

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **GENDER ROLES AND RESOURCE MANGEMENT AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL**

In the past, the way of life of Karen in Ban Dok Dang was closely related to the nature, soil, water and forest. They collected wild products from nature for their domestic consumption. Karen villagers were also engaged in upland cropping and rice cultivation, which was primarily subsistence production. After the harvest, they have free time. They could spend this time to rest, visit their relatives or do other work. For example, women would spin cotton, weave cloth, collect firewood and wild products. Men would repair their houses, make household utensils and production tools, go hunting and take part in village activities.

Most domestic work is related to food preparation for family members. Women would wake up before men. They wake up to cook rice, pound rice grain and cook food for members in their families. In addition, they also feed their animals. In the past, women were mainly in charge of domestic affairs while men only helped when they were free from their work. At present, women are still the main responsible party in domestic work, but men do not help much since they spend most of their time in cash crop production.

The major activity of women outside their homes is work in the fields. They play a key role in this work as they share greater responsibility than men do. At the beginning, both men and women look for a plot for cultivation and mutually make a choice. Then, they start to clear the land, dry, and burn the field respectively. After burning, they will put up a small structure in the field, which is the main task of men. Women will do the cultivation and sow various seeds. Then, they will start upland rice cultivation. When rice plants grow up to 20-30 centimetres, they start weeding in both their rice field and cropping plot, which is the main task of women until harvest season. In harvesting, both women and men will help harvest until it is done. At present, men have adopted intensive commercial production. They have to put their labour, time and capital into this production, inhibiting them from fully helping in fieldwork.

In addition, there is also another essential task of women, that is storing all seeds from their fields and as providers of food to feed their family members, and animals, at home. The stored seeds are varied and diverse. They keep the seeds over their stoves or shelves for the following season. However, at present, some seeds have disappeared due to the decrease of farmland. Most villagers have adopted permanent farming. However, cultivation of rice on permanent farmland makes it difficult for some seeds to germinate and grow. In the end, some seeds have disappeared.

During the period of subsistence production (1936-1974), the population was low and farmland was very rich and sufficient to meet the needs of the local

population. Therefore, villagers had a good livelihood with no competition. However, at present, the growing population and the unfavourable policy of the state force villagers to demand more land and water resources. They do not only look for more land, but also adopt modern farming methods to increase their production. In addition, during the past two decades, villagers with wet rice and highland rice fields in Ban Dok Dang have changed their traditional farming methods to commercial farming and developed their status from their available basic capital, leading to class differentiation in the community. Furthermore, gender roles have also undergone a change. The more they are involved in commercial agriculture, the harder women have to work. Resulting, in woman's role as inferior to men.

This chapter will present gender role in resource management at the household level. It is divided into two sub-sections: 1) Case study on rich, middle-class, poor and land less households; 2) Resource management at household level. It explains commonalities and differences of the gender role in households with different status.

### 3.1 Case Study of Households with Contrasting Socio-Economic Status

The commercial agriculture of Ban Dok Dang leads to class differentiation or socio-economic status in the community. Each status impacts access and control over resources at household level accordingly.

#### 3.1.1 Rich Households

In Ban Dok Dang, there are 9 rich households from the total of 75. They are families with many members and can clear farmland and develop their livelihood from wet and highland rice cultivation and fruit orchard, which is mostly the land inherited from ancestors of the women's side. In addition, these rich households also get animals such as elephants, cows and buffaloes from parents of both the women and men at the time when they were married to start their new families. On average, the rich households own 8 rais of wet rice field, 1 rai upland rice field and 7 rais of fruit orchard, and an average income of 80,000-100,000 Baht per year.

*Hta gau family* is a rich household who wants to develop as a capitalist in the village so as to tackle the problem of exploitation of farm price and exploitation by middlemen or outside capitalists. This family has a husband and a wife over 30 years old. They have been married for 8 years and have 3 daughters. It is a household practising traditional beliefs and the woman is the youngest daughter of *Hif hkof* who is one of the founders of this village.

Both husband and wife own their land, which they inherited from their parents. When they were married, the man came to live with his wife at her home and work on the land of the woman. They employ a reciprocal labour practice among their relatives in wet and upland cultivation. Sometimes, they also hire farm workers in cultivation and harvest. At present, both the husband and wife have built a new house separate from the parents of the wife.

In the past, both the woman and man helped do all domestic work since rice cultivation is done only in certain seasons. The woman would be the main person in all domestic work, such as food preparation, rice husking and child rearing. Sometimes, the man could also play the role of the woman, such as child rearing, feeding pigs and chicken, and food preparation when the woman had other obligation.

By 1984, this household had adopted commercial farming. As a result, the woman had to be responsible for upland cultivation and all domestic work. In addition, she has to work in rice fields and help work in cash crop plot too. The man will wake up in the morning and have his breakfast and goes out to the cash crop plot for the whole day. In the evening, on the way back home, he will stop to talk with his neighbours and will go back home late at night and it is bedtime.

When the decision arose to invest in cultivation by seeking loan from Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Co-operatives (BAAC), the husband was the one who makes the decision and informs his wife afterwards. In addition, the husband is in the cash crop plot and does all the work by himself, starting with land preparation, seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, growing, caring and watering. The wife will help on this plot when extra labour is need, such as transplanting, weeding and harvesting. Selling of the produce and financial management is completely be the task of the husband. He will allocate some money only to buy food for his family.

At the beginning of cash crop cultivation, this household grew cabbage, sweetbell pepper and tomato. They borrowed money from BAAC and moneylenders. This household was at high risk in adopting cash crop cultivation because it required high capital. When the yield was harvested, the price fell , creating a loss. Sometimes, they faced other problems, such as attack by pests and diseases. At present, this household owes BAAC with an amount of 30,000 Baht. The husband explains that:

*"villagers cleared forestland to grow cash crops because the government supported moneylenders to attract villagers to grow. Otherwise, they would not expand their farmland and grow cash crops that depend on intensive fertilisers and chemicals, which affect their life and the nature concurrently."*

This household formerly co-operated with middlemen by acting as an agent between the villagers and the middlemen. This household got farm inputs equipment, seeds, fund, etc and distributed them to the clients in the village, starting with 10 villagers. However, they were engaged in this business only for one season because the middlemen paid the price of the produce very late, up to one month after the sale, where as took only 1-2 weeks previously. Therefore, the dissatisfied villagers came to ask them for payment very often. This household was reluctant because it worked with the middlemen and earned not much compared to the burden it had to shoulder. In addition, they have a problem with their social relationship with the community. They thought that if they had money, they would invest by themselves. If possible,

they would also approach markets for the villagers, but their knowledge in trade is very limited.

In this commercial farming, the wife only plays a role as farm labourer at certain periods and she does not have any voice as before. All work is taken care of by the husband. The wife wakes up early in the morning to prepare food, do rice husking, washing clothes. Sometimes, she goes to do wet and highland rice cultivation with her sister. In addition, when the wife has a health problem, it is believed that she is sick because she does not properly follow rituals of *Hif hkof*, who is her father. Her two little children are also in poor health. She has to stay home to take care of her children and does not take part in making decision regarding cash crop cultivation. Sometimes, she feels hurt because her husband only works in the field and outside and does not help in domestic work or raising their children. When she is sick, she still has to take care of herself.

**Phau gau family** the husband is from Ban Huay Gung in Mae Sariang District. He is the fourth son of his family and married to a girl from Ban Dok Dang and came to live with his wife bringing along a pair of buffaloes. The wife is the fourth child of her family. Her parents gave her 4 rais of rice field and a pair of buffaloes. This household has 10 children, 5 boys and 5 girls. Their grandmother also lives with them.

This household practices traditional belief and is engaged in wet and highland rice cultivation and animal raising, such as pigs, chicken and buffaloes. After marriage, they bought an elephant to earn income from pulling logs and carrying rice. In addition, the elder son works with foreign tourists and can speak English. At present, this son is studying and also working as a tourist guide with a travel agency in Chiang Mai. They sold the elephant as they aged and could no longer care for it.

This couple is not engaged in cash crop cultivation because they see that this is not the way of life of the Karen. Initially, their son wanted to do cash crop cultivation and discussed this issue with his parents, but the couple disagreed because it risked dangers from chemicals. Later, they had to agree because it was the desire of their son. They grew cash crops on their rice field after the harvest with the help of his mother, younger sisters and brothers, but his father did not give any help because he spent most of his time in raising buffaloes.

This household started commercial production because of their son, who is now 23 and finished grade three of secondary education 9<sup>th</sup> grade. He used to work in a gas station in Bangkok to earn cash income, since they have lots of expenses at present and they have to mainly use cash. He worked there for only two months and returned home because it was not worth for him and life in Bangkok was difficult. When he returned, he started to grow tomato and cabbage when he was 19, since he saw his neighbours doing this and wanted to try. In adopting this cash crop cultivation, it was the son who makes all the decisions by himself.

The son explained his decision to grow tomato and cabbage as:

*"I want to earn cash and there is no other way to earn it except wage earning in urban areas which I have already experienced. Therefore, I decided to grow cabbage and tomato. I partly put in some capital and a middleman provides some fund. When the produce come out, I sell it and pay off my debt to the middleman. The surplus is spent in my family, such as buying a power tiller, a car, food, medical care and education of my younger sisters and brothers. At present, I take over this responsibility from my mother."*

The mother who is 50 years old, said that,

*"In the past, there was only wetland and highland cultivation, there was no commercial farming. Yet, we could feed our family because on our farmland we grew rice and vegetable as well for domestic consumption, such as taro, sweet potato, beans, sesame, lettuce and varieties of melon for food. We could also collect wild food from forest, mountain and streams. Both men and women helped one another. Women would sow seeds. In harvest season, women would collect and store seeds for the next season. In addition, women had to take care of children and animals at home. Men take animals out to feed and slept in forest. In the past, our work was seasonal. After harvest, we would take a rest and do other work. Women would spin and dye cotton, and weave cloth. Men would do bamboo crafts, make household utensils and farm implements, as well as visiting relatives in other villages."*

In the case of the rich households and resource management at household level, accumulation of capital is basically the inheritance of farmland and animals from their parents, both of women and men. They continue to accumulate their wealth further from their original capital by being engaged in cash crop farming on the land that is favourable to production, so as to earn cash income.

Concerning gender role in resource management at household level, especially in domestic production, food preparation, child raising, collecting firewood and care of animals at home, these activities mainly belong to women. In the past, men also helped women. At present, household activities and farm work are the tasks of women. Though land clearing needs labour of men, but they are not interested or spend much of their time in land clearing. In addition, women also help in cash crop production during certain periods. Men are completely absorbed in intensive cash crop production and they do not have time for domestic work as before.

In the first case we see that the man is the decision maker who has access and control in every stage of cash crop production as well as controlling cash. In the second case, the son has access and control over the resources at household level on behalf of his father. In the past, his mother was responsible for cash. She now

becomes a partner in this cash crop production under the reason that men are more skillful in this process of commercial production. The housewife continues to do rice cultivation and grow native vegetable and store seeds. This woman added that she would continue to do rice cultivation as her energy allowed because she could do it without depending on external factors or inputs.

### 3.1.2 Middle Class Households

Ban Dok Dang has 44 middle-class households. These households own an average size of rice field of 6 rais, highland farm of 3 rais, and fruit orchard of 5 rais. They own an average of 3 cattle. In addition, these middle-class households earn an average income of 40,000-60,000 Baht per year.

*Wa pau* family practices traditional belief. The husband is 51 and came from Ban Mae Tho Luang. He married with a girl from Ban Dok Dang. He is the eldest of 9 children. He inherited 6 rais of rice field and 3 buffaloes. The wife is the fourth of 7 children and inherited 6 rais of farmland and a pair of buffaloes. When they got married, the man came to live with the woman at her house and they now have 8 children.

The husband told a story that production in the past was done at different periods and there was reciprocal labour practice among kin and neighbours, especially among young people who would also exchange folk song (*U'hta*) on farmland. In addition to rice cultivation, they also grew varieties of vegetable, such as lettuce, corn, eggplant, cucumber, taro, sweet potato, pumpkin, beans and flowers for rituals (there is a kind of flower local one for use as offering in a ceremony to celebrate the spirit of rice). After cultivation, it was a time for rest. Men would prepare a barn to store rice and women would spin and dye cotton and weave cloth, other work and visit relatives. In the past, there was more free time, making them healthy. The elders were also healthy.

At present, this household continues to do rice cultivation as its main occupation. Three years ago they started cash crop production using capital of 20,000 Baht. They have to work the whole year without any rest. In addition, they also have to use fertiliser and chemicals, which affect soil and human health. Cultivation does not depend very much on reciprocal labour practice because each farmer wants to complete his work in time for each production cycle. Sometimes they face problems, such as when an animal dies or someone is sick or worried. They will try to get a fortune with chicken bone and if it indicates that the cause is related to production, they have to abandon the crops. Sometimes, farm price is not good and they have to sell at a loss and earn not a single Baht. The husband said that:

*"Cash crop production is a hard work, involves high risk and I'm very tired. It is like walking blind. If we walk on the right track we will arrive at our destination. If we walk on the wrong direction, we shall never reach the destination. Now, I stopped growing cash*

*crop, but my children, both sons and daughters, are doing it and my wife occasionally helps them."*

Regarding the role of the housewife at present, she wakes up in the morning and prepares food and her husband will continue to cook the food while she and her daughters do rice husking and feed chicken and pigs. When all finish their breakfast, she will go to the farm with her daughters and her sons will go to cash crop plot while her husband will take care of animals because their buffaloes and elephant need some care. In the past, he could leave his animals to graze in forest, but at present he has to be on watch. Farming activity is less now due to limited size of his land. Some families do not have enough labour for land clearing. His children have expanded their farmland for cash crop cultivation.

The housewife continues to grow vegetable on their farmland as she did in the past. However, vegetables at present do not grow as well as before and pests always attack it. She assumed that it could be a disease coming with cash crops. In addition, the housewife also does other work when she has free time from farm work, such as weaving, sewing and raising a three-year old grandchild when she comes back from a childcare centre because her parents go to work in the field. She also grows cabbage and tomato.

In addition, the housewife has an essential role in collecting and storing seeds for the next season. She selects seeds from plants that give good yield. She collects seeds of root crop, with seeds and crops with flower. After collecting, she will dry the seeds first and then pack in a plastic or cloth-bag, after which she will hang in a kitchen, where the temperature is high from the stove and good to store seeds. The seeds of rice will be stored in a sack kept outside the barn or under the house waiting for the next cultivation season.

The wife had once thought that she would cultivate highland rice for the rest of her life, however forestry officials have limited farmland and she faces popularity of cash crop cultivation. She is waiting to see how villagers think about some local vegetables. She accepted that some plants have disappeared. When there was a change towards cash crop production, she had noticed that both men and women had more work.

At present, her son is thinking of producing mainly for the marketing. Men have a greater role than women, starting from making decisions to adopting the production pattern, to harvesting. Now a day, parents have to depend on their children to get cash for household expenses. When selling the produce, their son gives money to his mother to pay for household expenses. The housewife said that many of her neighbours had an idea to produce for market. They wanted to earn cash and buy food. She thought it was a wrong idea because production for marketing was not secure. When one is still living, one has to continue struggling. Furthermore, she thought that highland rice cultivation was the source of life, and that rotation farming was not the cause of deforestation.

This family teach their children when eating or before bedtime and when working. They teach their daughters that:

*"Girls have to wake up early and have to be responsible for domestic work, stay home and take good care of their home. They should respect the elders, be diligent, should not argue with parents or the elders when they teach."* They also teach their sons that:

*"They should know their work and work hard. In making friends with others, they should be careful in choosing friends; otherwise they would be discredited. If they want to have their own family, they should be responsible for their families."*

In this family, the housewife is a member of the village committee. The eldest daughter is married and is a member of the second housewives' group as well as a member of a committee on village fund. She is the only woman of this committee. In addition, their daughters and sons, who are young, are also members of the committee. Young daughters are active members and women leaders. Her two sons work in town. One is married with a lowland girl and visits his home once or twice a year to take part in a ritual of *"Nif sau hkof"* (newyear ceremony). His parents are worried about him and want him to come back and stay in the village.

**K' Hhi family** is a household whose housewife came from Ban Khun Pae in Chom Thong District. She got married and moved to stay with her husband in Ban Dok Dang. She is a Catholic. She moved to stay with her husband because he has inherited rice fields from his parents. This couple has 7 children, 4 boys and 3 girls. Two of them are mentally impaired and the parents did not have time to take care of them because they had to work in the field. Therefore, they left both of them with their grandmother. Now, both of them are grown up and are labourers to help their family. This family is engaged in wetland and upland cultivation as well as banana for marketing. She also grows seasonal tomato, cabbage and sweet-bell pepper for market like other villagers.

The housewife wakes up early in the morning to prepare food, feed pigs and chicken. She also collects firewood for daily use. She goes out to the field to do weeding, as well as collecting and preparing seeds. In addition, she also takes care of her children. Her husband works outside, especially on bamboo craft, making implements, carrying timber, building houses and is responsible for soil preparation for cultivation, as well as spraying chemicals and apply fertilisers. Cash crop cultivation forces them to reduce the size of their farmland because they have added area for growing cabbage, tomato and sweet-bell pepper. Men spend most of their time caring for cash crops and are not interested in the work of women. They will leave domestic work and upland cultivation to women. Women themselves do not have enough time to take care of highland farm as before because they have to spend some time to help take care of tomato and cabbage, since it cost them high investment.



Cash crop cultivation is a practice that they follow their neighbours who were attracted by moneylenders with funds. However, a choice of commercial production has led to debt. The housewife of this family said:

*"In borrowing 30,000 Baht from BAAC, my husband made a decision alone without consulting or informing me. This is because if he consulted me, I would not agree. Therefore, he secretly borrowed the money. When I came to know this, I was very angry because in borrowing money from BAAC we have to pay back in time. If we do not have money, we have to seek loan from informal sector, which charges a high interest rate of 5%, to pay off the loan due to BAAC, which is a serious problem in my family."*

In addition, the housewife expressed her idea on cash crop cultivation that depends on external capital that;

*"no one is rich because of BAAC. Most of the rich in our village inherited properties and capital from their parents or sold out their cattle. It is difficult to be rich by growing cabbage, tomato or sweet-bell pepper. We bring richness for others. The rich become richer, the poor get poorer."*

Later, the couple decided to sell their buffaloes to pay off their debt due to BAAC. This decision gave them relies.

Cash crop and rice cultivation need time for labor during all season. When there is more work, women do not have time to do their work they normally do, such as spinning and weaving. The housewife sees that it is difficult to work the whole season. They must allocate time to do domestic work at night and in daytime or when there is not much work to do in the field. In addition, when farmland is smaller, the women have less vegetable cultivation.

This housewife explained that cash crop cultivation affected their health directly and indirectly because of chemicals (toxic substance) left in vegetable and fruits sprayed with pesticides without proper knowledge or carelessness. This has brought different diseases. Therefore, people today do not live long as the older generations did. It also affects ecosystem, soil, water and forest.

This housewife explained resource management as:

*"In the past, villagers would draw water from a well for consumption. There were three wells in the village. Now, the population grew with more cash crop cultivation, drying up the wells. We cannot use the water for consumption anymore. There is a shortage of water. We have to use tap to draw water from a mountain which is 4 kilometres away."*

She expressed her ideas on upland cultivation that:

*"In the future we will not be able to do highland rice cultivation as much as before. At present, there is still some land to do it though the government does not allow the villagers to clear forestland. However, the villagers will continue to clear forestland. If we don't do it, what will we eat? Even firewood that highland people use to cook their food is also banned. No firewood no food. Villagers will collect firewood from the remaining or dried wood from community forest. They do not collect firewood from conserved forest at all. We can say that we make full use of every tree, from its roots to its top, because villagers know how to make use of forest, know how to conserve and maintain forest, which still exists sustainably until today."*

She added that:

*"I do not understand why the government has to bring in fertiliser and chemicals and support cash crop cultivation in all rural communities. It not only depletes the soil, but also promotes deforestation or destruction of natural resources. Without propaganda on the villagers, this situation would not occur. People of today want only money and they want to be indebted, making them work harder, worry, with no time to rest as before because every one has to struggle hard. I am worried that the lifestyle of Pgaz k'nyau (the Karen) will disappear. Fortunately, there are some young people who are interested to carry on the culture and way of life of Pgaz k'nyau in Ban Dok Dang."*

Apart from being a secretary of the first housewives' group, she is also a member of an education committee of Ban Dok Dang School as well as a member of a village committee. She is accepted by community members. She is active and interested in all events in the village and outside. She is one of the women who go out to buy goods for housewives' welfare shop (cooperative store) of Ban Dok Dang when the stock is running out. She will go with 1 or 2 other housewives. Every year she will help summarize the books of the savings group and the cooperative store for both groups to allocate dividends and pay back loan to the savings group, which is a revolving fund, for a new round of operation in the following year.

Looking at the above 2 cases of middle class households and resource management at household level, we can deduct that in general the middle-class households own rice fields, highland farm and cash crop plots inherited from parents of the man and woman. It is also the work of labour of each family who cleared new land. Families with male labour can clear highland fields and establish new cash crop plot. Some families sold their animals to buy more land. At the same time, these middle-class households enter into commercial production to improve their economic position.

Apart from being responsible mainly for all domestic work, as well as preparing food for their husbands and children as in the past, women in middle-class households have to also help their men in cash crop production. In addition, women also have to share debts with the men as in the case of a man who borrowed money without informing his wife and the woman still took it as mutual responsibility of her family and they had to sell buffaloes to pay off the loan due to BAAC. Women also have to do highland cultivation to produce rice for domestic consumption and to earn additional cash income since their families need it to pay for food, tuition fee of their children, as well as for medical care in time of sickness and investment in production.

For middle-class households who still grow rice and other crops on highland, these women realise the need to continue growing rice because it is the sustainable mode of production of the villagers of Ban Dok Dang rather than being interested in cash crop production, from which men hope to improve their livelihood in the future, but are always at a financial loss.

The women in the two aforementioned middle class households came from a family practising traditional belief. She is very strict in observing traditions and customs. She is also knowledgeable and skilful in traditional mode of production, especially in collecting seeds and doing the work of Karen in growing cotton, spinning and weaving. The woman of *Ke' hti* is capable in reading and writing Thai, which is useful for housewives' groups and the community as a whole. This woman has an opportunity to use her skill and capacity to manage resources in households like men, although it is more difficult for her.

### 3.1.3 Poor Households

There are 9 poor households in Ban Dok Dang. These households own an average of one-fourth to three-fourth of a rai of rice field, 1-2 rais of highland farm and 1-2 rais of cash crop land per household. These poor households will mainly grow wet and highland rice. They will also grow tomato or cabbage on their rice field or on the land their neighbours allow them to. They earn additional income from earning wage by land clearing, cultivation and harvesting of cash crops at the rate of 70 Baht per day for a woman and 100 Baht per day for a man. After finishing their domestic work, they will go out to earn wage in Ban Kong Roi by cultivating cash crops or harvesting longan with a wage of 100 Baht per day for a woman and 120 Baht per day for a man. These poor families earn an average income of 20,000-35,000 Baht per household per year.

**Bu la' family** whose husband came from Mae Tho Noi and married a girl from Ban Dok Dang. When he got married, he moved to live with his wife at her house. This couple has six children. They are poor and did not inherit anything from their parents. Therefore, they cleared the land for highland cultivation. At present, they farm on two rais to grow rice and varieties of vegetable for domestic consumption. This family does rotation farming 1-3 years and does not get enough rice to eat. Furthermore, they also grow tomato and cabbage for market and earn wage by working on cash crop production in and outside their village.

The housewife of this family wake up early in the morning to prepare food. Then, her husband continues the cooking while she pounds rice with her daughter. After finishing this, she goes up to her house to take care of her youngest child and arrange the food. When all finish their meal, she, and sometimes her husband will help feed chicken and pigs. The children go to school. Then, her husband goes out to work on tomato and cabbage plot. She mainly works on highland farm and sometimes also goes to help her husband. If they need more labour, especially during cultivation, weeding and harvesting, her husband will help her, but not very often.

Sometimes in upland cultivation, they also employ reciprocal labour practice mainly with her kin and neighbours. Both her husband and she remain in the field until evening. When they come back home, she pounds rice, feed chicken and pigs while her husband sometimes helps her and bathes her small daughter. Then, she prepares food. If her husband is there he will also help her. After eating their meal, their children play and talk with one another. Their kitchen is also a bedroom. When their children are sleeping, she continues to work, like spinning cotton partly grown on her upland farm and partly bought from somewhere else, or arranging household stuff. While she is always working, her husband will sit or lie down and talk with her.

As the way of life of the poor households in highland villages, they depend on natural resources for their survival. It is well known that for the poor households natural resources are the source of life. Though they own only a small plot of land, it provides them with everything. On the whole, the rich, the middle class, the poor and the land-less households still make use of forest. Yet, the poor and the land-less households make more use of forest. Although the villagers will say that now forest is not as rich as before, and wild food is less, they still hope to collect some wild vegetable as their food. In time of shortage, they can still have dried radish or fermented soybean to mix with water and serve as their food.

In the morning or evening, the housewife and her daughters and fellow housewives will go to community forest near their houses to collect firewood from the remaining dried trees. They will cut the trees with axe and chop into smaller pieces for firewood. Then, they will collect it and put in their basket "*kue*" and bring back home to store for use in cooking their food, pig feed and heating in winter.

In the daytime, after finishing her routine work in house, eating her meal and feeding her animals, she will go to farmland with her relatives or friends. There, after clearing the land and growing rice and other crops, they will come back to do weeding and collect vegetable as food for their families and pigs. We can see that empty basket or "*kue*" they carry out in the morning will be full of varieties of vegetable, such as long bean, chilli, lettuce, melon, tomato and cabbage remaining in the field or cabbage villagers left on their cash crop plot, and other vegetable which is human food and animal feed, for cooking when they come back home in the evening.

In rainy season, there are be sweet vegetable, bamboo shoot and different varieties of mushroom. Villagers have indigenous wisdom in searching for and identify several varieties of mushrooms. Some varieties are poisonous and inedible,

but villagers have never been sick from eating mushrooms. This is because of special wisdom of the villagers. The poor households can collect more sweet vegetable, mushroom and bamboo shoot because they are the main seasonal food that they do not have to buy. This can also earn them some income. Rich and middle-class households reducing their upland farming will also collect some wild food or might buy from the poor households who can collect a surplus and sell to them.

When harvesting highland rice, both the woman and man will help in this work. This community still practices reciprocal labour in rice harvesting. The woman is the one who collects seeds for the following season. She continues to play her role in upland farming, though rice harvesting has ended. She will go to her field to collect vegetable, melon, taro, sweet potato and beans grown when she cultivated rice for food in dry season where vegetable is scarce. She also collects Job's tears to decorate her dress.

For the man, after helping his wife in domestic work or preparing farm implements, he will go to farmland, which is his production plot or borrowed from his relatives or neighbours after cultivating rice, to grow cash crops like tomato and cabbage. These crops need care regarding quality of the soil, enriching the soil and watering properly and thoroughly, as well as weeding and controlling pests. He has to apply pesticides or chemicals. Therefore, the man will do the work at all stages. However, in making decision, he discusses with his wife first. Then, he will start cultivation by borrowing money from moneylenders since he does not have his own fund. After selling his yield, he will pay back the moneylenders. In most cases, income is just enough to cover the invested fund. Therefore, he does not make any profit, but has to put in his labour.

This family has borrowed money from BAAC for 5 years. At present, it cannot pay back the loan and has to work all the time without any rest. The housewife helps transplant rice, do weeding and harvesting, but production for market is not worth investing as debt increases. At the same time, highland farming is still a production that sustains life and maintains balance of the nature. Yet, they are not allowed to do upland farming by the government. The housewife said that:

*"The poor are afraid and dare not clear the land. What will the poor families eat ? We do not have farmland like others. It is impossible for us to stop doing highland farming. We will not have rice to eat because even today we still have to earn wage to buy rice. If we do not cultivate upland crops, our rice seeds will disappear and we have to completely depend on outside. Highland farming should not be done in watershed area and it is necessary to pass this on to our children."*

**De la family** is a household whose woman has been a widow for 12 years since her husband fell ill and died. When she got married, she inherited 2.5 rais of rice field from her parents and she has an evidence of local land tax voucher 1988. She also has an evidence of application for land ownership of her father issued by the

Land Department in 1954, in which it also stated his nationality and citizenship as Karen and later changed to Thai. However, all these ownership documents have been revoked. Therefore, it is a question for her and all villagers what the rights of Thai people living on highland will be in the future. It is a question of the poor widow and her fellow housewives.

This family practices traditional belief and has 4 children. Two of them are studying outside the village at "*Suksa Songkroh*" School. The other two, who are boys, are studying in the village. She has a free but difficult life. She has to do everything on her own with support from her children and neighbours. She will take part in activities of the villagers and her community. She likes to help in the work of her relatives and neighbours in need of assistance.

Regarding her daily life, she starts her day with food preparation for her children, feeding 10 chicken, both small and large, prepared for a ritual of "*Nif sau kho*" in celebrating the spirits of traditional irrigation canal and tap water, a ritual of "*Auo kha*" and other special rituals when there is any strange events. She kills the chicken to feed her family only when their children are all present. Sometimes she has to buy chicken for rituals if her chicken are not grown enough or are not proper looking.

After preparing food and eating the meal, her children go to school. She goes to the rice field and highland farm (which is a field where villagers grow cabbage in winter) belonging to her relatives and neighbours. Apart from growing "*Buemue* and *Pi-Isoo*" varieties of rice, she also grows chilli, eggplant, lettuce, sweet potato, taro, vegetable and melon. Crops grown on upland farm give lower yield. Though the plants look nice, but pests eat their tops. She assumes that it could be due to remaining fertiliser in the soil where her neighbours used to grow cabbage, which destroy the yield.

In addition to upland farming, she also grows wet rice. She prepares embankment of the rice field with the help from her relatives and neighbours to prepare for rice cultivation. Then, she hires a power tiller at 1,200 Baht to plough her rice field.

When free from the work on the field, she earns wage from growing cabbage, tomato or giant chilli, earning 70 Baht per day. She receives her wage every three days. In addition to earning wage from growing cash crops in the village and Ban Kong Roi, she also earns wage from harvesting longan in Hod District. She goes with more than 10 other people. There are four women. She will earn wage from this for six days, at the rate 120 Baht for a woman and 150 Baht for a man per day. She sleeps at the house of the longan plantation owner. When she returns home, she has 300 Baht left after deducting all expenses. It is the money she keeps for expenses on a ritual of "*Auo kha*" and wrist tying ceremony to implore blessings in life and fruitful yield and happy family.

We can see that she is the main party in production with two small sons staying home to help in all domestic work, such as pounding rice, fetching water and so on. When it is a school break, they will go to the field to help their mother. Therefore, they learn and inherit knowledge from her and will transmit the lessons of life to her children. While talking with her, the ten years old son came back home from raising buffaloes with his uncle. He came to his mother and showed a bag in which there were two frogs, tomato, cabbage and other vegetable collected from a garden of her neighbours, which could be food for the family for several meals.

With her freedom and enthusiasm, she joins the first housewives' group, both in the savings group and housewives' cooperative store. She has to pay 300 Baht a year to build up a revolving fund for loan and to buy goods for sale in the village, the profit of which will be allocated as dividend for all the members.

In addition, she has been elected as a member in a village rice fund committee. Her task is to measure rice for members when they borrow or repay to the group. She has to work with another man. She has also been elected by teachers to be a member of the village education committee and a member of the village committee without getting any allowance. She does it with sheer willingness. She is a villager who takes part in activities of the village, especially of housewives' group, to demand for the right to land of villagers where her ancestors made their living in the past. Anyway, they still have to continue demanding for their legitimate rights, in their own generation and their younger generation (see details in Chapter IV).

Her daily role in her family is both domestic and productive. After her work in the field, she has to prepare food for her children, talk with and teach them and spin cotton at night to prepare for weaving when she is free for her children. Sometimes she sells it when she needs cash. We can see that a poor woman who is a widow has to play a role in production in her family like other households with both women and men, but she gets some help from her kin and community members.

In short, management of resources at household level of the poor families is still the mutual role of both men and women. When farmland is limited and reorganised, coupled with a problem of shortage of rice, men have to adopt commercial production and wage earning. This affects gender role in resource management for production at household level similar to the rich and middle-class households. Yet, the role of women in upland farming is still the only role or space that women continue to carry on, including seed collecting and storing and maintaining of biodiversity, provided the poor women in Ban Dok Dang are not banned from engaging in upland farming.

#### **3.1.4 Landless Households**

In Ban Dok Dang, there are 3 land-less households from the total 75. These land-less households do farming on the land provided by their relatives or neighbours, since they are new comers who cannot clear new land per policy of the

Department of Forestry banning forest clearance. Therefore, these households are mainly wage earners with an average income of 8,000-15,000 Baht per year.

**The family of Bu Hhei** is a household with the husband of over 30 years old and a wife over 20 years old. Both have come from Ban Mae Tho Noi 5 years ago and are Protestant with 4 children. The two elder children are studying in the village school. The two younger children stay home with their parents. Sometimes, they also go to the farm with their parents. Concerning the way of life of a woman in land-less household, her domestic role is similar to women in other households. When she wakes up in the morning, she will prepare food for her family members, pound rice and collect firewood from nearby forest. However, domestic work of this land-less family can be done either by a woman or a man, such as childcare, food preparation, feeding pigs and chicken.

After finishing domestic work, both the woman and man will go to work in the farm. When free from farm work, the man will go to earn wage in growing cash crop, or sometimes he will grow cash crop by himself on the land owned by his relatives after their rice harvest. The woman will help grow cash crop or earn wage after her farm and domestic work. Her work on cash crop farm is mainly on growing, weeding and harvesting, while her work on highland farm is mainly reciprocal labour practice with her kin and neighbours, especially in cultivating and harvesting rice.

In the evening after farm work, both the woman and man collect wild vegetable from forest for food back home. The woman pounds rice while her small daughters stay nearby. Then, she will feed her pigs. The man takes care of small children and helps prepare food. When the woman finishes feeding her two pigs, she comes to help prepare food. The son and the older children help take care of their smaller sisters and prepare food. Then, they have their dinner together. After the meal, the man might visit his neighbours or sometimes their neighbours visit his home to chat with him. The woman takes care of their small children and prepare feed for pigs. If she is not too tired, she will spin cotton or sew clothes before going to bed.

The woman in this land-less household will mainly work on farms. She helps her husband in every stage with assistance from their relatives and neighbours. In their farming, they continue to grow all kinds of local vegetable and plants, since they are the source of food for their family without costing money. At present, however, rice and vegetable production on upland does not give good yield because the land is not fertile anymore since it has been intensively used to grow upland rice and in certain years was also grown with cash crops. The man recalled that:

*"Making a living today is more difficult with no money. Now, one needs cash. We have to borrow money to buy food. I am sick and have to get some money to buy medicine, go to see a doctor, pay for my children. Therefore, my debt is growing every year. I do not have any solution."*



The family of *Phau bau* is a household whose husband came from Ban Mae Ya Noi in Chom Thong District and the wife is originally from Ban Dok Dang. After getting married, the man moved to live at the woman's house. They have a farmland of three-fourth of a rai given by the parents of the woman. This family practices traditional belief and has three children; two are boys and one girl. At present, their sons and daughter work in Chiang Mai and send money to support their family. Their daughter is married to a Karen working in Chiang Mai and has a small child. The youngest boy stays home to help his parents and earns wage from raising cows. Sometimes, he is a wage earner in cash crop production. When he earns money, he gives it to his mother to buy rice and food and pay other expenses.

Looking at the way of life for this family, the housewife is responsible for all domestic work. She is also the main party in farm work like other Karen women in general. This woman is working hard to support her family. The man also helps in the farm, but he normally earns wage and spends money on opium rather than spending it on his family. Therefore, the housewife has to shoulder heavy burden in everything.

At present, the husband is sick and cannot do anything. It is, therefore, the burden of the housewife and the son who stays at home. The husband talked about making a living that:

*"Each age is different from one another. Twenty years ago, life was difficult. One had to depend on the farm and grow all kinds of vegetable, such as taro, sweet potato, melon, vegetable for domestic consumption without having to buy any. All had something to eat and shared with one another. Food was tasty. Fish, dried fish, chilli sauce was also tasty. Without money we could still live. At present, we have to buy everything. Today, money can easily be earned, but one has to work very hard. The government does not allow us to do highland farming, and then what shall we eat? Households that have no rice field or cash crop land but have upland farm have to do upland farming. If the government does not allow us to do upland farming, it has to support our living. If it does not support our living, perhaps we have to stage a protest. Today, life is difficult. Money seems to have no value, but without money we cannot live."*

Concerning resource management at household level, this land-less household is primarily engaged in upland cultivation and earns additional income from cash crop production and wage. Domestic work is the main role of the woman. The husband sometimes helps his wife, like taking care of the children, preparing food and feeding animals. This land-less household maintains traditional way of upland farming by growing native plants for domestic consumption as well as being able to keep various seeds. Land-less households are a small number. Therefore, it is their role to maintain their traditional way of upland rice farming and bio-diversity in a sustainable manner.

Looking at both cases of land-less households and their role in resource management at household level, we can see that both women and men share the power in decision-making and work, especially in upland farming. However, in all activities of cash crop production, the men play the main role. For the case of land-less household which has no cash crop farm, both woman and man are the main wage earners, which is an alternative to the present mode of production. Farming on highland by these land-less households helps maintain bio-diversity, which is sustainable, if the government does not impose a ban on upland cultivation.

Production and resource management at household level in Ban Dok Dang is different in households with different economic status. Rich households have better means of production of land, capital and technology for commercial production than moderate, poor and land-less households do. However, the rich and moderate households have to intensively use natural resources, which seriously affects their health due to chemicals and depletion the soil. Poor and land-less households continue to rely primarily on rotation farming. They also enter commercial production as wage earners. They continue to produce rice and diverse vegetable for subsistence. This highland rice cultivation can help maintain balance of the nature better than commercial farming, which is a production that depends completely on external means. It creates insecurity on both yield and price. This situation pushes the villagers into serious debt.

Looking at production and resource management at household level we can clearly see changes of gender role in the rich households, because rich men are ready to adopt intensive commercial farming. They will make decision at all stages, starting from selecting varieties of crops to grow, investment that is related to outsiders, selling of the yield and financial management. Women play a minimal role. They are occupied mainly in domestic work in which men are not interested in at all. At the same time, these households also reduce their upland farming plot, which is the space women accumulate their wisdom in upland farming, collecting seeds and maintaining bio-diversity.

Gender role in the poor and land-less households corresponds to traditional mode of production, since both groups of households are primarily engaged in upland farming by growing rice and various vegetable for domestic consumption. Gender role in these households is based on mutual aid. After farming season, both of them earn wage as labour in commercial farming. They also help in domestic work, only in a household whose husband is sick does domestic work totally belongs to the woman. Although women have a heavier burden of their work, both men and women share this burden.

### **3.2 Resource Management at Household Level**

Resource management at household level in Ban Dok Dang is not merely related to production pattern of each category of households for their survival. Community members of Ban Dok Dang also practice a pattern of common property management. This is related to the use in production and sustainable conservation of

resources for the community at present and in the future. In addition, natural resource management of Ban Dok Dang Community is also an expression of ideology and belief in nature and the “Absolute” that support everyone in the community.

**3.2.1 Management of Forest, Soil and Water Resources:** Each category of households in the community has to depend on soil, water and forest resources for their living.

**Soil Resource:** Most households in the community are involved in management of soil resources, allocated as residential land, farmland and watershed area (see details in Chapter II). Houses in Ban Dok Dang are built on neighbouring mountain slopes. Land around the village is allocated as farmland for cropping. However, soil in different areas does not have the same richness. It can be classified by the use of community members as rice field, highland farm and cash crop plots. Management of soil resource differs in different categories of households, what they want to produce and on which kind of soil or type of their ownership.

**1. Rice Field:** In rainy season, people grow rice for domestic consumption, beginning in July. After harvest in November, they start to use their rice field to grow cash crops, such as tomato, sweet-bell pepper and cabbage, which is at the end of winter until beginning of summer. Most community members will grow tomato on their rice field by starting to prepare their land in January.

**2. Upland Farm:** Villagers can do farming on upland in one season, the rainy season. This is because upland rice cultivation depends totally on rainfall. On upland farms, they will grow rice and some vegetables. When they are farming on highland, they put up fences to prevent their animals from eating their crops. After harvesting rice, this land is public and left fallow to allow plants to grow again. In households growing upland rice and other crops on farm land, which is the main role of women, they realise the need to continue farming on upland rice because it is a sustainable way of life of the villagers of Ban Dok Dang rather than cash crop production that men adopt in the hope to improve their livelihood in the future, but actually results in financial loss.

**3. Cash Crop Land:** It is a newly cleared or original land, which is presently used as a permanent farmland with permanent fencing. Most of this land does not have water. It depends totally on rainfall. In cultivating crops on this plot, villagers also grow fruit trees, such as mango, jackfruit, banana, wild pear and lychee. They also grow cash crops mainly for market, such as tomato, cabbage, which can only be cultivated during the rainy season. In summer, they cannot grow any crop due to lack of irrigation system. Some areas are near water source and villagers can draw water to irrigate part of their farms.

Villagers also have another plot of land near their homes to grow native vegetable, such as chilli, eggplant, long bean, melon and varieties of vegetable, for food, as well as native herbs, which can be grown on cash crop land. Elder women cannot go to the farm because it is far away. They will use the land near their houses

to grow varieties of the vegetable that they used to grow on upland and will also collect seeds as they used to do at highland farms. Though some varieties of vegetable have disappeared because they are not relevant to this land, but housewives are satisfied to be able to grow vegetable for domestic consumption without having to spend money to buy it, which is not economical.

**Forest Resource:** *"Forest is another place that is everything for us villagers. It is a source of water, farmland, source of building material. We can find firewood and raise our animals. We can collect herbs and food in all seasons, like vegetable, plants, mushroom, bamboo and wild animals. Forest is also a dwelling place of spirits who are protecting everything in forest. It is also a place for offering rituals to pay respect to the nature and the 'Absolute' who is the original source of nature."*

Villagers of Ban Dok Dang divide forest area into watershed area, ritual forest area, utilized forest and prohibit forest (see details in Chapter II). They formulate strict regulations and practical traditions for management of each category of forest, which gives the priority on relationship with nature expressed as belief in the holy spirits. This is an ideology that human being does to nature and fellow human beings. But it is an ideology that is active and adaptable to social contexts and age.

Forest management patterns practised by each socio- economic class in Ban Dok Dang community is similar to one another. In the old days, there was forest clearing for upland rice cultivation. The rich would get more land because they spent money to hire other labour. The poor would depend totally on their family labour, and, thus, got smaller plot for rice cultivation. At present, however, the use of forest by villagers has changed. There is log felling for house building and clearing for cash crop cultivation.

In conclusion, both women and men benefit from forest. Men go to the forest to take care of cattle or collect wild products, such as vegetable, honeybee, herbs, rats, birds, and so on. Sometimes, they also go hunting, normally at the beginning of rainy season. A young man told a story on hunting at the beginning of rainy season that: *"Villagers will go to forest before dawn and at night. They can go together with 1-2 people. They will trace footprints, such as deer, wild boar. They will follow the footprints and can hunt wild animals for food."*

The author had a chance to meet a deer. A son of the host family caught a deer. It was around 8 at night. The son and parents helped prepare the meat as food on that night. They also invited their neighbours to eat the meat. Villagers came and went for one day to join this feast. However, there was still deer meat left. The host family kept the remaining meat as meals for 2-3 days more.

Hunting in forest is done in summer. Both women and men, about 20 people, help chase wild animals or shout a loud noise to frighten wild animals by

throwing sticks. Men make traps to catch wild animals. They can catch many animals, such as wild boar, deer, wild fowls, rats and birds. When villagers catch animals, they divide the catch among those who take part in the hunting. Women, men and children get their fair share because villagers believe that wild animals belong to all.

In addition, they also believe that whoever hunts animals has to share. If he does not share, his livelihood or production will be affected and they would never be able to hunt again. For those who hunt in summer and beginning of rainy season, if they can catch more animals and have more chance to go hunting, they will not kill the animals because they believe that this will affect their life too. Villagers hunt only for food and share with their neighbours.

Regarding the use of forest by women, after finishing farm work they will collect firewood, vegetable as pig feed, herbs and vegetable in a forest on the bank of a pond, including mushroom and small and large fish, which are wild products they consume everyday on their way back home. Wild product that can be sold is "Luk Gor" (common seed that can be eaten found at the forest floor). Villagers will sell this for 3 Baht a litre. Some may collect for selling to visitors coming to buy in the village. Some will sell it to traders in Ban Kong Roi. Before and after school, students will run into forest to collect Luk Gor to sell to teachers who will resell in a market. Often, when I asked questions about what the housewives would prepare before mealtime, the answers would always be, *"I don't know yet, but we are not afraid. There is plenty of food in forest. We shall see in a moment. Sometimes, it is difficult to find, but we will not starve to death because we have forest. Though there is not much food, but enough to feed us until now."*

At present, the Department of Forestry tries to declare forest around Ban Dok Dang and neighbouring communities as Mae Tho National Park. This would limit the size of farmland used by the villagers. They are afraid that they will have no farmland to make their living or it will not be enough for the future. Therefore, they try to occupy land and develop it as their permanent farmland. This action leads to permanent disappearance of forest. Actually, villagers have been living with forest for a long time and know how to make use of forest. They also know how to conserve and live with forest in a sustainable manner. However, the voice echoed an outside voice that blames Karen as destroying forest, which is a myth as the land around the village, about 15-20 square kilometres, is still a green and rich forest as in the past.

**3.2.2 Animal Husbandry at Household Level:** Most villagers will keep their animals to roam around freely, which is a normal pattern of local animal raising without many regulations. We can classify animal raising into two main categories.

1. Animals kept at home, such as pigs, chicken and duck, and so on. Villager feed their poultry only in the morning and evening. In the daytime, they roam around freely. Pigs will be fastened or put in a cage and are fed only once a day.

2. Animals left in forest, such as cows and buffaloes. They allow cows and buffaloes to graze in forest. The owner will go to see in the evening and tie them and will release them again in the morning to graze naturally.

At the household level, raising of different kinds of animal is similar. It is the role of women to feed animals kept at home. The task of raising animals left in forest belongs to men. Women sometimes help take care of these animals.

The general problem in animals raising is animal diseases and limited space for animal raising, especially pigs and chicken. In a cycle of one year, the owner face this problem once when their animals die. Animal are not raised for market. They raise animals for domestic consumption and use in various rituals. If there is ritual offering, they have to buy chickens from town. Each year, they use many chickens.

For animals kept in forest, they also have a problem of limited space since the mode of production has changed from subsistence to market oriented production. When they produce for market, they need more land for production. Therefore, there is expansion of farmland in forest, gradually reducing grazing area. At present, grazing area in forest is very minimal.

In addition, production for market also creates a problem of chemical residue. In the past, chemicals were not used in production. At present, production depends on agricultural inputs to increase yield. They use more fertiliser, pesticides and other chemicals in production. However, rural farmers are careless in using chemicals. They do not consider future impacts since they lack knowledge on how to use chemicals. This has yielded impacts on the users and ecosystem because of toxic substance left to deplete the soil and water in streams or ponds are poisonous. This seriously affects all creatures when animals come to drink water in streams or ponds or eat grass in cultivable land. As a result, many animals have died. This also leads to conflict among members in the village who have to negotiate and conclude an agreement in water use.

In conclusion, looking at domestic work at household level (see Table 3.1), we see that all activities are done by both adult and young women, starting with food preparation, cloth washing, childcare, house cleaning and collecting firewood. Water drawing and fetching is the work of women and men, children and adults as well. In addition, caring and feeding animals kept at home, such as chicken and pigs, is done mainly by women, both adult and young. Sometimes, men also help if the women are busy. Raising animals left in farmland or forest, such as cows and buffaloes, is the task of men, both adults and boys. At present, adult and young women take care of cows and buffaloes for men who are busy in cash crop production.

Villagers remarked that women and men could replace one another to do domestic work. Sometimes, they could even ask assistance from their neighbours and relatives. Realistically, what can actually be seen at present is that all domestic work

is done by women and they also have to help men in commercial production as well, while men occasionally help do domestic work.

We can see that women and men can do almost all the work of others, both domestic and field work. Some women can even work as hard as men can. There are certain things that women cannot do, such as climbing tall trees, co-ordinating with or contacting outsiders, and so on. Therefore, we can see that villagers do not look at gender role completely separate from one another. They look at it as complimentary, mutually making decision and mutual responsibility.

However, domestic work in each category of households is also different, making gender role of men and women also different. Each year, the rich and middle-class households grow rice and cash crops for market throughout a cultivation season. In growing cash crops for market, they will spend their own capital in this investment. In rainy season they will grow wet rice and reduce land area for highland rice cultivation. They will put an emphasis on production for market. Women of the rich and middle-class households have to do domestic work alone while the men concentrate on cash cropping. Furthermore the women have to help men with cash crops.

For the poor, both men and women help each other with domestic work. They grow rice mainly for domestic consumption rather than for market. Highland rice cultivation does not need capital, but only labouring in production. They do not hire anyone, but practice reciprocal labour with their neighbours and most of them primarily rely on family labour. The poor produce for market in certain periods, but their production for market also depend on moneylenders outside their village, in which they do not have to pay interest as they will pay back the loan by selling the yield to them at the price fixed by them. The poor households do not seek large loan, because farm prices are not stable. Therefore, they do not want to take great risk for fear that the yield will come out when produce prices are down, leading them indebt. For land-less households, they will farm upland rice cultivation and earn wage from cash crop activity of the villagers and outsiders as well as wage earning in general.

**Table 3.1 Calendar of the Domestic Work and Gender Role**

Domestic Work	Month											
		Feb	May	April	May	Jun	July	Aus	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
• Washing		F Fc			→						→	
• Cooking		F Fc			→						→	
• Feed children		FFc Mc			→						→	
• Cleaning		F Fc			→						→	
• Collect Fire-wood		FFc Mc			→						→	
• Fetch Water		FFcMc			→						→	
Cattle Raising												
- Chicken		FFc			→						→	
- Pig		FFc			→						→	
- Cow		M Mc			→						→	
- Buffalo		M Mc			→						→	

**F = Female, Fc = Female Child, M = Male, Mc = Male Child**

**Source : Village Survey in 2001**

In general, women in rural society have similar roles, which we can see from their daily way of life. Most women still hold on to a traditional way of life, regardless of whether they are from rich or poor families. Although the way of life leads to definite division of roles and functions, what still remains is that women and men still help one another. The difference is just a matter of degree. At present, this has changed a bit, because in the past women and men would help in upland farming. At present, villagers are engaged in cash crop cultivation and women and men, especially husband and wife, do not have time to work together in the farm on at home as before.



At present, capitalis economic production partly help society as a whole to improve livelihood, but some parts are getting worse. This has created difference in social classes in rural society. Consequently, the role of women is different. Women in rich families have enough land to grow rice for domestic consumption for the whole year. They can do upland farming less and work less hard. Women in the poor or land-less households have to work harder.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Resource management at the household level in rich and middle-class households have greater access and control over their resources, because of their original assets of inherited resources, as earlier mentioned, such as rice field, upland farm and cash crop plots. These households reduce the size of upland farm to expand cash crop production.

In addition, in accessing costs of cash crop production of both categories of households, especially the rich, they can act as agents for moneylenders and villagers. At the same time, these households also borrow from moneylenders and BAAC to buy inputs to improve their livelihood. Furthermore, their farmland is near water resources and the soil is fertile, which is good for cultivation. Therefore, these households are engaged in intensive commercial cropping. Although it needs high investment, risks disease and pests, and unstable price as fixed by middlemen and outside market, they continue to be engaged in intensive cash crop production for market.

Concerning gender role in the rich and middle-class households, in the past women and men used to help one another in their work or would do the work for others. At present, domestic work is solely the task of women. Women will also take part in cash crop production, which increases their burden and workload. At the same time, women have less free time after their work on highland farming and rice culture. Therefore, food production activities, seeds collecting from farmland and domestic work, such as spinning and weaving, will decreases or disappear. The most serious effect is that women are losing theirs rights in access and control of natural resources which is the source of their life and their family. In addition, men have access and control over the resources in domestic sphere at household level by exercising power in making decision on financial matters. The more they are involved in commercial agriculture, the less women have status in decision making. Women's role is inferior to men's. They also work harder than men.

On the contrary, the poor and land-less households continue to lead their life in a traditional way, such as upland rice culture. However, access and control over the resources is limited because they do not have access to means of production for commercial cropping. What they can do is to earn wage in this production system. However, apart from being the households which are able to maintain the way of life that depends on nature, they also help to maintain the balance of nature. The rich and middle class households are active in enducing a transformation in resource management.

The poor and land-less households continue to do farming on uplands growing rice and varieties of vegetable for domestic consumption without depending on outside factors. However, the state policy to announce the area of Mae Tho National Park over their farmland is another factor that pushes the poor and land-less households to seek alternatives by earning wage or sending their children into labour market in order to survive.

All categories of households of socio-economic status, as discussed in this chapter depend on natural resources, especially soil, water and forest. This is evident in their close relationship to and balance with nature and amongst human beings. This relationship has been disturbed by external factors, namely cash crop cultivation, resulting in several adverse effects on community members. The community is trying to adapt and maintain its identity and potential to manage natural resources at household level amidst these current conditions.