes to personal income tax regulation will require individuals to pay a new tax rate of 28 percent on income earned from land transactions, replacing the

current rate of four percent of the total value of transactions on land for housing and two percent on agricultural land<sup>2</sup> (Vietnam Investment Review 2005b).

In addition to concerns over speculation significant amidst the development of Vietnam's land market, conflicts have emerged over low compensation paid to farmers for appropriation of their land by the state for subsequent urbanization, infrastructure, or industrial development (Suu 2004). Moreover, in such instances, criticisms have been raised over the inadequacy of government efforts to retrain farmers for alternative employment, or to ensure that family members are given jobs in factories opened on the site of their reclaimed land.

### **Formalizing customary tenure**

Reintroducing private ownership within a more market-based economic system has wide-reaching political, economic, social, cultural, and ecological consequences. It also implies changes in production systems and, frequently, social differentiation. The distribution of land has been further affected by the spread of new technologies, globalizing economic forces, and demographic pressures generated by rural-urban migration. Within this changing global context, the objectives and measures of land reform agendas have shifted.

The generalized policy prescription of privatized property rights has been challenged by a growing number of scholars who have drawn attention to the implications for marginalized and subsistence producers, for women and ethnic minorities, and for environmental degradation (Bromley 1991; Platteau 1996; Ostrom 1998; Meizen-Dick et al. 2002; Benda-Beckman 1988; Hann 1998). In response, the World Bank recently modified its position. The publication by Deininger (2003) reflects a changed viewpoint: that there is no single formula for property rights reforms to best stimulate growth and poverty reduction. This underscores the need for local-level case studies and policy proposals designed to account for local conditions.

Vietnam faces the challenge of both reforming a system of collectivized production, as discussed earlier, and formalizing a system of customary tenure. Customary tenure systems, affecting both collectively and individually farmed lands, are common in some rural communities which have traditional social structures and land administration institutions. Customary tenure systems in Vietnam experienced little outside impact until the 1960s in the North and following 1975 in the South, when State campaigns for agricultural collectivization and sedentarization were put in place. Thousands of residents from lowland areas were resettled into 'new economic zones' in an effort to modernize and develop upland areas and assimilate ethnic minority populations (Hardy 2003). State forest enterprises and agricultural collectives were established, constituting a direct challenge to customary tenure and land management systems in many ethnic minority communities, and in many cases leading to a degradation of forest resources (Bui Quoc Toan et al. 2004).

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<sup>2</sup> Moreover, to combat land speculation, "land traders will also have to pay a cumulative tax set at between 10 and 25 percent. The tax will take effect if the after-tax profit earned after subtracting both expenses and the paying of the 28 percent is still above 15 percent. ... It is estimated that tax contributed from land transactions reached around VND300 billion (\$20 million) this year" (Vietnam Investment Review 2005b).

The 1990s represented a change in approach away from direct state involvement and towards decentralization and devolution. Through the 1993 Land Law, the land use rights of individual households were recognized. At this stage, however, community and group-based land tenure was still not formally recognized by the state. Village communities, hamlets, and groups of households that comprise ‘customary groups’ could not qualify for land allocations because they were not considered legal entities. This was a problem in many mountainous and ethnic minority areas where customary tenure systems play an important role in land tenure and management. State efforts at land allocation were sometimes simply ignored as village rules held more weight than state-issued certificates in some areas (Scott 2000; Sikor 2001; Tinh and Hjelmdahl 1996). Moreover, some localities in Vietnam have continued to practice various forms of collectives or cooperatives into the current period, despite ‘decollectivization.’ The melange of property rights regimes becomes quite complex when examined at a micro scale. This is particularly true in the midlands and highlands where agro-ecologies and livelihood systems are extremely diverse. Shifts in land tenure and management of agricultural production varied tremendously for different land and crop types and livestock activities—rice paddy, other crops, home gardens, forest gardens, orchards, grazing land, swidden land, livestock raising, and fishponds—over different historical periods: prior to, during, and following collectivization, and by village, ethnic group, and region (Scott 2001; Sikor 2001; Castella and Quang 2002).

At long last, the revisions to the Land Law passed in 2003 addressed some of the concerns over customary tenure. The specific changes implied by the revised law are still under discussion, but it is hoped that they will help to meet environmental objectives of improved community-based forest land management, including increased forest cover and enhanced watershed and biodiversity protection. Moreover, the policy reforms should bring about a range of socio-economic benefits including improving access to land and tenure security and social acceptance of land allocation, and enhancing community enforcement of resource use (Bui Quoc Toan et al. 2004). It remains to be seen exactly what steps will be taken to implement this new approach.

The next section reviews the extent to which land is an important asset shaping patterns of well-being and differentiation among households, villages, and regions.

## **Social and Regional Differentiation in Landholdings**

The livelihoods of millions of smallholders are still currently maintained through the agricultural sector. While the allocation of agricultural lands following decentralization in Vietnam was fairly equitable, it has been regionally uneven (Que 1998; Huong 1999; Scott and Truong 2004) and agricultural land ceilings have been circumvented (Akram-Lodhi 2005: 88). Yet, as shown in Table 4 and Table 5, even in the early 1990s, shortly after the allocation of agricultural land to households, there were discernible regional differences in average landholdings and differences between the poor and nonpoor. Factors of terrain and population density are key in explaining regional variations, such as the difference between the Red River and Mekong Deltas, where the average area of cultivated land per person is 702 and 1977 m<sup>2</sup>, respectively. Rural areas of southern Vietnam have significantly more land per person, and more irrigated land per

person, than in the rural north. But disparities between the poor and nonpoor are also much higher in the south.

Differentiation in average landholdings per household through the 1990s became particularly marked for perennial crop land, especially in the Central Highlands and North West (see Table 6). The number of households that farm less than one hectare has been decreasing, while the number of households that have more than one hectare has been on the rise. This tendency has been most pronounced in the Central Highlands and Southeast region, where landlessness is also most widespread (Vietnam Net 2003). Results of the Vietnam Living Standards Survey of 1992-93 revealed that poor households in the south have on average less than half as much land as the nonpoor, whereas land endowments in the north are relatively equitable—although the poor do tend to have less irrigated land. Nineteen percent of rural households in Vietnam were landless in 2002. And among the poorest quintile of households in the Mekong Delta, nearly 40 percent have no land (see Table 7). Although some of the farmers who opt to move out of farming are well-off or average income, the link between land accumulation and landlessness is marked. Poor households tend to have smaller landholdings or be landless.

'Forest' land is often used by rural households to grow trees or other perennials, or to harvest non-timber forest products. The poorest quintile of the population on average holds more forest land than the richest quintile, although in many cases it is more marginal, steep, and inaccessible land. These factors, plus lack of capital, market opportunities, and weak tenure security mean that forest land tends to not be used as productively among the poor. There are often large disparities in the quality and quantity of forest land allocations at the local level (Castella and Dang Dinh Quang 2002; GENDCEN 2003). Households have sometimes been excluded from forest allocation due to a lack of information about details of the process, criteria and deadlines for applications, or fear of being charged high taxes. One consequence of the allocation of forest lands is the loss of access to former common lands, particularly crucial for grazing of animals and collecting fuelwood and other forest products. Those households that received no forest land allocation suffer disproportionately from this process of enclosure of common lands (Tinh 2002; GENDCEN 2003). This is particularly critical for some households that earn up to 65 percent of their income from forest products.

Increasing productivity and encouraging diversification into livestock and non-farm enterprises are key priorities for rural development in Vietnam. The 1990s saw expanded commercialization of farm production through cash crops. Yet this trend has been regionally differentiated (see Table 8). The Northern Mountains, Red River Delta, and North Central Coast have lower rates of commercialization than the South Central Coast, Central Highlands, South East, and Mekong River Delta. Rice still accounts for over 60 percent of the total sown area, and food crops for over 70 percent of total sown areas. But overall,

From 1990 to 1999, the land area planted to annual industrial crops (cotton, jute, sugarcane, peanut, soybean, tobacco) has increased 64 percent, area planted to multi-year industrial crops (tea, coffee, rubber, pepper, coconut) has increased by 91 percent, and area planted to fruit crops increased by 82 percent. At the same time the land area planted to food crops has only increased by 29 percent. Since 1990 to 1999 there has also been a 30 percent increase in the numbers of cattle

and a 54 percent increase in the numbers of pigs (GSO data, cited in Marsh and MacAulay 2002).

These income generating initiatives for diversification of farm commodities have been encouraged by state-run agricultural extension services. Yet, these efforts by farmers to adapt to the open door economy and participate in agricultural markets have been characterised by “booms and busts, copycat-induced gluts and slumps, disease, environmental damage, trade disputes and tough competition from high subsidising nations” (Taylor 2005: 3).

Aquaculture has become another popular mode of on-farm diversification, with the aquaculture area expanding from 296,000 to 755,000 hectares. Nearly two-thirds of the latter is dedicated to shrimp cultivation. National fisheries production boomed from 890,000 tons to 2.5 million between 1990 and 2003 (GSO and FAO 2004). In some areas of northern Vietnam, low-lying paddy fields are being converted into fish-breeding ponds. As shown in Table 7, the area of fish ponds is also disproportionately concentrated among the richest income groups.

The number of households specialising in industrial production and services between 1994 and 2001 increased from 1.6 to 5.8 percent, while the number of farming households decreased from 89 to 81 percent over the same period. This trend has been consistent with the Vietnam government’s promotion of rural economic restructuring. Vietnam has seen an increase in the number of households not cultivating land. From 1994 to 2001, the number of such households increased by 335,000 to a total of 445,000, equivalent to 4.2 percent of the total (Vietnam Net 2003).

Access to urban markets has been key in local economic development in many parts of the Vietnamese countryside. Seasonal migration and non-farm income have provided investment to diversify production into higher value crops, thereby strengthening the agricultural sector (Thanh et al. 2005). Declines in rural poverty are closely linked to non-farm employment opportunities, proximity to large urban centres and good transportation networks.

De-agrarianization and urbanization are processes forcing major change in rural life. Although about 68 percent of the population is still engaged primarily in agriculture, by 2003 only about 22 percent of the GDP came from agriculture, forestry and fisheries, down from 39 percent in 1990 (GSO and FAO 2004). Thus, land and agricultural production must be considered in relation to other rural livelihood activities. Despite the fact that few ‘peasants’ in Vietnam have been farming exclusively for subsistence production in recent decades, the proliferation of pluri-activity to supplement agricultural incomes in rural areas since the 1990s is a new phenomenon (INSA 1995). Studies elsewhere trace parallel shifts in the significance of human capital and non-farm activity as the basis for new rural livelihoods—i.e., ‘hands not land’ (Toufique and Turton 2002). To facilitate this trend in livelihood diversification in Vietnam, micro-credit rather than land distribution has become a development priority.

## **Regenerating collective action**

Decollectivization and the allocation of agricultural land in Vietnam have brought about a new set of formal and informal institutions. The coming years will likely see a continuing flourishing of institutional forms for agricultural producers as farmers

experiment to find the most adequate scale and mutually beneficial dynamics of interaction. The reorganization of institutions to better meet market demands and the needs of rural producers represents a move away from government 'delivering' development to the people. New discourses emphasize the competition and complementarity between different sectors: "rural development will be favoured where ... provincial enterprises and cooperatives compete with private suppliers of services" (MARD and UNDP 1998: 39-40).

Through the policy reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, agricultural production collectives (*hop tac xa san xuat nong nghiep*) were phased out, in some cases being dissolved completely, in others being reformed or remaining in name only (Tuan 1997). Between 1988 and 1994, 2950 collectives (accounting for 17 percent of all collectives) were disbanded (Harms 1996). Following a new cooperative law passed in March 1996, a number of former 'agricultural production collectives' were converted to 'service cooperatives'. In the past, collectives coordinated most aspects of production (especially of rice) and also collected tax, mobilized labour for public works, and performed many other tasks. In contrast, cooperatives operating successfully in the post-land allocation period generally have a more narrow range of tasks, including coordinating irrigation, drainage, and pest control, and in some cases providing technical advice, seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs. These changes are summarized in Table 8.

The number of non-operational collectives is increasing due to members' refusal to make further contributions to cooperatives (Harms 1996). The regions with the highest proportion of collectives that could be successfully converted (i.e., over 30 percent) were the Red River Delta and Central Coast, where farmers were relatively homogeneous and their lands fairly small. In these areas, individual farmers were unable to manage irrigation systems alone, hence the need for cooperatives. The regions with the lowest proportion of potentially convertible collectives (under 12 percent) were the Northern Mountain region and the Mekong Delta, where irrigation systems managed by collectives were not well-developed. Currently, ten million household members are organized into 7171 agricultural co-operatives. Most of these are converted cooperatives, while 13 percent are newly established (GSO and FAO 2004). Factors associated with successful producer groups include cooperative discipline among members and conflict management; credible, experienced leadership; credible and efficient marketing system; appropriate technical support; institutional support; demonstrable success (Kiuru et al. 1997). Yet few cooperatives assist with agricultural commodity marketing.

Alongside formally-structured new cooperatives, other types of arrangements are emerging in the form of solidarity teams or informal producer groups in order to meet various needs of farmers. Coordination and maintenance may be lacking in areas where cooperatives are absent. To address these gaps, small-scale irrigation networks are sometimes coordinated not by cooperatives but by local and kin-based groups. Such small irrigation groups or 'water users organizations' among farmers with adjoining fields meet together to coordinate their irrigation needs and avoid disputes by reaching a consensus on irrigation schedules. These kind of customary arrangements, used in place of larger-scale cooperative management, raise the important issue of appropriate scale in resource management and point to the necessity for a diversity of forms of productive organization to address diverse needs and interests at the local scale.



Despite policy discourses hailing the household economy and development of rural markets, there are significant trade-offs brought about by decollectivization and the quasi-privatized household production system, as summarized in Table 10. New vulnerabilities are shaped in part by institutional gaps in the structure of services for farmers. The scale of administration and decision making for many former collective responsibilities has shifted to households, complicating the coordination of tasks such as control of pests and access to water. In this way, the disbanding of collectives represents a breakdown in (formalized) collective action for protection from various shocks and stresses. Decollectivization has also been seen as undermining the ability for collective actions to maintain infrastructure and ameliorate flooding hazards from coastal storms (Adger 2000).

Overall, as highlighted in Tables 9 and 10, patterns of livelihood vulnerability are mediated in part by formal institutions such as legal and market structures and the loss of some support services provided to farmers by agricultural collectives. The latter has produced a series of institutional gaps in some locales. Some of these gaps have been addressed by the establishment of new service cooperatives or less formal farmers groups, but overall this kind of institutional strengthening is lacking. Informal social institutions are a further factor mediating new patterns of livelihood vulnerability. Non-material assets such as social capital are becoming increasingly important in the new market economy in Vietnam. Yet social capital is an unevenly shared asset. Social networks operate differentially, often based on kinship and ethnic ties, and can thereby shape parallel patterns of exclusion.

## Conclusions

Two of the major historical events occurring in the contemporary world in the past quarter century were the collapse of socialist systems and their experiences of adjustment that involve the reintroduction or expansion of a market economy. In moving away from the security of the 'iron rice bowl' economy and facing greater exposure to market fluctuations, this adjustment process has imposed various challenges. For the most part, the economic transition and land allocation did not favour the land rich, nor was it subverted by powerful local officials (Ravallion and van de Walle 2003). Many analysts agree that it is largely due to Vietnam's tradition of household farming, small-scale enterprises, and petty trading that the costs of adjustment and marketization of the economy through *doi moi* were much lower in Vietnam than in many former Soviet republics and Eastern European countries (van Arkadie 1993).

In contrast to Eastern European countries, it is not the laid off state sector workers but (non-diversified) farming households that tend to be the most poor and vulnerable in Vietnam. Vietnam's agricultural sector is experiencing a major shift from subsistence farming to more intensive and higher-value market-oriented production. Dual processes of agricultural intensification and diversification are taking place, and rural-urban linkages are being strengthened. The redistribution of agricultural land, which has driven agricultural production and exports, lies at the heart of this reorientation of economy and livelihoods. As a consequence, poverty dropped from 58 percent in 1993 to 29 percent in 2002. By now, however, the primary benefits of land allocation have been exploited. New sources of growth are now being sought as the country faces high population density

on a very limited land area. Regional, intra-provincial, and rural-urban inequalities are rising and will continue to do so as the majority of the population continues farm-based livelihoods, while others move into more remunerable employment in manufacturing and services.

Entrepreneurship is now embraced, and tolerance of a degree of disparities is seen by policy makers as necessary for economic development. The structural adjustment process represents a move toward greater enrichment, but also a move away from the redistributive and egalitarian policy orientation that characterized the past. The overall government strategy encouraging off-farm work is intended to squeeze 'inefficient' farmers out of the agricultural sector and create an entrepreneurial class of 'leading farmers'. Small parcels of land are often not large enough to sustain a living for many rural households. At the same time, landlessness and rural under-employment weigh heavily on rural residents and Vietnamese policy-makers.

Changes in the management of land and property resources, including land tenure, land markets, and land use, have shaped Vietnam's 'agrarian transition' and have important implications for rural livelihoods. Any shift property rights systems will necessarily impact on social differentiation, including class, gender, and age dimensions. Long term land allocation has encouraged many households to invest in and expand their agricultural production. At the same time, mortgaging, leasing, and transferring of land use rights have also increased, particularly in the South. The economic transformation through *doi moi* in Vietnam has opened up more opportunities and benefits for some groups, while others have been left more vulnerable to livelihood insecurity and potentially volatile markets. Balancing the tensions between social equity, on the one hand, and land consolidation and land accumulation to encourage commercial farm production, on the other, are fundamental challenges for rural development policy in Vietnam. Rural non-farm employment is key in this regard, for absorbing displaced farmers. While efforts to promote large-scale agricultural processing, such as through sugar refineries, has been volatile and frequently unprofitable, many other rural non-farm income-generating opportunities are creatively being pursued (Taylor 2005: 21):

food and hospitality services (including vegetarian and *halal* food stalls, fixed and mobile food vendors), entertainment (*ruou de bars*, video cafes, karaoke machine hire and travelling circuses, drag performers and opera troupes), retail (in neighbourhood markets, housefront stalls, door-to-door peddlers, boat-to-boat paddling sellers, floating markets), herbal medicine manufacture and distribution, lottery ticket sales, long-distance trade, weaving, fabric dyeing, sewing, embroidering, sewing classes, hair-dressing, domestic work, road and river-based transport services, public telephone rental, credit provision, construction, photographic and video services, chair and table hire, furniture construction, coffin-making, boat-building, repair services (vehicles, boats, motors, electronic equipment), government employment, dredging (of river silt), ice production, food processing (*mam* and *prahoc*), husbandry (cattle, pigs, chickens, ducks), aquaculture (in fields, ditches, ponds, netted enclosures and floating cages), fishing (drag and cast lines, cast and trawl nets, spearing, trapping), hunting and gathering...

Vietnam's state has been in a relatively favourable position to shape changes, with its structures of support through producer organizations, mass organizations, and

health system infrastructure, combined with strategic collaboration between ministries and jurisdictions. Yet greater appreciation needs to be given, too, to vernacular strategies for rural development that benefit more from kinship or community networks than from any state-led efforts.

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**Table 1. Poverty Rate by Region, 1993, 1998, and 2002 (Proportion of households living in poverty)**

(%)	1993			1998			2002
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
<b>Vietnam</b>	58.1	25.0	66.3	37.4	11.5	44.1	28.9
N Mountains*	78.6	46.2	84.2	59.6	10.3	65.8	43.9
North East							38.4
North West							68.0
Red River Delta	62.9	13.8	71.6	28.5	4.8	33.3	22.4
N Central Coast	74.5	49.6	76.9	48.1	12.5	51.7	43.9
S Central Coast	49.5	27.8	59.1	34.0	17.4	39.9	25.2
Central Highlands	69.9	-	69.9	48.3	-	48.3	51.8
South East	32.7	16.2	45.8	11.1	5.7	14.3	10.6
Mekong Delta	47.1	25.03	51.9	39.0	19.7	42.9	23.4

Note: the Northern Mountains region was subsequently divided into the North East and North West.

Source: General Statistical Office, various years.



**Table 2. Stages and Scales of Collectivization in Vietnam**

	<i>Stage of collectivization</i>	<i>Scale: Number of households or people per collective</i>	<i>Scale: Number of hectares per collective</i>
1953	Mutual aid teams	Groups of several households	
1959	Low-level collectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhood level; several per hamlet</li> </ul>	10-20 households each	
1963-1965	Shift to high level collectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamlet level; one per hamlet</li> </ul>	30-50 households	25-50 hectares
1966-1969	High level collectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village level; one per village</li> </ul>	100-150 households	80-120 hectares
1970-1971	High level collectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commune level; one per commune</li> </ul>	4000-6000 people	400-700 hectares
1974-early 1980s	Agro-industrial unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District level</li> </ul>	100,000-200,000 people	15,000-20,000 hectares

Source: Adapted from Taillard (1983: 138-139).

**Table 3. Reconfiguration of household status and functions through property rights reforms in agricultural production**

	<b>1960s to early 1980s</b>	<b>Late 1980s to present</b>
	<b>Collectivized production (in North Vietnam)</b>	<b>Decollectivisation and increased marketisation of economy</b>
Basic unit of production management	Collective; predominantly collectivized production, with work-point system (some contracting out to households in early 1980s)	Household ('peasantisation' of agriculture)  Household-based production, with autonomy in production coordination, allocation of labour and marketing
Property ownership	Agricultural land was mainly managed by collectives, while some was under state agricultural (and forestry) enterprise management.  Limited private plots ('five percent land') for home consumption and limited market sales	De-statisation and quasi-privatisation of productive resources through land allocation  'Greater security' of land rights: liberalisation of land use rights via 1993 Land Law: extension of rights to <i>transfer, exchange, lease, mortgage</i> and <i>inherit</i> land, through long-term leases for agricultural and forestry land
Common property resources (CPRs)	Managed mainly by collective  Individual usufruct rights to some upland forest and swidden lands	Increasing enclosure: some areas managed by rural commune/village administration, but much 'forest' and 'bare' land allocated to households
Crop diversification	Limited; rice production as central to agricultural development	Encouraged
Sideline production	Restricted and social stigma	Encouraged, but limited by infrastructure and other constraints
Private marketing of produce	Restrictions and social stigma; intermediaries seen as morally-devoid capitalists	Individual responsibility: emergence of intermediary traders, now considered as essential agents to facilitate economic development
Role of mass organisations	Largely political, to mobilize people to participate in state campaigns	Oriented more to service delivery (especially Women's Union), providing technical needs such as credit and some agricultural extension information
Role of collectives (cooperatives)	'Agricultural production collectives' provided inputs and managed production and procurement of outputs	New 'service cooperatives', with reduced range of functions/services: mainly irrigation coordination and pest control

Source: fieldwork by author

**Table 4. Average area of land per capita of the Poor and Nonpoor in Rural North and South Vietnam, 1992-93 (m<sup>2</sup>)**

<i>Type of land</i>	<b>North</b>			<b>South</b>			<b>National</b>		
	<i>Nonpoor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Nonpoor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Nonpoor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Irrigated, annual crops	414.8	333.4	360.1	825.9	346.0	584.2	590.3	336.8	434.0
Nonirrigated, annual crops	288.9	378.2	348.9	1149.8	660.9	903.5	656.6	454.4	531.9
Perennial crops	55.0	50.8	52.2	373.9	212.8	292.7	191.2	94.4	131.5
Other	173.8	126.1	141.8	156.0	29.7	92.4	166.2	100.1	125.5
Total	932.4	888.6	902.9	2505.7	1249.4	1872.8	1604.3	985.8	1222.9

Source: 1992-93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey, cited in van de Walle (1998: 110).

**Table 5. Average area of land per capita in Rural Vietnam by Region, 1992-93 (m<sup>2</sup>)**

Region	Northern Uplands	Red River Delta	North-Central Coast	Central Coast	Central High-lands	South-east	Mekong Delta	National
Irrigated, annual crops	229.3	521.2	307.9	325.9	17.1	484.5	713.1	434.0
Nonirrigated, annual crops	679.2	78.7	349.3	321.2	1015.5	823.1	905.9	531.9
Perennial crops	76.7	31.8	58.9	42.8	398.3	354.9	256.6	131.5
Other	311.0	69.8	112.8	50.3	27.2	101.3	101.5	125.5
Total	1314.2	701.5	828.8	740.2	1458.0	1763.7	1977.2	1222.9

Source: 1992-93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey, cited in van de Walle (1998: 112).

**Table 6. Average Land Holdings per Household in 2002**

(in m <sup>2</sup> )	Quintile				
	Poorest	Near poorest	Middle	Near richest	Richest
<b>Annual crop land</b>					
All regions	4778	3898	4333	4610	4867
<b>Perennial crop land</b>					
All regions	1114	1198	1427	2239	2649
Central Highlands	4199	7183	7866	12978	9941
North West	656	1558	1314	1291	7578
<b>Forest land</b>					
All regions	2743	1591	1501	1268	1233
North East	8068	5258	4974	5517	7751
North Central Coast	2756	2240	3098	2889	3486
<b>Fish ponds</b>					
All regions	175	209	335	454	1181
North Central Coast	78	77	122	532	511
Mekong Delta	1197	723	925	1120	2700

Note: excludes households with no land.

Source: Based on 2002 Vietnam Living Standards Survey, cited in Joint Donor Report (2003: 40).

**Table 7. Landlessness among rural households**

(percent)	Vietnam	N Mtn	RRD	NCC	SCC	CHigh	SE	Mekong
<b>1993</b>	8.2	2.0	3.2	3.8	10.7	3.9	21.3	16.9
<b>1998</b>	9.2	0.5	3.3	8.0	2.0	2.6	23.5	21.3
<b>2002</b>	18.9	4.8	13.9	12.2	19.6	4.3	43.0	28.9
<b>Quintile (2002)</b>								
<b>Poorest</b>	11	1	7	8	9	3	31	39
<b>Near poorest</b>	14	2	5	8	18	3	40	30
<b>Middle</b>	17	6	11	13	15	5	35	26
<b>Near richest</b>	23	12	15	22	27	7	41	25
<b>Richest</b>	38	25	43	25	45	11	59	28

Source: constructed using data from the Vietnam Living Standards Surveys, cited in Joint Donor Report (2003: 39)

**Table 8. Commercialization of Farm Production**

	Share of output that is sold					
	Crop output			All agricultural output		
In %	1993	1998	2002	1993	1998	2002
<b>All of Vietnam</b>	40	54	61	48	59	70
<b>Northern Mountains</b>	22	33	34	36	44	52
<b>Red River Delta</b>	23	29	34	39	45	61
<b>North Central Coast</b>	22	30	38	37	44	63
<b>South Central Coast</b>	23	46	53	39	55	73
<b>Central Highlands</b>	78	78	74	77	78	74
<b>South East</b>	65	77	88	69	79	84
<b>Mekong River Delta</b>	56	74	84	59	74	85

Source: Minot et al (2003), based on General Statistics Office data, cited in Joint Donor Report (2003: 41).

**Table 9. Production-related functions of various institutions in the periods of collectivisation and decollectivisation**

<i>Period of collectivisation</i>	<i>Period of decollectivisation</i>
<p><b>Collectives / production teams</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides)</li> <li>• provision of machinery and animal traction: irrigation pumps, tractors, buffalo</li> <li>• coordination of irrigation and pest management</li> <li>• provision of technical advise</li> <li>• coordination of production decisions (crop composition, planting schedule)</li> <li>• mobilisation of labour and funds for public works maintenance</li> <li>• distribution ('marketing') and transporting of produce and provision of storage facilities</li> <li>• some social security mechanisms in the face of floods or other natural disasters</li> <li>• provision of credit not required</li> </ul>	<p><b>New cooperatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may coordinate irrigation</li> <li>• may coordinate pest management</li> <li>• may provide technical advise/information</li> <li>• may provide inputs (on credit)</li> <li>• may manage village markets</li> </ul> <p><b>State agricultural extension service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide technical advise</li> </ul> <p><b>Mass organisations</b> (quasi-government organisation, e.g., Women's Union)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some credit programs</li> <li>• some agricultural extension training</li> <li>• some collaboration with NGO, international and state programs in provision of financial supports and special services</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal producer associations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some coordination of irrigation</li> <li>• some coordination of agricultural extension training</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal networks of social capital</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• privileged access to technical information and opportunities</li> <li>• kin-based access to credit</li> </ul>

Source: fieldwork by author

**Table 10. Institutional gaps and new household vulnerabilities through economic and property rights restructuring**

<i>Discursive and institutional shifts: greater freedom or responsibility?</i>	<i>Implications for community, inter- and intra-household and gendered vulnerabilities</i>
From collective to household as basic production unit	Household assumes responsibility for former collective tasks and functions
Household is 'freed' from the bureaucracy of collectivized agriculture	Lack of coordination for... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• irrigation and pest management in some areas</li> <li>• mobilizing labour and funds for maintenance of public works</li> <li>• purchasing inputs at wholesale prices</li> <li>• offering access to former collective assets: machinery, animal traction, processing equipment (e.g. mill, tea dryers), and protective clothing for pesticide spraying</li> <li>• managing land use conflicts</li> </ul>
Household autonomy in production decisions; freedom to manage own time and labour	Access to land is mediated at level of household rather than collective; new patterns of decision-making and intra-household bargaining over production decisions (crop composition, marketing); allocation of labour; inheritance
Greater incentives to produce, use labour more effectively, and reap the rewards of one's own labour	Differential benefits based on uneven asset base: differential endowments of financial and human capital (knowledge, skills, and labour)
Household is 'free' to make investment (in equipment and agricultural inputs)	Demand for <i>credit</i> for production inputs, but credit schemes are limited (too small, too short-term, or too high-interest). This contributes to lack of investment at household level, and limited access to new technologies (e.g. processing equipment)
Household is 'free' to determine crop composition, and has opportunities to develop sideline production	Demand for <i>information</i> : opportunities, technical knowledge and entrepreneurial skills for income-generating activities  Weak extension and advisory services for information on viable cash crops with market demand: extension programs may be designed with inadequate understanding of local farming systems  Lack of clarity over policy procedures and legal rights; low legal literacy and poor dissemination of information
Household is 'free' to market its agricultural produce	Increased market integration, but lack of storage facilities and coordinating mechanism for transporting and <i>marketing</i> goods in larger quantities to negotiate a higher price

Source: fieldwork by author