

Lessons Learned

Viet Nam UN-REDD Programme, Phase 1

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

June 2012

Executive Summary

When Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) became a headline issue at international climate change talks in 2007, few negotiators or observers had Viet Nam in mind. However, shortly after the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in December 2007, Viet Nam, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) was among the first countries to express interest in the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), which aims to support the development of national REDD programmes. MARD's argument was that a recent record of expansion in national forest area, due to a successful afforestation programme, masked a steady decline in the area and quality of natural forest, which existing policies had been unable to address. These circumstances drew the attention of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), when they launched their joint UN-REDD Programme in September 2008, making Viet Nam one of the original nine partner countries.

Viet Nam has since progressed further with its national UN-REDD Programme than any other partner country. Phase 1 began in August 2009 and is due to conclude in June 2012. Over this period, the Programme has made a significant impact on the domestic forestry sector, in terms of policy and practice, and has been the most significant initiative for REDD+ readiness in Viet Nam. It has achieved some notable successes, when measured against its own objectives. For example, its work on Benefit Distribution Systems (BDS) began early and has generated important discussions among forestry policy makers. In the pilot province of Lam Dong, the pilot exercises on applying the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the context of REDD+ were internationally recognised as ground-breaking. The Programme also made a significant contribution to the success of new multi-stakeholder bodies, such as the REDD Network and six Sub-Technical Working Groups (STWGs) that contribute to research, development and decision-making processes in REDD+ Readiness.

However, not all of the Programme's objectives could be successfully accomplished during Phase 1. For example, although it is essential for the Government of Viet Nam to develop and approve a National REDD+ Programme (NRP) in order to provide effective governance and oversight for the UN-REDD Programme and all other REDD-related initiatives, this work was delayed. The Programme's anticipated impacts beyond Viet Nam's national borders, through 'regional approaches' to REDD+, are not highly visible.

The wealth of experience generated during Phase 1 of the Programme offers important lessons, both for the design of Phase 2 of the Programme in Viet Nam, and for other UN-REDD and REDD+ country programmes around the world. They may also have relevance beyond the scope of REDD+, for the wider field of forestry and land-use policy and practice.

This report outlines the lessons that have been learned by a range of different stakeholders in Viet Nam, as a result of their involvement in different activities and discussions during Phase 1 of the Programme. They demonstrate a widespread appreciation of the inclusive nature of REDD+ discussions but also some persistent misunderstandings about the nature of REDD+, its likely benefits, and its limitations.

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Acronyms

APFC	Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission
APFNet	Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BDS	Benefit Distribution System
CERDA	Centre for Research and Development in Upland Areas
CF	Community Forestry/Community Forest
COP	Conference of Parties
CPC	Commune Peoples' Committee
CSDM	Centre for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Provincial level)
DEMA	Department of Ethnic Minority Affairs (Provincial level)
DoF	Department of Finance (Provincial level)
DONRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Provincial Level)
DPC	District Peoples Committee
DPI	Department of Planning and Investment (Provincial level)
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation (of the United Nations)
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (of the World Bank)
FD	Forest Department (sub-department of DARD)
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
FIPI	Forest Inventory and Planning Institute
FIS	Forest Information System
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FORMIS	Forest Modelling Information System
FPD	Forest Protection Department (sub-department of DARD)
FPDP	Forest Protection and Development Plan
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FSSP	Forest Sector Support Partnership
GIZ	German Agency for International Development
GoV	Government of Viet Nam
ICD	International Cooperation Division (of MARD)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NFA	National Assessment and Long Term Monitoring of the Forest and Tree Resources in Viet Nam
NFI	National Forest Inventory
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRP	National REDD+ Programme
PCM	Participatory Carbon Monitoring
PEB	Programme Executive Board
PFES	Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services
PFM	Participatory Forest Monitoring

PMU	Programme Management Unit
PPC	Provincial Peoples' Committee
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
REDD+	REDD plus the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SFE	State Forest Enterprise
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SRD	Sustainable Rural Development
STWG	Sub-Technical Working Group
TFF	Trust Fund for Forests
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
VCM	Voluntary Carbon Market
VFU	Vietnam Forestry University
VND	Vietnamese Dong
VNFOREST	Viet Nam Forest Administration (of MARD)
VRO	Viet Nam REDD+ Office
WG	Working Group
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Mr. Ben Vickers and Ms. Nguyen Hang. The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the staff of the Programme Management Unit (PMU) of the UN-REDD National Programme in Viet Nam, in particular Ms Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, Ms Le Na, Ms Hoang Vu Lan Phuong and Ms Akane Hanai, for their work in arranging appointments in Ha Noi and logistics for the field trip to Lam Dong province. Thanks also go to Dr Nguyen Ba Ngai, Ms Pham Minh Thoa and Dr Pham Manh Cuong of VNFOREST for their crucial support and cooperation, without which a study of this nature would not have been possible. To all those individuals listed at the end of this document, who graciously and generously gave their time and provided such important insights into the impacts of the UN-REDD National Programme, we express our gratitude. Great appreciation is reserved for the villagers of Kala Tong gu in Bao Thuan commune of Di Linh district, Lam Dong, for their hospitality. And finally, thanks to Dr Thomas Enters of UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, for his valuable comments and suggestions for improvements to earlier drafts of the document.

Introduction

The UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme has implemented numerous activities and achieved significant outputs over the last two years. While lessons learned during this period had some bearing on the implementation of the Programme, no comprehensive effort has been undertaken to document lessons learned so that they can be distributed widely in Viet Nam and beyond, and inform implementation of the National REDD+ Programme and Phase 2 of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme. Hence, the objective of this review is to collect and analyze internal and external lessons learned during the first two years of the Programme and provide recommendations to:

- (1) guide the Programme in its Phase 2 implementation;
- (2) guide the National REDD+ Programme; and
- (3) inform other countries getting ready for REDD+.

Therefore, this document is not an evaluation of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme. It is a summary of the subjective opinions of a wide range of individuals in response to the question ‘What have we learned during the implementation of the UN-REDD Programme in Viet Nam to date?’ Some opinions formed during this time may have arisen through involvement in REDD+ initiatives beyond the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme.

As a collection of subjective views, it is important to stress the following up front:

- The lessons presented do not represent the opinions of the authors, the UN-REDD Programme, FAO UNDP and UNEP, the Government of Viet Nam nor of any institutions connected with the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme.
- Although care has been taken to present a balanced set of lessons, there are inevitably points that may be subject to valid dispute.
- No lessons have been included which are the opinion of a sole individual or stakeholder group, unless they could be independently corroborated by another party.
- This document is an account of the lessons that, in fact, *have been* learned, not those that an objective assessment would conclude *should* have been learned. It may therefore include opinions that are factually incorrect or the result of misunderstandings. The authors have indicated where this is the case.

The prime source material for the document was face-to-face interviews conducted during February and March 2012 in Ha Noi, Da Lat and Lam Ha and Di Linh districts of Lam Dong Province, Viet Nam. Programme documents were used to check facts and to align the views of different interviewees. A full list of interviewees is provided at the end of the document, broken down by stakeholder group. The authors do not claim that this constitutes a fully representative cross-section of REDD+ stakeholders in Viet Nam. Some groups, notably private sector and government bodies from outside the forest sector, are under-represented. This is either because they were unavailable for interviews, or did not include individuals who could answer the general question above, due to lack of familiarity with the UN-REDD programme.

Interpreting the Lessons

The lessons have been organised into nine categories, representing distinct activity areas and aspects of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme. Interviews were loosely structured around the same set of categories, as follows:

1. **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC):** The activities constituting the first practical application, anywhere in the world, of FPIC principles in the context of REDD+.
2. **Benefit Distribution System (BDS):** The activities involving exploration of appropriate systems of resource allocation, and associated costs and risks, in a future REDD+ programme for Viet Nam.
3. **Participatory Carbon Monitoring (PCM):** The activities concerned with the development of a role for community-based information generation within a future Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for REDD+ in Viet Nam.
4. **REDD+ Consultation Networks and Working Groups:** The initiation and operation of a national REDD Network, six Sub-Technical Working Groups (STWGs) and provincial REDD+ Working Group in Lam Dong, the UN-REDD pilot province.
5. **Engagement of Civil Society, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Private Sector:** The participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) national and international NGOs, and private sector representatives, in consultation and decision-making processes in the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme.
6. **Engagement of Non-forest Sectors:** The participation of Vietnamese government organisations and institutions, outside the Viet Nam Forest Administration (VNFOREST), within consultation networks and decision-making processes in the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme.
7. **Regional Approaches:** The activities pertaining to Outcome 3¹ of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, concerning the sharing of lessons and technical assistance to the wider region.
8. **Forest Information Systems (FIS):** The lessons of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme that are of wider relevance, beyond REDD+, for forest information systems, forest management and forest sector governance in Viet Nam.
9. **National REDD+ Management Structure, including UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme:** The structure and operation of the institutions that are directly involved in management and decision-making within the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, and the relationships between them, including the Programme Management Unit (PMU), Viet Nam REDD+ Office (VRO), FAO, UNDP and UNEP, Programme Executive Board (PEB) and other relevant government bodies.

The responses of all stakeholders under each category have been amalgamated and condensed into distinct 'lessons', which can be expressed as a single sentence or phrase. Each lesson is followed by a short passage containing necessary justification and explanation, based on the outcomes of the interviews.

Learning Status: A Hierarchy of Knowledge

In recognition of the progressive nature of learning, this document uses a simple hierarchy to indicate how well each lesson has been learned and incorporated into the development of stakeholders' activities and knowledge – its **Learning Status**. The three stages of the hierarchy are as follows:

1. **Unrecognized Lessons:** Lessons that have not been fully acknowledged or expressed by any stakeholders, but which are evident from their combined responses. To address these lessons, they must first be appreciated, discussed and acknowledged by all concerned stakeholders.
2. **Partially Recognized Lessons:** Lessons that are appreciated and acknowledged by at least some stakeholders but for which no solutions or strategies have been expressed, and, in some cases, are still either disputed or unacknowledged by other stakeholders.

¹ Outcome 3: Improved knowledge of approaches to reduce regional displacement of emissions.

3. Fully Recognized Lessons: Lessons that are widely appreciated and acknowledged by all or most stakeholders and for which solutions and strategies have been proposed, developed and sometimes also implemented.

Each lesson is followed by one or more *recommendations*, again drawn primarily from the responses of interviewees.

Section 1: Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

1.1 The FPIC process facilitates efficient programme planning

Though not the first time that local interlocutors² have been used in Viet Nam, it is very significant that the government has made a substantial commitment to engage local communities and ethnic minorities directly in the planning of a major initiative, giving them a chance to be fully informed of the activities planned under the UN-REDD Programme, to give feedback, and ultimately to provide or withhold consent, without the direct involvement of government officials.

The use of local interlocutors is crucial to the process and a significant improvement on past practice. Previously, facilitators would simply explain regulations – a very top-down approach. By taking local government personnel out of the consultation process itself, the quality and utility of the information gained from local people, particularly ethnic minorities, was substantially improved.

The FPIC pilot exercise also demonstrated that we can change the ideology of the leadership at the local level, with regard to consultation and planning processes.

UN-REDD Viet Nam: Pioneering FPIC in REDD+

The UN-REDD National Programme in Viet Nam provided the first practical example, worldwide, of the application of FPIC principles in REDD+. For more information, see the Programme's report on the process, and the independent evaluation and verification report by RECOFTC, both downloadable from the REDD+ Viet Nam website (<http://vietnam-redd.org>).

Learning status: 3³. Local authorities in particular are very enthusiastic about the use of young, independent local interlocutors. They see potential in terms of increased efficiency of local consultation, and in transferring the approach to non-forest sectors.

Recommendation: Invest in the development of a local interlocutor network during UN-REDD phase 2,

1.2 Integrate progressive learning into the FPIC process

Organising the FPIC process in three phases was a very good idea. Each phase was followed by reflection, allowing facilitators to unpack lessons and incorporate practical improvements in subsequent exercises. This approach somewhat mitigated the rushed nature of the exercise by showing, for example, the progression towards greater transparency and autonomy in collective decision-making (show of hands was replaced by secret ballot), and the minimization of the role of local authorities.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely understood.

² In contrast to 'facilitators', whose role is to assist in delivering information and capacity building services from a project/programme to grassroots beneficiaries, 'interlocutors' also serve as spokespersons on behalf of their communities, so performing a two-way communication role.

³ For an explanation of the rating system see previous page.

Recommendation: Progressive learning should be incorporated into all aspects of the UN-REDD Programme, where possible.

1.3 Awareness raising has often been misleading and confusing rather than informative

Local communities and ethnic minorities do not need intricate information about global climate change and its potential impacts in order to be fully informed of the activities that affect them through the UN-REDD Programme or REDD+ implementation. Awareness raising activities should focus on practical forestry and land management issues. Local people assume that information being imparted to them will be of direct relevance to their livelihoods – why else would the interlocutors dedicate so much time and resources to awareness raising? They sometimes draw the wrong conclusions as a result (e.g. “we had four rains this year because we began protecting our forest better”). Climate change issues are often too complex to be fully understood by local communities, but this will not be addressed by longer or more numerous events. It should instead be addressed by more appropriate materials and content, focused on practical forest and land-use activities. Design of appropriate awareness raising materials is likely to be more cost intensive than design of an FPIC process.

Learning status: 2. Only some people working with the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, as well as CSOs, are aware of the poor effectiveness of the awareness raising materials.

Recommendation: Where possible, relate awareness raising to pre-existing programmes, particularly where local people currently have unclear relationship with forests and lack collective rights. Instead of REDD+ technicians, give communications specialists, with the help of local interlocutors and field-based CSOs, the lead in developing an awareness raising strategy.

1.4 FPIC for REDD+ is an ongoing process, rather than a single event

The FPIC piloting exercise implemented by the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme did not give enough time for people to discuss among themselves, to think about the meaning of REDD+ or to think about the various decisions they would have to make. FPIC in REDD+ is essentially an ongoing process of negotiation and communication. Consultation and consent must be sought whenever activities or policies affect concerned communities. Duration of awareness raising events and appropriate communication channels are both important.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is appreciated by most stakeholders.

Recommendation: Future FPIC processes should not only focus on voting as the final key decision-making exercise. They should focus instead on a continuous, transparent and equitable process of negotiation between local people and the initiators of REDD+ activities.

1.5 Don't take new terms into the field

Unfamiliar terms, such as REDD+ and FPIC, when used outside of a legal or academic environment, encourage stakeholders to view the processes concerned as new and exotic. In the context of FPIC, particularly at the grassroots level, this distracts from the essential nature of the exercise; 'best practice' in consultation and participatory decision-making. Similarly, it is counterproductive to focus on the term "REDD+" during engagement with local people. At the grassroots level, it is important to emphasise that, in practical terms, REDD+ and FPIC are not new.

Learning status: 1. This lesson has not been learned by stakeholders but is evident from the feedback obtained. Local authorities highlight the confusing nature of the new terms.

Recommendation: Local interlocutors, as well as the communities themselves, should not be encouraged to think that they are 'doing FPIC', but instead focus on the principles and processes encompassed by the concept. A more effective approach to grassroots engagement in REDD+ is to concentrate on the more accessible concepts behind each of the five REDD+ activities. Don't try to translate new terms but use familiar, Vietnamese vocabulary and local language as necessary.

1.6 FPIC is applicable when there is something to negotiate, and not before

FPIC consists of two parallel sets of activities: awareness raising and negotiation. If a project or programme has not begun the process of developing a proposal for activities that must be subject to consent under FPIC principles, then it is not ready to enter into an FPIC process. An attempt to follow the steps of FPIC in such a situation will lead to confusion on all sides. It may also risk undermining trust between local people and authorities, by raising new issues and expectations before they can be properly addressed and negotiated.

Learning status: 2. Many stakeholders, from both government and civil society, felt that it was problematic to carrying out the FPIC process before the start of activities on the ground.

Recommendation: Awareness raising can begin at any time, preferably as early as possible, but it should not be explicitly labelled as part of an FPIC process until negotiations are ready to begin. Wait until the Programme has a proposal to bring to the community and it is clear what activities (in each location) will be undertaken.

1.7 FPIC must be adapted to the national and cultural context

Viet Nam's political and cultural context is different to most other countries, particularly with regard to ethnic minorities and participatory approaches. It is not appropriate to insist on international norms that may not be implementable. Although FPIC must be an independent process, it is not possible to avoid involving the local government in planning and organising activities. Village-level decision-making is still quite weak. The FPIC process will therefore require substantial support, time and engagement of government bodies, as well as civil society stakeholders, in order to approach international norms.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely understood in Viet Nam, but not fully appreciated by international NGOs and other parties to UNFCCC.

Recommendation: Many lessons of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme in FPIC cannot be directly extrapolated to other countries or used as the basis for international guidelines for FPIC for REDD+.

1.8 The aim of FPIC is empowerment, not propaganda

There is still a risk of mistaking awareness raising with propaganda; the aim of FPIC is not to secure consent for REDD+ through promotion, but to empower local people with the capacity to negotiate on a level playing field. There is a risk of bias; the culture of Viet Nam is generally geared towards consent, and to follow the guidance of authorities. Interlocutors themselves will have difficulty escaping this mindset. Most of the information provided to communities during the FPIC process encouraged consent, rather than explaining options. Decisions may not have been based on full information. When the costs were explained properly, some stakeholders, particularly in local government, were more hesitant about consent.

Learning status: 2. This is one lesson that is better understood at central level than at local level, which is where it must be appreciated in order for appropriate action to be taken.

Recommendation: Potential problems with REDD+ should be more emphasized. The risk of consent should be highlighted, as well as the importance of a recourse mechanism. Communities should be able to report concerns and complaints to agencies independent of the FPIC process, and independent of the government.

Section 2: Benefit Distribution System (BDS)

2.1 The topic of BDS generates widespread interest and valuable debate on REDD+

Benefit distribution goes to the heart of forest governance – how to ensure that resources are directed so that they achieve policy goals. Different stakeholders have varying perspectives on the relative merits of forest policy goals, leading to interesting and profound debates about the nature of REDD+. Unlike some other REDD+ topics, much of the discussion is led by national stakeholders, not international technicians and experts.

However, the BDS conversation remains broadly theoretical because it is still largely removed from on-the-ground activities. The topic of ‘Benefit Distribution’ inevitably implies financial payments and there is thus an increasing tendency for some stakeholders to equate REDD+ with money, neglecting alternative non-monetary incentives and practical measures.

Learning status: 2. The positive aspects of the BDS discussions are widely appreciated, but the precautionary aspects less so.

Recommendation: BDS discussions have resulted in two quality reports⁴ and laid a solid foundation that can be built on. The Programme should summarise and publicise these reports widely. However, in phase 2,

⁴ Both reports downloadable from the “REDD Vietnam” website at:

consider a change in terminology from *benefit distribution* to, for example, *resource allocation* (considering also the impact of a change of terminology in Vietnamese language) as a means of reducing the focus on payments. Perhaps, the whole concept of positive incentives should be reconsidered, in light of the design of policies and measures for phase 2.

2.2 We cannot devise appropriate BDS before we know the policies and measures to be implemented

Different policies and measures require different financing modalities; direct payments to individuals, groups, companies or local bodies; in-kind payments; subsidies; access to loans; stronger rights etc. In phase 1, the discussion of BDS remained theoretical and abstract, based on the design of 17 principles and policy recommendations. Underlying many discussions was the general assumption that REDD+ finance will ultimately be distributed as payments in cash or in kind to grassroots beneficiaries, while other stakeholders were not considered as potential beneficiaries. However, for each REDD+ policy or measure the financing mechanism will be quite different, and quite specific. The BDS topic has stimulated many interesting discussions, but some of these may turn out to be superfluous once policies and measures have been defined. For example, the question of whether to distribute cash payments to households or to community-level institutions has revealed some unexpected, counter-intuitive conclusions, such as a strong preference on behalf of some ethnic minority groups for household-based distribution. However, the question becomes arbitrary if the households concerned are unable to implement the identified policies and measures independently.

Learning status: 1. This lesson is understood by some CSOs but not by the major stakeholders in the UN-REDD Programme. No remedial measures were proposed.

Recommendations: The BDS reports are quite detailed, considering the limited practical experience available, and should be open to modification through experiential learning throughout phase 2.

In Phase 2, the Programme needs to emphasise adaptability to local context, and the variety of rights-holders and potential beneficiaries. It is too early, at this stage, to be discussing payments. We should instead focus on identifying the kind of benefits available from different policies and measures.

2.3 Discussion of financial benefits and payments may cause misconceptions at local level, and unintended negative outcomes

The UN-REDD Programme has carried out local consultations on decision-making processes in BDS. However, the Programme must be very careful during such exercises because, while BDS is still not clear at the central level, there is a strong risk that the topic will raise expectations and create confusion at the local

[http://vietnam-redd.org/Web/Default.aspx?tab=project&zoneid=110&lang=en-US:](http://vietnam-redd.org/Web/Default.aspx?tab=project&zoneid=110&lang=en-US)

(1) 'Design of a REDD-compliant Benefit Distribution System for Viet Nam', January 2010, UN-REDD/MARD/GIZ

(2) 'Follow-up Studies for the Design of a REDD-compliant Benefit Distribution System for Viet Nam', December 2010, UN-REDD/GoV

level. Some of the information provided to villagers on BDS has been misleading, or has been misinterpreted. For example, a poster portraying a pair of scales balancing CO₂ and money has distorted local peoples' understanding of the source of potential financial benefits from REDD+.

After phase 1, most local stakeholders in the pilot province of Lam Dong expect substantial additional financial resources to invest and distribute to local people during phase 2. However, as mentioned above, the scale of benefits reaching local people depends largely on the policies and measures to be implemented, and is unlikely to enable significant livelihood improvements on a district-wide scale.

There are already policies and regulations in Viet Nam that encourage local people's participation in forest protection. These will continue to apply, with or without REDD+. Expectations that are raised and then dashed will undermine trust between local people and the authorities and may negatively affect their commitment to forest protection.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is the time necessary to develop institutional capacity for an effective BDS for REDD+ at local level. In Viet Nam, compared to other countries, transfer of finance and technical assistance is narrow; most flows of finance and information are vertical rather than horizontal. Not only is this inefficient, but it requires a much greater investment in human resources, and their capacity development, than would otherwise be the case.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely appreciated. Indeed, the risk of misconceptions is a justification for early work on BDS in the pilot province, where any negative consequences can be limited, and be avoided when the Programme is scaled up in phase 2.

Recommendations: Facilitators of local consultations on BDS must be ready to answer questions with a commitment to find out more and respond at a later date, or simply by making clear that the answers are not yet available.

Local consultations on BDS must be strongly linked to the awareness raising process as part of FPIC. Local people have no problem at all understanding the concept of payment for services and contractual arrangements. These should therefore be the basis of any consultations on BDS in the field.

2.4 MRV is not necessarily the only basis of benefit distribution

Misconceptions about BDS persist, not only among local people, but also at central level. The distribution of REDD+ finance does not necessarily have to be linked to MRV. This depends on whether rewards for implementing policies and measures are based on work done (inputs) or carbon stock and flow changes (outputs or results). The latter, which is truly based on performance, is common in projects under the voluntary market, and has therefore influenced some discussions of REDD+, but it is unlikely to be workable at a national scale. It would be prohibitively costly to validate all output-related claims down to community level. Such a system would also be much more prone to abuse and false claims, than a system based on simple assessment of known and easily quantifiable inputs.

Learning status: 2. Most UN-REDD stakeholders appreciate this lesson, and the phase 2 proposal anticipates rewards based on inputs. However, many CSOs and local stakeholders still assume that MRV and BDS are directly linked at the local level.

Recommendations: If BDS is not based on performance (i.e. carbon stock and flow changes), then the new National Forest Inventory (NFI) approach being piloted by the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) and the Vietnam Forestry University (VFU), showing forest data down to household level, is more detailed, and more expensive than required for UN-REDD phase 2. This approach should therefore be financially sustainable independent of a National REDD+ Programme (NRP).

2.5 Equality of payments is not the same as equity of outcomes

Viet Nam has a strong culture of fairness, which pervades all discussions about BDS. This is particularly evident in the emphasis on equality of payments and benefits between individuals, communities, districts etc. For example, Lam Dong provincial officials expect that the benefits accruing to two neighbouring districts should be balanced or the planning process will be criticized.

The concept of R-coefficients (see box), adapted from the K-coefficient used in Viet Nam's Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES) schemes, has been developed with particular attention to equity issues.

The R-coefficient has been developed in order to share benefits fairly, to take into account forests in different conditions, with different levels of social and environmental benefits and taking account of relevant differences between stakeholders according to ethnicity, gender, poverty status etc.

How does the R-coefficient work?

"The R-coefficient is made up of a series of seven factors [Income, Ethnicity, Gender, Biodiversity, Watershed, Accessibility and Protection Impact]. Each factor is weighted with a score depending on the different environmental, social and difficulty conditions of a given area. This score will be multiplied by the size of the net emission reduction produced through REDD+ activities in the given area. In this way, the R-coefficient will either increase, decrease or leave unchanged the total performance payment received by a household, village or community group."

From the 'R-coefficient fact sheet' of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, downloadable from the REDD Viet Nam website.

The principle of results-based payments remains – those who perform more work accrue more benefits, but the R-coefficient recognizes that disadvantaged groups face greater challenges and risks in taking on these duties. It therefore incorporates equity into the BDS in a way that PFES schemes and forest protection contracts have not done.

Learning status: 2. The difference between equality and equity is not so well-understood at local level and thus the purpose of the R-coefficient is sometimes misunderstood.

Recommendations: The concept of the R-coefficient may be difficult to apply in areas where people have a communal ownership culture (e.g. ethnic minorities). In such cases, allocation of resources through community forestry groups, or similar local groups, is preferable to the development of formulae that result in different households receiving different payments for the same work.

2.6 BDS should build on existing programmes (e.g. Viet Nam's experience with PFES and forest protection contracts)

REDD+ is a form of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). So Viet Nam's experience with PFES⁵ should certainly be relevant for development of the BDS. The consultation team should not try to create a completely new tool but should, to some extent, follow the existing system. This will save time and money (e.g. decree 99 on PFES is applicable in all provinces). However, the higher all-round forest governance standards required for REDD+ will mean that the payments system for PFES cannot simply be applied for REDD+, taking higher costs into account.

Forest protection contracts, under Programme 327, are another source of valuable experience for a REDD+ BDS. The contract system can accommodate a variety of tasks, including group work such as joint patrols and forest fire monitoring, but the payment rate and contract duration are relatively inflexible. REDD+ must also incorporate lessons from, and improve on, the 661 Plantation Programme, the Community Forestry Pilot Programme and the projects of the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) which pioneered the allocation of payment to individual smallholders via dedicated bank accounts and the allocation of Red Books (forest land title) to communities. Lessons from these, and other past and existing programmes, were analysed in the BDS reports produced by the UN-REDD Programme.

However, none of these existing systems has overcome a gap in public finance which currently prevents a 'community' entity from opening a bank account or registering land ownership. This ultimately limits the ability of a REDD+ BDS to consider community groups, instead of individuals or households, as the ultimate recipient of finance, even where this might be most appropriate.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is well understood and has been incorporated into the work by the BDS consultation team. However, there are differences of opinion regarding the extent to which a BDS for REDD+ can be aligned with PFES. Local stakeholders and officials in Lam Dong believe the systems are highly compatible whereas some NGOs believe that REDD+ must be considered quite separately.

Recommendations: Review and use, if relevant, existing policy frameworks for piloting BDS in phase 2. Investigate potential application of KfW project methods for individual payments. Identify and address gaps in legislation on public finance, land law and co-operatives to facilitate payments to communities.

2.7 Distribution of REDD+ revenue depends mainly on the costs of implementing policies and measures

Stakeholders frequently observe that REDD+ presents an excellent opportunity for rural livelihood improvement, forest protection, community forestry etc. through the financial benefits that the mechanism will deliver. However, the costs of implementation are rarely mentioned. Income foregone by forced or voluntary abandonment of an alternative land use (opportunity costs) have been considered in the context of identifying appropriate policies and measures, but the direct costs of implementing activities to ensure REDD+ outcomes in the field have not been sufficiently discussed.

⁵ It is recognized that under the current PFES schemes, payments are not performance based, although they are implemented at a much smaller scale, i.e. not at the national level.

Ultimately, the objective of REDD+ is to keep and enrich existing forests and to create new forest areas (as a means of reducing net concentrations of atmospheric CO₂). This will naturally entail costs; for plantations, for protection, payment for labour and for contract supervision. The current rate for forest protection contracts in Lam Dong, of VND 200,000 per ha per year, does not adequately cover the costs of labour, particularly in the fire season and the rainy season when illegal logging activity peaks. In addition, the costs of handing over forests, including management responsibilities, to local communities, must be estimated and factored into planning for demonstration activities for phase 2.

Learning status: 2. When the implementation costs (especially labour inputs) of REDD+ are discussed with local people, the message is very clear; if everybody wants to benefit from REDD+ then it will become too expensive. Hard choices must be made regarding what the National REDD+ Programme can afford. At central level, however, the focus of discussion is still on benefits rather than costs, and this has caused some confusion.

Recommendations: One of the most important roles of UN-REDD phase 2 will be to focus attention of all stakeholders, particularly at central level, on the implementation and transaction costs involved in REDD+ activities, rather than on the distribution of money. In addition, the cost of insurance (addressing the risk of reversals, or ineffective measures) should be highlighted.

2.8 A poorly-designed BDS risks reinforcing existing inequity

Experiences gained from the implementation of PFES schemes indicate that, if benefits from REDD+ are distributed according to existing rights, only the relatively better-off will benefit. When forest land was allocated in the 1990s, poor people often did not realize the opportunity, were not aware of the programme, or shied away from the perceived risk. According to some NGOs and ethnic minority representatives, the result was increased inequity. If REDD+ BDS is based on the Red Books that were allocated during this period, those who have large forest areas will claim the benefits from REDD+ and poor people will continue to lose out. Moreover, much of the allocation has been completed on paper only, and the mismatch between Red Book rights and facts on the ground may lead to complex and lengthy disputes.

The most significant problems with a BDS system based on forest land allocation will be with landless households and with ethnic minorities. Benefit distribution under PFES is currently being done at the household level. It will be informative to evaluate the outcomes of this exercise in terms of equity and conflict.

Learning status: 2. This risk is appreciated by many stakeholders, but little effort has been devoted to addressing the needs and rights of the most vulnerable.

Recommendations: A BDS centred on community-based resource allocation is the most appropriate way to ensure that benefits reach groups with no individual land rights.

Section 3: Participatory Carbon Monitoring (PCM)

3.1 Focus on Participatory Forest Monitoring (PFM), rather than Participatory Carbon Monitoring (PCM)

Participatory carbon monitoring is understood as the periodic measurement of forest carbon stocks by local communities. This is not the same as forest carbon accounting, or the maintenance of a full MRV system, which most stakeholders agree is beyond the capacities of local people. According to the PCM manual⁶ produced by the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, the core activities under PCM are basic forest mensuration, with additional measurements for above-ground and below-ground carbon pools as required. Many stakeholders, both at local and central levels, question the utility of the exercise as a contribution to a national MRV system. Many local people are potentially competent to monitor the changes in area and forest quality indicators but are not best suited to carry out measurement of carbon-related parameters. Participatory Forest Monitoring (PFM), on the other hand, is acknowledged as a potentially valuable tool in a national REDD+ Monitoring system. The key difference between PCM and PFM is that the latter does not entail an explicit link to carbon stock measurement.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely acknowledged.

Recommendations: In phase 2, replace references to PCM with PFM, and position the innovation as an exploratory programme to identify the potential contribution of local people to a national Monitoring and MRV framework, rather than as a core element from the outset.

3.2 Participatory Forest Monitoring is a key part of awareness raising

Forestry officials in Viet Nam, at central and local levels, view PCM (or PFM) as an element of an awareness raising strategy for REDD+. Local people who have never done such work will face many difficulties. They will need to know how much labour and time PCM/PFM will entail and what benefit they will get for performing the work. Promotion of the innovation as an awareness raising tool will defer these concerns.

The feedback from the pilot PCM training events in Lam Dong indicates that the majority of trainees require a local language medium, rather than Vietnamese, in order to obtain full benefit. However, it is also clear that some trainees are very competent, and have retained the information and skills well. Many technical staff see the monitoring of carbon stock as their role, not that of villagers or farmers. It will not be a simple task to convince them that local people can not only do the work, but that the participatory approach to forest, or carbon, monitoring will make their own jobs easier. Local forestry officials are already concerned that they will be short of skilled human resources to carry out monitoring duties for REDD+ after the expert support provided by the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme expires.

⁶ Bao Huy, 2011, 'Technical Manual for Participatory Carbon Monitoring', UN-REDD/MARD. Downloadable from the REDD Viet Nam website (<http://vietnam-redd.org>) under Library/Documents/MRV Documents

Learning status: 2. The training element of PCM/PFM has already been piloted, but the ultimate objectives of the training are not yet clear. The awareness-raising aspect of the PCM exercise in Lam Dong Province was widely appreciated.

Recommendations: In phase 2, the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme must be selective with trainees for PCM/PFM and clearer with the goals for the training programme. PCM/PFM can be used to encourage discussions on forest governance between local people and forestry technicians. It might also be presented to the trainees as a route to potential future income generating opportunities from forest monitoring, rather than a future obligation under REDD+, although this again will depend on selected policies and measures.

Section 4: REDD+ Consultation Networks and Working Groups

4.1 The institutional setup of the REDD Network and Sub-Technical Working Groups (STWGs) is highly effective

The current setup of the REDD Network, with several Sub-Technical Working Groups (STWGs) reporting to the Network on a range of REDD-relevant issues, is very appropriate and comprehensive. The six current STWGs, on MRV, BDS, private sector engagement, local implementation, governance and safeguards, cover the key topics of relevance to REDD+ in Viet Nam at this point. Through this arrangement, stakeholders can attach themselves to certain issues and bring in their practical knowledge and experience as needed. The design of the STWGs is also very appropriate; they are each co-chaired by a GoV official and a non-GoV representative.

Discussions at the meetings of the Network and STWGs are open, democratic and participatory, and officials from VNFOREST have demonstrated commitment to these principles. As a result, the consultations have contributed significant milestones to the development of a National REDD+ Programme (NRP), such as the MRV framework and BDS reports.

Learning status: 3. All stakeholders show great appreciation for the overall consultation arrangements.

Recommendations: During phase 2, the UN-REDD Programme should continue to provide logistical and financial support for developing and refining the Network and STWGs. This is a very worthwhile investment.

4.2 The REDD Network must be understood as a forum for all REDD+ initiatives

The REDD Network was established by MARD in September 2009. Soon afterwards discussions during Network meetings were dominated by the UN-REDD Programme. The Programme used the Network very effectively to introduce and discuss new ideas. The size and national significance of the Programme may have justified this high profile, but some partners became unhappy with the situation. Although the Programme does not actively seek to control the process, the minutes of Network meetings and the contents of the national REDD+ website (<http://vietnam-redd.org>) show that a large proportion of information originates from the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme.

FSSP transferred administrative and logistical duties for the REDD Network to the UN-REDD PMU in early 2011. This has reduced the perception that the Network is part of the UN-REDD Programme and clarified the relationship, resulting in more effective support from the PMU for the consultation process. However, the perception of UN-REDD dominance of the national REDD+ agenda is still prevalent in some of the STWGs. As a result, some stakeholders continue to confuse the UN-REDD Programme with the National REDD+ Programme (NRP) itself.

Learning status: 3. This issue is widely understood and steps have been taken to address it.

Recommendations: This lesson does not imply that the mechanism itself is ineffective, but highlights a problem with coordination brought about by the fact that there is still no official NRP in place. In its absence, the UN-REDD Programme has in many respects become a *de facto* template for a national REDD+ strategy. The Viet Nam REDD+ Office (VRO) should therefore prioritise the endorsement of an NRP as the framework for all consultations under the Network and STWGs.

4.3 The REDD Network must be separate from, but linked to, the FSSP

While FSSP concentrates on the National Forestry Strategy, REDD+ is now such a big issue that the Network addresses many topics that overlap with FSSP, resulting in two parallel national platforms for the forestry sector.

FSSP is closely linked to the decision-makers in the sector, with all messages from the partnership feeding back directly to them. The Network, however, is a discussion forum for REDD+ alone, which is an element of the National Forestry Strategy that is still provisional. Indeed, the government is careful to avoid giving stakeholders the impression that issues raised at Network meetings will impact directly on decision-making and therefore minimizes the participation of top-level officials.

The two forums therefore serve different purposes from the government's perspective. There is no need to merge them, but more formal links to FSSP would help ensure that messages from the REDD Network reach decision makers.

Learning status: 2. Donors and government agencies understand this lesson but have yet to explore specific options for developing links between the forums.

Recommendations: To begin with, after each Network meeting a short report could be developed for presentation at relevant events and to relevant bodies, particularly to VNFOREST.

4.4 REDD Network meetings must be easily accessible to Vietnamese government officials

The role of government in the REDD+ consultation process is still very weak compared to those of international organisations and national NGOs. This is reflected in the minutes of meetings where the voices of government bodies, with the exception of key individuals from VNFOREST, are largely absent.

The capacity of government staff is limited, partly due to a language barrier; according to several Vietnamese informants, the main medium of meetings is usually English. The Network now has a very important role in awareness raising for Vietnamese officials. It must therefore adjust to fulfil this role, rather than serving as a discussion forum for international organisations and experts.

The number of meetings is also an issue for government representatives. Key individuals are unable to attend frequent, regular meetings due to high workload or competing priorities. Once some meetings are missed, they fall behind in information and lose motivation and enthusiasm. There is a need for greater incentives to encourage government officials to participate more actively. This applies to VNFOREST staff as well as to those from other agencies. Some will only show interest when tangible results are imminent. Prior to this they will delegate attendance to junior officials, often with little capacity, and thus lose opportunities to influence discussions. This has knock-on effects, delaying the process of approval of key decisions. For example, representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) rarely attend Network meetings to discuss the NRP, due to heavy workload as well as a perception that REDD+ is MARD's business. However, comments by representatives of MONRE on the NRP are essential for approval, but for a lack of active participation in its development, and hence a lack of up-to-date information, these comments take many weeks to arrive.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is evident to all, and is frequently discussed.

Recommendations: REDD Network meetings should be held with Vietnamese as the main language, so that more people can be involved, particularly from government. Simultaneous bilingual translation services are already available at these meetings, however, so steps have already been taken to make the REDD Network accessible to all.

4.5 Sub-technical Working Groups (STWGs) need clear mandates and objectives

With the creation of the Viet Nam REDD+ Office and PEB, it is not clear how the STWGs are linked to decision-making. Some, such as local implementation, are more geared towards information sharing, whereas others, such as MRV, clearly aim to have a direct influence on VNFOREST policies.

The STWGs that emerged in response to the expressed needs of stakeholders are the ones that are functioning most effectively. These groups, such as MRV and BDS, developed clear goals and followed systematic agendas to reach these goals.

The STWGs are not intended to serve as an information exchange, although this is useful. They should rather concentrate on the discussion of topics that contribute to NRP development and implementation. By this logic, the local implementation STWG does not fit the concept of a working group, according to many national officials and NGOs. Any information and lessons generated through the STWGs should contribute to a strategic approach at the central level and meet a demonstrable country need.

Learning status: 2. There is no clear consensus on the ideal role of a STWG nor on their relative merits.

Recommendations: New STWGs should emerge from discussion at Network meetings and be approved on condition of clear mandates and objectives in line with the NRP.

4.6 Non-government co-chairs are the key to success of the Sub-technical Working Group format

The Viet Nam REDD+ Office invites representatives from outside the Government of Viet Nam (GoV) to co-chair the STWGs. This has proven to be a highly effective strategy and allows civil society the opportunity to actively engage in discussion on REDD+ issues.

The success of the STWGs in achieving tangible objectives largely depends on the motivation of the co-chairs, the time that they can devote to the job and the interest and activity in general related to the subject. The MRV group had many meetings leading up to the production of their framework document, and the frequency of meetings has reduced since then. The co-chair was highly active and was able to motivate other members of the group. The BDS group was similarly blessed with highly motivated co-chairs. Motivation and interest of both chairs and Network members must be maintained.

VNFOREST deserves credit for the co-chairs it has nominated. The STWGs in general are well attended and stimulate good discussions, and the co-chairs are adept at explaining the objectives of the groups to participants. The co-chairs are responsible for scheduling meetings and ensuring that activities are followed up. Chairing has generally been quite light so participants feel free to provide inputs.

Learning status: 3. VNFOREST highly appreciates the experience, talent and dedication that non-GoV co-chairs bring.

Recommendations: VNFOREST must identify the right people to co-chair the STWGs. Keep the meetings simple, informal and flexible. More formal meetings generate fewer comments and therefore fewer learning opportunities.

4.7 Government requires additional capacity to manage working groups and link them to policymaking

The government is not able to fully realise the goals of the STWGs. With a little more engagement and strategic direction from the government the STWGs could achieve more effective results. However, VNFOREST does not have full capacity to cover all aspects of REDD+ simultaneously. The small number of key REDD+ experts within VNFOREST can ensure that GoV has high quality technical input to the STWGs which they co-chair, but they cannot cover all STWGs.

The coordination and management of this institutional structure is a huge challenge for the government. This challenge will grow in phase 2; as a result of successful consultations, it is no longer only experts and international organisations that understand REDD+. The REDD Network covers a wide variety of national organisations and will soon have to accommodate stakeholders from six or more pilot provinces.

Weak capacity in government is perhaps felt most keenly in the STWG on private sector engagement. It takes a huge effort to persuade private sector representatives, such as those from rubber and coffee producers, to come to STWG meetings. But, if there is no follow up on the conclusions of the meetings that they attend, private sector stakeholders will not consider their time well spent. The chances of discussion points being followed up depends in large part on the level of knowledge and influence of government co-

chairs. Private sector and NGO participants can tell quite easily when knowledge and influence is lacking and will not expect much from these meetings, which adversely affects the level of engagement.

Learning status: 2. All stakeholders realize that government capacity is a key limiting factor for STWGs.

Recommendations: There must be a higher-level official for each STWG with responsibility for linking WG discussions to central and province-level policymaking. Much greater attention must be paid in phase 2 to expand VNFOREST capacity on REDD+ beyond a very small number of key individuals. Especially in the STWG on private sector engagement individuals with good negotiation skills are required to bridge the gap between different stakeholder interests on such issues as multiple benefits and the need to generate financial returns.

4.8 Choice of topics must be determined primarily by national priorities rather than the international agenda

Viet Nam must ensure that its national interests are covered before considering its role as an international leader on REDD+. However, donors are partly at fault for pushing Viet Nam as a REDD+ champion, getting carried away with their own enthusiasm. Viet Nam cannot always be the poster child for REDD+.

It is not easy to set up all STWGs right at the beginning of a National REDD+ Programme. One has to review what forums already exist, how the groups will be managed, what levels of participation can be expected, and what are the group's goals and objectives. However, the selection of STWGs to date has been far too dependent on the international negotiation process. Although the international process provides necessary guidance for the appropriate topical focus, the prioritisation of topics for STWGs should be determined primarily by country-specific needs, as identified by a range of national stakeholders.

Learning status: 1. Most stakeholders look to the international agenda to identify the discussion tracks required, rather than national needs.

Recommendations: The secret of success lies in the selection of priority areas. Meetings must reflect national interests, but also those of the working group participants, so the thematic areas and agendas must be chosen by the participants themselves.

4.9 Concentration of working group members in Ha Noi limits the effectiveness of STWGs

A key limitation of the Network and STWGs is that almost all members are based in Ha Noi. There are many individuals, across the country, who would be interested but cannot participate because of a lack of finance.

REDD+ networking and STWGs should aim to encourage provincial coordination. This is a sensitive topic in Viet Nam. It is particularly difficult in the case of Community Forestry (CF) – the dissemination of lessons learned between provinces has hardly taken place at all. The institutional memory is also very poor. There is no central database for forestry projects and very few examples of horizontal learning between provinces.

In some cases, some Provincial People's Committees (PPCs) gained a high sense of ownership for CF projects. However, it is still a risk to advocate policy reform without explicit approval from the centre, even where strong evidence exists.

Learning status: 2. This is acknowledged as an issue but the full potential of provincial contributions is not clearly appreciated at central level.

Recommendations: The UN-REDD Programme can create a platform to actively bring lessons on forest management from past projects at the provincial level into REDD+ discussions and development. A proper system of combining these lessons and feeding them into policy and institutional reforms is very important.

If the UN-REDD Programme can give provinces the opportunity to share their experiences and contribute to REDD+ development, not only would this contribute to a robust NRP but it would build great trust.

Acknowledging and rewarding the political risks that provinces have taken will encourage more innovation and sharing. The UN-REDD Programme should actively support stakeholders from the provinces or remote areas to STWG meetings in Ha Noi, and also promote the development of provincial-level STWGs where possible, but especially in the pilot provinces of the UN-REDD Programme in phase 2.

4.10 Provincial-level REDD+ working groups should serve the NRP, not just the UN-REDD Programme

The provincial REDD+ working group (WG) was set up in Lam Dong Province with the support of the UN-REDD Programme. It is understood by WG members either primarily or exclusively as a forum for discussion and implementation of UN-REDD Programme activities. However, just as the Viet Nam REDD Network must be governed by the NRP (see above), the provincial-level WG must function for all REDD+ activities, not just the UN-REDD Programme. The agendas of both STWGs and all provincial REDD+ WGs should be governed by the NRP. This is now a requirement according to VNFOREST and will ensure that WGs in different provinces are in alignment with regard to activities and agendas.

Learning status: 2. This lesson is understood by national-level stakeholders, but not by provincial officials, where it matters most.

Recommendations: As with the national REDD+ consultation bodies, the NRP must be clearly presented in order for provincial level stakeholders to understand the difference between the NRP itself and the UN-REDD Programme. In phase 2, the UN-REDD Programme should ensure that all provincial REDD+ WGs understand this distinction and function accordingly.

4.11 The Provincial working group suffers from a lack of informed and active NGOs at local level

All 13 members of the Lam Dong REDD+ working group are government officials, from provincial and district administrations. This limits the perspective of the group in decision-making processes and is in stark contrast to the consultation bodies at national level.

However, the absence of non-government representation in the REDD+ WG is largely due to the lack of capacity of NGOs. There are few organized NGOs at provincial level. Indeed, provincial officials are unaware of any civil society organisations except the mass organisations such as women's unions, farmer's unions and youth unions etc. Although these unions have strong community-based networks, they are linked to government bodies through political affiliation. The added value that NGOs bring to national-level consultation bodies, widely acknowledged by all stakeholders, is not available at local level. There is no private sector involvement, apart from State Forest Enterprises (SFEs), despite invitations on several occasions.

Learning status: 1. This lesson is only appreciated by civil society organisations at national level, but not by any stakeholders at local level, where it matters most.

Recommendations: Membership of provincial REDD+ WGs in phase 2 should be extended to include representatives of mass organisations. These organisations and the Department of Ethnic Minority Affairs (DEMA) may also be assigned prominent roles in district-level activities and resource allocation, due to their strengths in communication and networks. However, independent representation of forest owners and villages/communities, should also be encouraged wherever possible. National-level NGOs with provincial-level experience and human resource capacity should also be pro-actively encouraged to become members of provincial REDD+ WGs. However, although representation of many stakeholder groups at local level is desirable, it may be necessary to compromise on numbers for the sake of effectiveness.

4.12 Strong links between national and provincial bodies in the REDD+ management structure are essential for effective learning and appropriate work plans

Every month the Lam Dong REDD+ WG formulates a work plan and sends it to the PMU in Ha Noi, clearly defining the tasks that each WG member will carry out. Sometimes PMU staff members are invited to join the WG meetings and Lam Dong PPC or DARD representatives often attend STWG meetings in Ha Noi, particularly the BDS group. The province has also been represented at most of the REDD Network meetings to date, UN-REDD Programme Executive Board (PEB) meetings, and major national REDD-related events. The provincial REDD+ WG usually receives schedules and agendas of these events in advance, via the PMU.

The collaboration between PMU and the province has been close and effective. This has been a key factor in the success of provincial and district-level activities of phase 1. Through their participation in Programme activities, the Forest Department (FD) and Forest Protection Department (FPD) sub-departments have benefitted more than other agencies by generating additional information about forest conditions and management, which helps in the development of long- and short-term Forest Protection and Development Plans (FPDPs). The Department of Planning and Investment (DPI), through its involvement in the WG, has pledged to ensure that REDD+ will be integrated into the provincial Social and Economic Development Plan (SEDP).

Learning status: 3. All key stakeholders understand the significance of this relationship.

Recommendations: The strong links between the PMU and the provincial WG should be continued, reinforced in phase 2, and replicated in other provinces. Efficient two-way flows of information between the

PMU and the provinces about UN-REDD, REDD+ and provincial plans such as FPDs and SEDPs are essential for maintaining the relevance of the Programme to stakeholders at all levels.

4.13 Assignment of clear group objectives and specific, practical roles for group members are particularly important at provincial level

Even more clearly than in the case of the national STWGs, provincial stakeholders stress the need for clear objectives and work plans in order for the REDD+ WG and its members to contribute effectively to the UN-REDD Programme. Lam Dong officials claim that their experience in operating a provincial committee for the PFES pilot scheme enables them to identify appropriate tasks for similar programmes, such as UN-REDD. However, the topical coverage of the UN-REDD Programme phase 1 was considered too broad and abstract to assign roles appropriately. The new decision of Lam Dong PPC on preparation of the UN-REDD Programme phase 2, and formulation of a new provincial WG, stipulates the role of the forest sub-department, but not the roles of other agencies.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is well appreciated by all local level stakeholders

Recommendations: Meetings of provincial REDD+ WGs in phase 2 should be held regularly, with members responsible for deputizing alternative representatives and keeping them informed. The head and vice head of the provincial REDD+ WG should clearly identify the tasks of members, taking account of the increased specificity and complexity of the Programme.

Provincial planning activities for phase 2 will be based on activity packages that address specific drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and sectors (e.g. coffee, rubber, illegal logging, fire etc.). This will facilitate the identification of key technical inputs and roles of WG members.

4.14 Local government offices anticipate a shortfall of financial and human resources for the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme phase 2

Provincial stakeholders anticipate a considerable increase in workload during phase 2 for the staff of line agencies such as sub-FD and sub-FPD as well as local forest owners and communities. This workload will include participation in provincial WG meetings and other coordination activities.

During phase 1, while the majority of UN-REDD Programme activities at the provincial level are concerned with awareness raising, the current level of coordination and consultation is considered adequate. However, in phase 2, coordination will be more complex and time-consuming. This will have implications for the WG members and other staff with regard to their regular duties.

Learning status: 3. All provincial stakeholders are aware of their current limitations with regard to human resources.

Recommendations: There may be a need for more human resources to cover the UN-REDD Programme phase 2 work at provincial and district levels, particularly involving commune forest officers, forest protection officers and technical staff of forest companies. The costs of these resources must be reflected in

the demonstration activities and monitoring and evaluation work. Incentives for participation in REDD+ WGs and other coordination bodies should also be considered, as this is additional to the normal duties of provincial level officials and other potential WG members. These incentives may be small, but may still motivate WG members and make them more accountable for the work they do.

Section 5: Engagement of civil society, NGOs and Private Sector

5.1 The involvement of NGOs in REDD+ processes is unprecedented in Viet Nam and is widely acknowledged as a success

The REDD Network and STWGs have equal involvement of NGOs and government bodies. VNFOREST sees this involvement as an asset to the NRP. The NGOs have proved to be competent, open and committed partners.

This is the first government programme in Viet Nam that has involved CSOs and NGOs to such an extent in decision-making processes. MARD created an open discussion forum and opened the REDD network to CSOs, with the support of the UN-REDD Programme. Previously, this engagement was encouraged by the donor community but was generally restricted to specific projects. MARD and VNFOREST now actively seek the participation of NGOs in all REDD+ processes. REDD+ may therefore have changed the long-term dynamic in the forest sector as a whole. It is widely acknowledged that this level of engagement will continue even without the continuation of the UN-REDD Programme because of the perceived value of NGO contributions.

The active involvement of civil society has also encouraged several INGOs to stay committed to the development of REDD+ in Viet Nam, ensuring that an important source of technical expertise remains available.

MARD actively encouraged NGOs to take the lead in STWGs. Even though this is a new approach for Viet Nam, it is rare to see such constructive and non-confrontational working relationships even in other countries.

Learning status: 3. The value of the active role of NGOs is appreciated by all.

Recommendations: Viet Nam's open and non-confrontational relations between government and civil society in the REDD+ sphere may be promoted as a model for other programmes and sectors.

5.2 The UN-REDD Programme could be more pro-active in engagement of civil society and NGOs

It is widely agreed that the credit for the high level of engagement of NGOs and CSOs in the REDD Network lies with VNFOREST and FSSP, rather than with the administrative and logistical support of the UN-REDD Programme. Involvement of NGOs and CSOs in the REDD Network is more apparent than their involvement in the UN-REDD Programme itself.

FSSP initiated multi-stakeholder involvement as the first coordinator of the REDD Network. The UN-REDD Programme continued this participatory approach but did not pro-actively encourage NGO engagement to the extent expected by some partners. The progress of the UN-REDD's Programme in this regard is more the consequence of requirements under the COP than an active commitment by the Programme.

NGOs are invited to meetings and discussion forums but, considering the shortage of human resources in VNFOREST, particularly at the local level, the UN-REDD Programme could make more use of the expertise available in the non-government sector.

Learning status: 2. This lesson was widely acknowledged but is not fully appreciated by the UN-REDD Programme management bodies. However, the latest version of the phase 2 proposal makes more explicit reference to the need for full involvement of the private sector and NGOs in Programme activities. This indicates a more pro-active approach in future.

Recommendations: Given the weak capacity of local government, more work in phase 2 could be contracted out to NGOs and research or training institutes. The UN-REDD Programme should also consider these bodies and CSOs as full partners in the Programme, rather than simply contractors.

In phase 2, for example, provincial plans could be developed through engagement with NGOs. They may also be represented in meetings of the PEB, and other decision-making bodies.

5.3 REDD+ requires a comprehensive strategy for private sector engagement

Private sector organisations are eager to carry out work for the UN-REDD Programme but will naturally charge for their services. Though FIPI is a government institution, it operates essentially as a private sector organization; 80% of its budget is raised through clients in projects and programmes and it views the UN-REDD Programme as a major new source of revenue.

Phase 2 will also require the active involvement of the private sector in demonstration activities, particularly State Forest Enterprises (SFEs) and companies in agribusiness sectors such as coffee, rubber and aquaculture. However, unless these organisations are provided with reliable information, they may over-estimate the financial opportunities from REDD+. The efforts of the STWG on private sector engagement have often been undermined by the inability of the UN-REDD Programme (and other programmes or projects) to follow up recommendations with knowledge products and clarity of purpose.

There is no strong, visible commitment from government to engage the private sector in the process. For example, the government does not follow up on invitations to rubber association representatives to STWG meetings, although the importance of doing so is repeatedly stressed by co-chairs. The private sector is relying on NGOs to ensure their effective engagement.

Learning status: 2. This lesson is well understood but there are few concrete suggestions on how to improve the response of the UN-REDD Programme to private sector needs.

Recommendations: The UN-REDD Programme needs first to educate private sector bodies on REDD+ with carefully-targeted tools, and then to convince them that working with the UN-REDD Programme and similar initiatives will be good for business. This will require detailed research and analysis, in collaboration

with private sector groups, on where to devote resources; REDD+ will be viable only in a few specific sectors. The Programme, in close cooperation with key REDD+ experts in VNFOREST, must also work to convince central and provincial-level government officials of the importance of the private sector to the success of the NRP.

New interventions on integrating REDD+ into agribusiness value chains and forest certification schemes may be necessary. The UN-REDD Programme may also collaborate with the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) on reforming the policy framework regarding SFEs, so that REDD+ is feasible for these businesses.

5.4 To participate properly, NGOs need appropriate knowledge and capacity

In addition to recommendations and suggestions for the preparation and implementation of REDD+ activities, NGOs should be more active in awareness raising and consultation strategies. This is an ideal role for the non-government sector, both at central and local levels. Without the knowledge and expertise of NGOs, consultation exercises are often not sufficiently inclusive, representative or interactive. However, for NGOs to serve this function, they need to improve their own understanding of REDD+ and the UN-REDD Programme. During phase 1, the Programme did not invest sufficiently in capacity building for civil society. Effective capacity building was performed by other organisations not directly aligned with the UN-REDD Programme.

It is also very important that any information generated by NGOs, for the purposes of REDD+, is reliable and employs methods that are acceptable to the international community. Even when not directly related to the UN-REDD Programme, for example in voluntary projects, promotion of inappropriate methods will cause confusion and damage the NRP as a whole. The UN-REDD Programme is an ideal medium for translating the discussions at COPs into solid guidance for NGOs and for ensuring consistency in awareness raising and capacity building efforts.

Learning status: 3. All stakeholders are aware of the need for high quality, independent capacity building

Recommendations: The UN-REDD Programme should invest in partnerships with organisations specializing in capacity building in order to ensure consistency of messages relating to REDD+ in Viet Nam, whether or not they are directly related to phase 2 implementation.

5.5 Engagement of NGOs is important to ensure realistic expectations at local level

At sub-national level, effective capacity building exercises are still mostly carried out in provincial or district centres, rather than at commune or village levels, and have not yet realized the full potential of NGOs and civil society in their design and execution. In phase 2, when local-level capacity building for REDD+ begins in earnest, there is a danger of generating high expectations. The ability to control these expectations depends on effective communication of REDD+ and its objectives. NGOs with experience in forestry programmes with ethnic minorities in mountain areas are more realistic about the potential of REDD+ for livelihood benefits. If REDD+ is explained properly, with support from qualified NGOs, it can help secure the cooperation of local people in forest protection. If explained in inappropriate terms, e.g. in terms of additional financial benefit, the government risks losing the trust of local people, if such benefits do not materialize.

By appreciating the value of forests according to local perceptions (fuelwood, light construction material, spiritual value etc.), forest protection can be achieved with the help of customary law and indigenous knowledge, along with the strengthening of rights.

Learning status: 3. The important role of qualified NGOs in managing local expectations of REDD+ is currently acknowledged.

Recommendations: In phase 2, the UN-REDD Programme should contract out awareness raising and capacity building particularly to national NGOs, ensuring that their own capacity and understanding of REDD+ issues is enhanced appropriately.

5.6 The diverse perspectives of NGOs and CSOs requires active coordination and oversight at national level

Participation of NGOs in REDD+ readiness in Viet Nam is quite encouraging, but the understanding of REDD+ and the requirements for REDD+ implementation is variable. The interests of NGOs in REDD+ also vary widely, with some involved in BDS, others focusing on the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) and others concentrating on international negotiations, primarily through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

National-level coordination is essential to align these diverse perspectives. Many NGOs, both national and international, have secured financial support for REDD-related projects and programmes, but the exchange of information on these various projects is sub-optimal.

The STWG on local implementation was set up partly to facilitate such exchange of information. However, NGOs participate in or contribute to these meetings on a voluntary basis. Issues that are not raised in these meetings are not often discussed in other forums. Not all information related to projects, workshops, resources, and technical ideas is shared effectively and openly.

Regulation and oversight of all REDD-related activities at the national level is therefore an important consideration for the NRP and may require support from the UN-REDD Programme.

Learning status: 3. The creation of the local implementation STWG acknowledges this issue, and the need for more formal coordination is widely appreciated.

Recommendations: MONRE is responsible for management and coordination of all mitigation activities, so this responsibility currently rests with MONRE. However, for effective oversight of REDD-related activities by non-government agents, clear guidance must first be provided through the NRP. The UN-REDD Programme can subsequently support the Viet Nam REDD+ Office in the operation of a national registration and information system for REDD+.

Section 6: Engagement of non-forest sectors

6.1 Commitment at the top does not necessarily translate into practical collaboration on the ground

Commitment to the objectives of REDD+ at the top level of government has certainly become more apparent towards the end of phase 1 of the National UN-REDD Programme. For over a year after phase 1 began, non-forest sectors were barely involved at all. Government participation was effectively limited to VNFOREST, and to only three individuals within that department. In the last six months of the Programme, however, non-forest departments of MARD, as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and Ministry of Finance (MoF), have all demonstrated greater interest and commitment to REDD+ by attending steering committee meetings and sending staff to training events. They now show a greater understanding of the role of REDD+ in the context of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) and wider climate change strategies.⁷

However, this will not translate into good cross-sector collaboration within the Programme or in the field without substantial additional effort. To begin with, the necessary understanding and capacity is lacking. Officials who attend steering committee meetings and other cross-sector meetings need to be properly briefed. Though MONRE and MPI now have better access to knowledge resources in Ha Noi, in the field it is still apparent that, with a few exceptions, knowledge on REDD+ is limited to the forestry sector.

Learning status: 2. Most stakeholders seem well aware of this issue, but have no effective strategy to address it.

Recommendations: Capacity building efforts need to go wide, not just deep. Actively encouraging individuals outside the forest sector to gain knowledge on REDD+ has had some important results, but the tendency is still for non-foresters to assume that REDD+ is not their business.

6.2 Cross-sectoral collaboration implies compromises in terms of influence and information, as well as finance

As the host of the Viet Nam REDD+ Office, VNFOREST must ultimately be responsible for promoting cross-sectoral collaboration, but it may not be realistic to expect this to happen without external encouragement and support. If the National REDD+ Programme proceeds as envisaged, it will be a key driver of land-use policy formulation and implementation, with influence beyond the forest sector. Control over the programme, and the information required to influence it, is therefore a sensitive issue. The distribution of influence may cause tensions within and between government departments. MONRE, MPI and other government agencies, as well as VNFOREST, are (or will be) involved in strategic development and pilot implementation for REDD+. The coordination of these activities between ministries is a potentially controversial issue.

⁷The recently approved National Climate Change Strategy mentions REDD as one of the key strategic tasks: “Develop and implement GHG emission reduction programmes through efforts to stop deforestation and forest degradation” (MONRE, 7th March, 2012)

Outside VNFOREST, government staff still ask very elementary questions on REDD+. There is clearly a need for awareness raising for government officials. MARD has indicated their readiness to organize this itself, rather than acting on a concept note which has been submitted to them by NGOs. However, this is yet to happen.

Learning status: 2. This lesson is widely appreciated but not much discussed.

Recommendations: It is not possible for the National UN-REDD Programme to address this issue. The Government of Viet Nam (GoV) may investigate ways to facilitate transparent communication channels between departments.

6.3 Cross-sectoral collaboration is particularly important at the design phase

The design of programme phases requires the involvement of diverse ministries and departments, particularly the MPI. This did not happen during the preparation for phase 1 of the National UN-REDD Programme. Problems and opportunities arising from potential overlaps or links with other GoV projects and programmes were therefore not fully realized.

One of the most important missed opportunities was enhanced cooperation between counterparts in different departments and ministries.

Learning status: 1. This lesson is not widely appreciated.

Recommendations: The role of the steering committee could be enhanced in the preparation and implementation of phase 2. To date, it has dealt mostly with implementation issues. It should have more strategic oversight of the Programme in order to maximize the knowledge and skills available in the various ministries and departments.

6.4 Cross-sector collaboration is more achievable at provincial than central level

Engagement of non-forest sectors in the pilot province of Lam Dong has been good during phase 1; DPI, DONRE, DoF, DEMA and DPC representatives are all participating in each meeting of the provincial WG alongside DARD staff. All departments began their engagement in REDD+ from the same level, and there is therefore a sense of mutual learning and shared responsibility for the Programme, which is not so evident at central level.

Lam Dong's prior involvement in pilot activities relating to Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES) and Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) has helped non-forestry staff to understand the REDD+ concept. Moreover, the practical nature of activities at provincial level naturally leads to a collaborative approach to REDD+. For example, there are strong links between tourism and forestry in Lam Dong. Forest protection is already an integral part of agreements between the province and tourism entrepreneurs. DARD and DONRE must both be involved in the development and validation of these contracts, and the experience of this collaborative approach will be valuable for REDD+ demonstration activities.

Learning status: 1. The lessons that provincial-level cross-sectoral collaboration holds for the central level are not well appreciated.

Recommendations: Provincial representatives should be encouraged to share their experiences of cross-sector and cross-departmental collaboration during national steering committee meetings.

6.5 Integration of REDD+ into Socio-Economic Development Plans is an essential, but not sufficient, condition for cross-sector collaboration

Integration of REDD+ into the Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for Lam Dong has proved challenging. However, all provincial departments agree that it has been a rewarding exercise. Forest protection and development is already integrated into the SEDP. These plans will be an essential resource for the provincial planning process for demonstration activities in phase 2 of the UN-REDD Programme.

The SEDP and the Forest Protection and Development Plan (FPDP) provide a solid basis for multi-sectoral approaches to REDD+. Every year the plans must indicate how many hectares will be protected and how much budget will be allocated to forestry, but these plans need to be implemented effectively, and adapted to local situations and variable conditions. Strong commitment from local leaders is crucial. For example, though the SEDP limits the total area in the province for coffee plantation to 40,000 ha, it is a challenge to prevent the conversion of forest into coffee plantation when the coffee price rises. District and commune-level officials will be tempted to compete for plantation area within (and potentially beyond) the 40,000 ha limit.

Infrastructure planning for roads and hydropower, which is approved at the central level, is easier to enforce between province and district levels. However, micro-hydropower stations and the impacts of road networks on forests are not properly accounted for in the SEDP.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely appreciated at provincial and central levels.

Recommendations: SEDPs and FPDPs must be central to the provincial planning processes for phase 2 of the UN-REDD Programme. However, the importance of agribusiness and local infrastructure to local livelihoods and district and commune-level targets must be properly taken into account. Local people and local government officials need to have the opportunity to make objective comparisons between different land-use options. For agribusiness sectors, such as coffee, REDD+ demonstration activities should include strategies such as integrated land-use planning, improved production techniques and marketing support.

6.6 The financing system for REDD+ needs to be better understood by DPI and other sectors to avoid undermining additionality

Local officials understand that the financial architecture for REDD+ will be different from that which has been used in previous externally-funded forest sector projects and programmes. However, the nature of this difference is not well understood. This could have serious negative implications for the potential of the UN-REDD Programme, and the NRP, to achieve net emission reductions. For example, the principle of additionality requires that REDD+ finance should not cover activities for which alternative finance has

already been committed. However, the DPI appears to be looking forward to opportunities to make alterations to the provincial budget, on the basis of REDD+ income, shifting funds from forestry to other sectors.

Apart from the issue of additionality, there is also the risk that provincial plans place undue confidence in the amount of REDD+ finance, which is very difficult to predict.

Learning status: 1. The serious nature of these misconceptions, and their potential impact, are not well appreciated.

Recommendations: This issue requires immediate attention through capacity building and awareness raising activities in Lam Dong and phase 2 pilot provinces.

Section 7: Regional Approach

7.1 The political benefits of regional cooperation outweigh the technical challenges

In the context of regional approaches, leakage is the issue that is most commonly mentioned. However, as representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) point out, under the UNFCCC mechanism leakage of emissions from one country to another should be captured in the national account of the latter. Strictly speaking, therefore, regional leakage does not actually exist. This is a controversial point for Viet Nam because the most pressing cross-border issue for the country's forest sector is the illegal timber trade, where a regional perspective is certainly useful. Strict legal controls in one country which are undermined by weak or ineffective controls in another country constitutes a leakage problem, whether or not it is technically correct to label it as such in the context of REDD+. The National UN-REDD Programme could therefore do more to address these issues, regardless of the logic on accounting. In political terms, donor countries, as well as Viet Nam itself, envision a role for the Programme in highlighting and addressing regional leakage.

Learning status: 3. Most stakeholders understand the political expediency in maximizing the potential for REDD+ to address illegal timber trade.

Recommendations: More discussion of regional leakage during phase 1 would have strengthened the proposal for phase 2. As well as more efficient use of funds earmarked for regional approaches, activities of other programmes and projects at the regional scale may also be encouraged through the UN-REDD Programme.

7.2 Highlighting the links between FLEGT and REDD+ could encourage regional alignment in forest governance

Some regional issues are more related to FLEGT than REDD+. Linkages between FLEGT and REDD+ need to be emphasised to ensure that attention is being paid to improving forest governance. Both processes are highly significant for changing the dynamics of forest sector institutional and governance reform.

Developments in international markets, including certified timber as well as trade regulations and requirements such as the Lacey Act⁸ and FLEGT, may provide lessons for REDD+, including technical and financial cooperation at the regional level, from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and other agencies.

Learning status: 3. The links between FLEGT and REDD+ are well appreciated and are already being explored by several agencies.

Recommendations: The UN-REDD Programme could explore potential links between REDD+ safeguards and FLEGT for legality verification of forest product exports.

7.3 Regional efforts should focus on dialogue between key individuals

There have been few notable achievements under Outcome 3 (Improved knowledge of approaches to reduce regional displacement of emissions) during phase 1 of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme. Expectations at the outset of the Programme were over-ambitious because of the limitations of using funds from a national-based programme for activities that have impacts beyond national borders. For phase 2, it is important to limit ambition and concentrate on low-cost, high-impact activities in the regional sphere. The UN-REDD Programme should create the right conditions for ideas on regional cooperation to arise, rather than impose such ideas externally.

Counterparts in the forest sector throughout the region are in constant touch with each other and attend several workshops and other events together. One of the most practical objectives for the UN-REDD Programme at the regional level is to enhance the usefulness of these personal contacts in order to share lessons from REDD+ experience. The Programme should encourage informal regional dialogues, to build capacity at technical and political levels. These efforts should start off small, as dialogues between key individuals.

Learning status: 2. There is a realization among some, but not all, stakeholders that regional approaches should focus on personal connections, at least to begin with.

Recommendations: Phase 2 of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme may include support for Vietnamese government and non-government stakeholders to visit counterparts in other countries on a more regular

⁸The US Lacey Act was introduced in 1900 to prohibit the import and internal transport of illegally-captured wildlife and non-native species. It was amended in 2008 to cover plant material, and therefore illegally-harvested timber and other forest products. Importers in the United States of America must be able to prove that the material they bring into the country is legally sourced. Consequently, they are looking to exporting countries (such as Viet Nam) to provide them with such proof. For more information, visit the website of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), a US-based NGO, at www.eia-global.org

basis. Such meetings should remain small, informal and flexible. They should address issues of specific regional interest as the Programme evolves.

The UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme could also be more proactive in sharing the outcomes of phase 1 at the regional level, such as in the fields of FPIC and BDS. It is necessary to use the UN-REDD regional hub in Bangkok as an integral part of the National Programme, particularly when it comes to regional policy dialogue and sharing of lessons with regional countries and partners.

7.4 Choose an existing regional platform to maximize cross-fertilisation of ideas

The Asia-Pacific region has a variety of existing platforms for coordination and sharing of lessons on forest policy, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) and the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC). Independent, non-government platforms also exist, such as REDD-net, with an Asia Pacific regional hub at RECOFTC in Bangkok. These all have different objectives, structures and levels of complexity, but for regional approaches under the UN-REDD Programme to be successful, the Programme should focus on one of these platforms. There is no need to expend resources on the creation of new regional mechanisms or organisations.

Learning status: 2. There is still no clear strategy for sharing of regional experiences.

Recommendations: Early in phase 2, conduct independent assessment of regional platforms with regard to their suitability for dialogue on REDD+.

Section 8: Forest Information Systems (FIS)

8.1 Lack of consistency in forest data undermines confidence in a country's ability to manage a REDD+ programme.

REDD+ has highlighted the importance of quality and transparency of forest data. This has been a significant problem for Viet Nam. There have often been wide discrepancies between inventory and other data produced by FIPI, MARD, MONRE and other agencies, usually because of different methodologies and/or definitions. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) showed that its estimates of forest-based GHG emissions differed from FIPI's data by 30%. MONRE's estimate of forest carbon is much higher than MARD's, chiefly because the former includes shrubland within the definition of forest. It is very important that methodologies and definitions are standardized across all government agencies, ideally using a single source for government-sanctioned data and definitions. Conflicting information in different contexts will seriously undermine investor confidence in a country's ability to manage a REDD+ programme to the standards of accuracy required by the UNFCCC.

The GoV has now decided that all forest data for public use should come from MARD. This will reduce confusion among international observers and investors, but internally there are still problems. The national statistics office obtains all data on land from MONRE, which is still using its own forest definition.

For inventory methodology, the Forest Modelling Information System (FORMIS) supported by the Government of Finland has been successfully trialled, with FIPI as a key partner. The software is being further refined and may be ready for application under a future NRP.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is fully appreciated and, as noted above, many concrete steps have already been taken.

Recommendations: Awareness of the importance of accurate and consistent forest information must be built among all relevant government bodies and service providers. However, increased awareness is not sufficient. FIPI must hire more staff to undertake the National Forestry Inventory (NFI), and the costs of this should be absorbed by MARD, using UN-REDD and other funds earmarked for REDD+ Readiness.

All sources of forest data should be unified. It is recommended that MONRE align their definitions of land-use types with the forest definition used by MARD.

NFI, the National Assessment and Long Term Monitoring of the Forest and Tree Resources in Viet Nam (NFA) and REDD+ data may all be aligned under a uniform data management system such as FORMIS. The UN-REDD Programme should continue to support this goal.

8.2 REDD+ is an opportunity to secure finance for improved data generation and management, but the future costs of these improvements are uncertain

The emergence of REDD+ creates an unprecedented opportunity for investment in improved forest inventory methodology, which is important for both public and private agencies. However, FIPI is keen to ensure that all potential improved techniques are carefully scrutinized, including a cost-benefit analysis. It is not necessarily the case that a new technology will be economically sustainable in future, just because it is affordable now due to REDD+ Readiness finance.

UN-REDD support has enabled the use of high quality satellite imagery and remotely-sensed data in pilot provinces. However, FIPI needs an indication of whether REDD+ profits will cover the costs to provinces of keeping this information updated. Provinces and other clients will only request services if they feel that investment for REDD+ will cover the costs of information generation. FIPI's interest in generating higher quality inventory data may be limited, if it has to do so at its own expense.

Learning status: 2. This lesson is appreciated by forest technicians but not widely understood by other stakeholders

Recommendations: To accurately gauge the financial sustainability of improvements to the FIS, it is necessary to involve forest technicians, such as those in FIPI, more intimately in discussions on the REDD+ financing system, and the design of a national resource allocation (BDS) system for REDD+. Software and training provision for FIS must be followed up over the long term to reduce waste of resources and identify redundant or ineffective innovations.

8.3 Greater transparency of forest data will be resisted in some quarters

VNFOREST, and others who are committed to REDD+, have a different appreciation of data management than those responsible for the NFI at FIPI. The latter are less keen on changing inventory methods due to the additional costs that this would incur. Sale of NFI data is FIPI's biggest source of revenue. It is not in its commercial interest to release data for public consumption. There is also widespread acceptance that some data are inaccurate, but also a reluctance to be held accountable for these inaccuracies, which are generally ascribed to a lack of resources, particularly of qualified and committed staff.

Digitisation of NFI data began just before phase 1 of the Programme, with Finnish and Japanese technical support, on the understanding that the GoV, not FIPI, will own the database. MARD and VNFOREST are committed to this outcome, and the Programme has pledged to support the ongoing process.

Learning status: 2. Many stakeholders in Viet Nam are aware of this issue, but there is as yet no clear strategy for addressing it effectively.

Recommendations: Greater transparency of past data, inventory methodologies and data marketing practices, as required under the NRP, must take account of these misgivings and address them appropriately. All agencies, including government offices, private service providers and INGOs, have experienced problems with data transparency, but there have been recent improvements. Greater improvements are foreseen, and should be encouraged and rewarded with the support of phase 2 of the Programme.

8.4 National endorsement of forest certification systems may promote greater transparency and quality of the information, as required for REDD+

Within their national forest development strategy, the GoV has the objective that, by 2020, 30% of all exports of timber products will be certified according to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards. Accordingly, since the late 1990s, considerable effort has been expended in the development of an FSC National Standard for Viet Nam, with support from GIZ and other international agencies. However, the group of individuals involved with this work was narrow and closed, and did not receive any clear political backing.

State Forest Enterprises (SFEs) currently lack the capacity to manage production forests in accordance with international standards such as FSC, but there are encouraging signs of progress, with the first SFEs achieving FSC Forest Management and Controlled Wood standards in 2010. Moreover, MARD is currently designing technical guidelines for SFEs, to be developed into a circular. Although these capacity building efforts are explicitly aimed at strengthening Viet Nam's position in the international timber trade, there are very strong potential links to REDD+, through the required adherence to stringent social and environmental principles and international standards of forest management, including transparency and quality of inventory and information.

Learning status: 1. The link between FLEGT and certification schemes such as FSC is well appreciated, as is the link between FLEGT and REDD+ in terms of forest governance reform. However, the potential for integration of certification systems with the FIS for the NRP has not been explored.

Recommendations: The draft FSC national standard is quite far developed. The barriers to completing it are mainly administrative, not technical. Viet Nam also has the option of developing an independent national certification system. However, the country should carefully consider the costs and benefits of this approach (compared to completion of the FSC national standard), because of the lengthy, complex process of securing international recognition. The UN-REDD Programme could use its influence to get the FSC process back on track.

The circular on technical guidelines for SFEs may be assessed against draft FSC national standard and REDD+ safeguards and aligned as necessary. The UN-REDD Programme could specifically support the adjustments to make guidelines usable for small-scale community forestry and smallholders.

Section 9: National REDD+ Management Structure, including UN-REDD National Programme

9.1 In the absence of a National REDD+ Programme (NRP) document, the UN-REDD Programme has, inappropriately, been mistaken for the NRP

The lack of an NRP has undermined the clarity of the UN-REDD Programme objectives. The NRP is often presented as a UN-REDD Programme output. A framework NRP (or national REDD+ strategy) was indeed included as an output of phase 1 of the UN-REDD national Programme⁹. However, it would be more appropriate if the NRP was considered as a product of VNFOREST and the Viet Nam REDD+ Office. It would be good to have more clarity and discipline about the boundary between the UN-REDD Programme and the Programme Management Unit (PMU) on the one hand, and the government-owned NRP and Viet Nam REDD+ Office on the other.

It is certainly appropriate that the UN-REDD Programme is headed by a senior VNFOREST official, but the UN-REDD Programme team includes not only the national REDD+ focal point, but all of the key VNFOREST experts on REDD+. This may blur the line between the UN-REDD Programme and government accountability, at least in the perception of some stakeholders. This is inappropriate. Great care must be taken to ensure that the Programme does not assume (or be seen to assume) full ownership of REDD+ in Viet Nam but remains just one of the stakeholders in the NRP.

It is also true that, without an NRP, this has contributed to confusion regarding representation. It is often unclear to external stakeholders whether the National Programme Director speaks on behalf of the GoV or the programme. If an NRP were in place, this would not matter so much. Internal efficiency for the UN-REDD Programme does not necessarily lead to clarity of messages for external stakeholders. The MPI sees the UN-REDD Programme as one programme, among many others, to support them in giving advice to the government for establishment of the NRP.

⁹ Output 3 of Outcome 1

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely acknowledged and steps have been taken to accelerate completion of the NRP, in order to reduce confusion.

Recommendations: The NRP must be completed and approved before phase 2 of the UN-REDD Programme can begin.

9.2 The Viet Nam REDD+ Office is understaffed; a problem which will become more severe during phase 2 of the UN-REDD Programme

No individual in VNFOREST or the UN-REDD Programme currently has both the time and the competence to assemble all required inputs for the NRP. This job requires someone to gather all lessons from phase 1, all the results of the STWGs and REDD network, analyse, condense and compile them into a concise document that is in compliance with all relevant government policies and decisions. It is the task of an architect, or an intimate team of architects, solely concentrated on this task. At present, the NRP is emerging from a merger of vastly different, often contradictory descriptions of REDD+, like several blind men describing an elephant by touching different parts of its body, concluding either that it's all about BDS, all about MRV or all about safeguards, instead of an intricate and interlinked combination of them all.

The creation of the Viet Nam REDD+ Office, and the appointment of Viet Nam's national REDD+ focal point as its head, is an important step forward in building national ownership of the UN-REDD Programme, as well as other REDD+ initiatives. However, the head of the Office is also the lead in the development of the NRP. His new additional duties mean likely further delays to this critical task. With only a maximum of five full-time staff, however, and limited technical capacity on REDD+ apart from the Office head, there is no imminent solution to this problem.

Due largely to this shortage of staff and capacity, development of phase 2 of the UN-REDD Programme, which should have followed the NRP, instead preceded it, and took too much time.

Learning status: 3. This problem is widely appreciated and steps have been taken by MARD to allow the Viet Nam REDD+ Office to hire more dedicated staff.

Recommendations: The UN-REDD Programme may have to allocate more funds under phase 2 to human resources and staff development for the Viet Nam REDD+ Office in the short term, but the long-term solution must come from re-allocation of internal MARD resources, as long as other national and international funding sources are not available.

9.3 The UN-REDD Programme should build on the successful examples of previous multi-agency UN programmes

Multi-agency UN programmes are not new to Viet Nam. The MPI and other government bodies speak particularly favourably of the Avian Influenza and Gender Mainstreaming programmes, which both involved close cooperation between several UN agencies, with the GoV in the lead. These programmes shared a number of common characteristics which are absent from the UN-REDD Programme.

First of these is a clear relationship between the management committee and the steering committee, where the latter acts on the advice of the former. This puts the GoV clearly in the lead and gives UN agencies a framework for unified input. The three agencies in the UN-REDD Programme have appeared, on occasion, to disagree in public over phase 2 development and participatory carbon monitoring (PCM), for example. Disagreements are inevitable because of the different mandates and perspectives, but overt clashes would be less likely to occur with a clearer programme management structure, and firmer direction from the GoV. The effect of overlaps in technical capacities among agencies, and thus the potential for conflicting advice at the operational level, is also thus minimized.

Secondly, all UN agencies agree on a uniform framework for working with government partners. The GoV prefers an approach that gives it the lead in procurement, empowers staff and allows for flexible and expedient disbursement of programme funds. Currently, the three UN-REDD Organizations operate under three different reporting systems and working methodologies, which places an extra burden of work on the PMU and the Viet Nam REDD+ Office. This is one reason for slow progress and delays in phase 1.

Thirdly, government implementing agencies work directly with a PMU, and have minimal direct interaction with UN agencies. This shields officials from unfamiliar financial and management practices, and is particularly important, as in the case of the UN-REDD Programme, when such practices are not consistent between agencies.

Learning status: 3. This lesson is widely understood and steps have been made to harmonise UN Organization procedures.

Recommendations: If the UN-REDD Programme is to come under the umbrella of the NRP in phase 2, government preferences for working modalities are likely to become obligations. However, this further underlines the need for urgent capacity development of VNFOREST and other government staff to take on the necessary responsibilities.

More high-level meetings between UN Partner Organizations and GoV are required. These became quite frequent towards the middle of 2011 but declined again towards the end of phase 1.

Ideally, international programme officers from each of the three UN Organizations should be based in the country. These international experts need to be of consistent and high quality in order to gain the confidence of their highly-skilled and well-informed Vietnamese counterparts.

9.4 The UN-REDD PMU should develop into a body that serves other REDD+ initiatives

It is unfortunate that communications was not a priority from the beginning of phase 1. This may have served not only to clarify the difference between the UN-REDD Programme and the NRP, but also to provide more general, targeted information about REDD+. As it is, the communications unit of the Programme has successfully promoted the UN-REDD brand, but has not sufficiently distinguished the UN-REDD Programme from the concept of REDD+.

In PMUs of similar national programmes focusing on natural resources, support staff is minimal. Partly as a result of the complexities of three different UN-REDD Partner Organizations, however, the UN-REDD PMU is

surprisingly heavy on administrative staff. Staff members are now familiar with the differences in agency procedures and comfortable with all, which underlines the need for REDD+ implementing agencies to work through the PMU rather than directly with the agencies.

The PMU of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) will be located in the Viet Nam REDD+ Office (VRO). Management units of other REDD+ projects and initiatives, which are not government programmes, will rely on links to the VRO in order to ensure their legitimacy and compliance with the NRP. As investment in REDD+ grows, the VRO will find it harder to cope with these responsibilities. The UN-REDD PMU could provide a valuable focal point in this regard.

Learning status: 2. This is understood, but not agreed, by all.

Recommendations: During phase 2, the UN-REDD PMU should become embedded within national systems, so it can be seen to answer to the specific needs of the GoV, rather than the UN-REDD Programme alone. Communications under the UN-REDD Programme should focus more on general information on REDD+ and less on promotional literature for the Programme, in order to be of more long-term utility for national stakeholders. The Programme also needs to build the capacity of long-term staff, not only rely on temporary staff.

There need to be opportunities to have interchange between PMUs, particularly between technical staff for both programmes (and projects) to ensure consistency. Many of the individuals involved are common to both, although accounting and administration must be kept distinct.

9.5 Financial flows and technical advice must be separate to achieve maximum effectiveness

UN-REDD phase 1 was essentially a technical assistance programme but phase 2 will involve the flow of financial payments. This is a novel type of support and requires serious consideration regarding fund management. Interest in REDD+ will steadily decrease unless financial management systems are developed early, and investment begins to flow through them. The development of a national REDD+ Fund will involve significant changes in the management structure of the UN-REDD Programme. The Trust Fund for Forests (TFF) is the closest Viet Nam has come to such a system for designing financial flows outside existing government arrangements. However, it was never intended to manage the distribution of funds to diverse beneficiaries and is not an appropriate template for a national REDD+ Fund. One of the key lessons from the experience of the TFF is that the design of the financial system should come before the technical advice and, perhaps more importantly, technical advisors should not be involved in the former.

While all REDD+ finance still comes from donors and projects, financing is relatively less complex, although a system must be instituted that can accommodate market-linked investment. Management of payments to claimants and beneficiaries would require a network of intermediary fund-holders, but this network must be as small and efficient as possible. Because the vertical flows of finance and administration in Viet Nam are particularly narrow, this is a major challenge. Perhaps some, but not all finance, could be channelled through provinces or districts, but relying on existing administrative infrastructure will be impossibly expensive, slow and inefficient. The banking system, as used by KfW projects, may hold lessons, but only if

this simplifies the chain of financing, rather than adding an extra link. Hence such KfW-style accounts should not be administered at commune or district level.

Financial flows need transparency and accountability. Technical experts are required to audit and verify payments at each link in the chain, in parallel to the payment mechanism itself

Learning status: 2. The impact of the new type of financial management on the management structure of the UN-REDD Programme is not fully appreciated by all key government and non-government stakeholders.

Recommendations: Phase 2 of the UN-REDD Programme must prioritise the design of the national REDD+ Fund and the finance system. As previously agreed, the Fund will initially be managed by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, but after two years it should transition to national ownership, allowing for the improvement of national capacity at the same time.

To run the Fund, Viet Nam needs credible and functional agencies which are not primarily forest technical agencies, are external to the forest administration, and represent a wide pool of investors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

List of Interviewees

Stakeholder Category	Organisation/office/group	Name
Viet Nam government, national level	VNFOREST, MARD	Nguyen Ba Ngai
		Pham Minh Thoa
		Pham Manh Cuong
	ICD, MARD	Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hoa
	MPI	Nong Thi Hong Hanh
	FSSP	Nguyen Tuong Van
	FIPI	Nguyen Phu Hung
Viet Nam government, sub-national levels	PPC, Lam Dong	Pham S
	DARD, Lam Dong	Pham Van An
		Le Van Minh
	DARD extension, Lam Dong	Nguyen Son
	DPI, Lam Dong	Pham Van Dung
	DONRE, Lam Dong	Luong Van Ngu
	DEMA, Lam Dong	Huynh My
		Vo Thuan
	Sub-FD, DARD, Lam Dong	Le Quang Nghiep
		Le Van Trung
	Sub-FPD, DARD, Lam Dong	Tran Thanh Binh
	DPC, Lam Ha	Dinh Tan Bai
	FPD, Lam Ha	Do Van Thuy
	ONRE, Lam Ha	Nguyen Minh Thong
	DPC, Di Linh	Le Viet Phu
	FPD, Di Linh	DinhTien Hung
	CPC, BaoThuan	K'Bril
	CPC, Phu Son	Nguyen Minh Doan
Vietnamese CSOs/NGOs	SRD	Vu Thi Bich Hop
	CERDA	Vu Thi Hien
	CSDM	Luong Thi Truong
International NGOs	JICA	Ejashiri Eiji
	WWF	Le Thuy Anh
	FFI	John Parr
	Forest Trends	Phuc Xuan To
	RECOFTC	Nguyen Quang Tan
	SNV	Richard McNally
		Steven Swann
	GIZ	Jürgen Hess
KfW	Nguyen Van Minh	
Local communities	Pre Teng 2 village, Phu Son	Ho SyTho
		Thoi
		Loc
		Y Ban
		Ka Bon
		Ka Dung
		Dang Su
		Huynh Van Than
	Kala Tonggu village, BaoThuan	K'Bren 1 (village head)
		Ka Nhoih
	Ka Nhop	

		K'Bren 2 (villager)
		Ka Doi
		K'Bret
UN-REDD Programme Partners (and other multilateral agencies)	UNDP	Tore Langhelle
	FAO	Akiko Inoguchi
	UN-REDD PMU	Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen
	Embassy of Norway, Ha Noi	Larissa Falkenberg
	World Bank	Nguyen Thi Thu Lan