

BRIEF SERIES: VIET NAM

# Viet Nam's experience with developing Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (PRAP)



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## REDD+ and the rationale for sub-national planning

The Cancun Agreements of 2010 ([paragraph 71](#)) request countries to develop a National Strategy (NS) or Action Plan (AP) for REDD+ implementation. Such a document is mandatory, if countries intend to become eligible for result-based payments. In recent years, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Viet Nam, have developed what are generally referred to as National REDD+ Strategies<sup>1</sup>. These Strategies are designed to direct policies and investments towards actions that will clearly contribute to climate change mitigation goals<sup>2</sup>, through their impacts on forests. In other words, they are designed to address direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation effectively. They are also expected to complement existing forestry strategies, such as Viet Nam's Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAP) and national socio-economic development plans.

Implementing a National REDD+ Strategy will often require many different practical interventions across the whole country. The more diverse a country is, the more varied these interventions will be, in order to suit different environmental, social and economic contexts and the different factors that drive forest loss and degradation, and prevent or discourage forest expansion and improvement. So, while a National REDD+ Strategy sets the overall objectives, targets and approaches, specific actions and interventions should ideally be planned and monitored at a more local scale.

When Viet Nam's Forest Administration (VNFOREST) designed the UN-REDD Viet Nam Phase II Programme in 2012, it was proposed to tailor the broad provisions of the National REDD+ Action Programme (NRAP) according to conditions on the ground,

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1 Called National REDD+ Action Programme (NRAP) in Viet Nam.

2 For example, the 2015 Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Viet Nam aims to increase forest cover to 45 percent by 2030.

thus developing Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (PRAPs) in each of the programme's six pilot provinces. These would be aligned with existing provincial Social and Economic Development Plans (SEDPs), which follow a five-year planning cycle. Provincial SEDPs are used to generate provincial Land Use Plans and Forest Protection and Development Plans (FPDPs). PRAPs could therefore take current plans as a basis, identifying to what extent planned actions are already aligned with NRAP objectives.

In Viet Nam, a PRAP's role is to operationalise the NRAP and its component Policies and Measures (PAMs) by tailoring PAMs to address both local-specific drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and barriers to expansion of forest enhancement activities. Developing PRAPs allows for more direct involvement of a wide range of provincial stakeholders, including sectors beyond forestry, in the planning process. This increases transparency, ownership and the social sustainability of REDD+ interventions. PRAP development recognises that, in order to be effective, REDD+ implementation must align with provincial planning processes. Ultimately, the results of PRAP implementation may also affect subsequent provincial planning cycles to bring about a transformational change in how forest landscapes are managed.



## Evolution of the PRAP process in Viet Nam

In 2012, developing PRAPs was a novel idea. According to the Cancun Agreements, there was no obligation to develop sub-national REDD+ plans. Since Viet Nam developed and piloted the concept, it has been spread to several other countries in Asia. For example, India, Lao PDR, Mongolia and Nepal have all built on the experience from Viet Nam and introduced similar sub-national planning approaches to facilitate the implementation of National REDD+ Strategies.

Beginning in 2013, the UN-REDD Programme worked with national partners to develop a step-by-step process for formulating PRAPs, through a multi-stakeholder consultative approach. The Programme also supported VNFOREST and the Provincial Peoples Committees of Bac Kan, Binh Thuan, Ca Mau, Ha Tinh, Lam Dong and Lao Cai provinces in gathering baseline information and building the capacity of national technical institutes and partners to guide stakeholders through the PRAP development process. In December 2015, MARD Decision 5414 formalised a set of guidelines, based on the experience gained through the UN-REDD Programme, and made the Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in all provinces responsible for developing and implementing PRAPs in order to contribute to NRAP objectives, to identify gaps in finance for implementation, and prioritise resource mobilisation efforts to fill these gaps.

Since 2015, not only have all six UN-REDD Programme pilot provinces completed PRAPs, but over 20 provinces altogether went through the process, with the support of several international development partners, including JICA, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank, USAID and GIZ, building up a substantial body of expertise among national and provincial institutions.



## Conclusions and Lessons from PRAP experiences

Based on the experiences and lessons learnt from the six pilots carried out in UN-REDD provinces, the PRAP development process can make a cost-effective contribution to operationalising national REDD+ strategies, monitoring the implementation and impact of PAMS, and developing a safeguards information system. Specifically, a PRAP process can:

- adapt the National REDD+ Strategy to the provincial level to identify REDD+ interventions that provide a strategic, locally appropriate and cost-effective response to the specific circumstances, drivers and barriers in a particular province;
- identify potential benefits, as well as social and environmental risks and risk mitigation measures that minimise trade-offs between objectives, and better ensure safeguards;
- increase stakeholder ownership and transparency in the planning process, thereby strengthening ownership and social sustainability of the PRAP and REDD+ implementation;
- maximise complementarity of PRAPs with core provincial planning processes, and foster cross-sector coordination;
- facilitate financing of PRAP implementation by addressing concerns of potential investors, particularly regarding results-orientation, ownership and participation; and
- develop national capacity to apply a generic integrated planning methodology to a range of natural resource management contexts.

Several challenges also emerged during and after the PRAP development processes. The major constraint to effective PRAP development was the absence of strategic and specific PAMS within the original NRAP of 2012. Without such details, PRAPs risk being misaligned with



national priorities when they are eventually defined. However, partly as a result of the experiences with the PRAP process, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) recognised this issue and engaged in a comprehensive revision of the 2012 NRAP, resulting in the revised NRAP that was approved by MARD Decision 419/QD-TTg in April 2017.

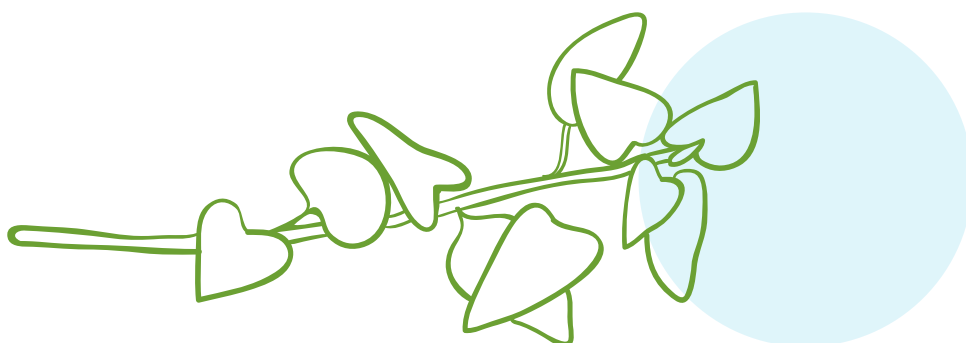
## Other challenges included:

- reconciling data from different sectors and from different administrative levels and management units within the forest sector, which at times delayed discussions on particular matters or drivers;
- focussing multi-stakeholder priorities on actions with the most potential to contribute to solid REDD+ outcomes in a province, as sometimes “pet projects” emerge that have little relevance to REDD+ and GHG emission reductions; and
- countering the high expectations of results-based payments, which may later lead to frustrations when the payments do not materialise.

At the sub-national level, it can also be easily overlooked or forgotten that PAMs that address indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation can play a more significant role in achieving climate change mitigation goals than those that are more clearly forest-centred.

The pilot PRAPs developed through the UN-REDD Programme were not clearly and fully integrated with other planning processes, partly due to the timeframe of the Programme not being in alignment with the five-year planning cycle. The National Planning Law, passed in November 2017, came into effect in January 2019. This provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that such integration will happen in the future. Moreover, provinces will need to adapt their existing monitoring systems to facilitate adaptive management and allow the review, validation and adjustment of PRAP objectives and interventions to changing circumstances. Such systems need to go beyond existing methods of provincial data collection and analysis, if they are to incorporate the challenge of tackling climate change.

As provinces, for the first time, consider Viet Nam’s Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDC), and their role in directing planning and investment to achieve climate change mitigation goals, the experiences gained through the PRAP process are expected to ensure that forest sector stakeholders are fully prepared for this new challenge.





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