

**Participatory Governance Assessment for REDD+ in Viet Nam
A pilot proposal**

Concept Note – Initial Phase

This Concept Note on the Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA) for REDD+ in Viet Nam is a starting point for discussion on how a PGA can add value to the REDD+ process in Viet Nam. More specifically, it describes the general purpose of a PGA, how it can fit into the REDD+ context in Viet Nam, the initial activities to ensure stakeholder participation and contributions, and possible coordination in the further PGA process beyond the initial phase. Especially important is the alignment with FAO's Forest Governance Monitoring project. No decisions regarding objectives, scope or implementation modalities have been made as the intention is to work together with stakeholders to reach such agreements, after which a more detailed Project Document will be prepared and presented.

I. PGA overview

What is the Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA)?

The Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA) is an approach that aims to establish a system of information on governance issues (governance data) through the development of governance indicators which can be measured over a period of time. The process undertaken includes a diverse range of key stakeholders as owners of the process. The difference between a PGA and other more externally driven assessments is that it is fully initiated, implemented, and sustained by national actors. By ensuring the inclusion and participation of all key national stakeholders in the design, choice of methodology, selection of framework to be measured, the indicators developed to measure or assess governance are likely to be more reflective of the country context, thereby providing more legitimacy and relevance. The analysis of these indicators will lead to the establishment of a baseline, which will be then used to make an assessment of performance in subsequent times.

When conducted successfully, a nationally owned governance assessment can strengthen democratic governance in a country, provide opportunities for state-citizen engagement, and ultimately serve as an accountability mechanism among different stakeholders. If the process becomes institutionalized and indicators are measured regularly, governance assessments also provide a reference for planning, monitoring and evaluation of governance performance.

There are four key principles that differentiate the value of a nationally led PGA, as opposed to external assessments:

- 1) Participation – a broad and representative range of national actors (government, civil society, academics) have opportunities to provide input to key stages of the assessment process
- 2) Transparency – national actors have unrestricted access to information on the assessment process, and the results of the assessment are made available to the public as a public good
- 3) Accountability – country-led assessments act as critical accountability mechanism for local stakeholders with regard to governance performance
- 4) Legitimacy – national actors agree that the assessment process and the findings are legitimate

The PGA approach builds on existing approaches and expertise within the UN-REDD agencies - both on the UNDP/ Oslo Governance Centre's knowledge and experience of supporting countries conduct democratic governance assessments, as well as FAO's experience in data collection and monitoring in the forest sector. A combination of this expertise will be applied as relevant to issues within REDD+.

Why is the PGA relevant in the REDD + process?

The success and sustainability of REDD+ policies will depend largely on the way it is able to address the multiple governance challenges and opportunities that are linked with it. As such, a REDD+ governance information system will be an important element of overall efforts. Such a system can disseminate information on REDD+ funding received as well as revenue distribution, and other issues of interest, such as levels of perceived corruption, for instance. This information system can provide an accountability mechanism if the information generated is thought to be credible, scientifically sound, and if indicators are chosen so as to reflect and address citizens' concerns and interests, which is what the PGA aims to do.

For instance, the Social and Environment Principles developed by the UN-REDD Programme emphasize the following:

Principle 1 on Democratic Governance states that the Programme should “comply with standards of democratic governance”, and stresses the following three criteria:

- a. Ensure integrity of fiduciary and fund management systems
- b. Implement activities in a transparent and accountable manner
- c. Ensure broad-based stakeholder participation

Likewise, **Principle 2 on Stakeholder Livelihoods** states that the Programme must “carefully assess potential adverse impact on stakeholders' long-term livelihoods and mitigate effects where appropriate”, and stresses the following criteria:

- d. Promote gender equality
- e. Avoid involuntary resettlement
- f. Respect traditional knowledge
- g. Develop equitable benefit distribution systems

The PGA for REDD+ can through consultative and inclusive processes contribute to *the development of national systems providing relevant information on how safeguards are promoted, addressed and respected* as recommended in the Cancun Agreement (paragraphs 60 and 71 d).

Beyond the sharing of information for increased transparency, the PGA will also include capacity building and training for governments to provide relevant, reliable and timely information – as well as civil society to act upon the information provided.

As seen from the above, these are only certain examples of the types of governance issues that are related to the successful implementation of REDD+. The PGA can address all, or only some of them – this is entirely dependent on the decision of national stakeholders. It has been illustrated through case studies that the success and usefulness of the PGA is more likely to occur if the focus area is more finite. This is the suggested approach for Viet Nam as well.

What does a PGA process look like?

Below is some information related to how PGAs can be applied in the context of REDD+. The purpose of this information is to present the array of issues that can come up (and have in other countries where pilots have been undertaken, such as Nigeria and Indonesia). The list is not exhaustive, and one or more objectives could be selected.

Possible short/medium term objectives for the PGA

- Identify and establish mechanisms for consultation and feedback from forest-dependent communities with regard to the implementation of REDD+
- Identify policies and legislation that are relevant in the forestry sector and to forest dependent communities (also on regulations that may not be specific to the sector, but which could have an impact), and how such information is made available to stakeholders
- Assess the capacity of relevant institutions at national and sub-national levels to gauge their ability to implement REDD+ in an accountable and transparent manner
- Assess mechanisms available to make the Benefits Distribution System accountable and transparent
- Identify anti-corruption mechanisms and strategies

Possible long term objectives for the PGA

- Increase efficiency of land administration and service delivery (land registration, for example)
- Enhanced coordination among agencies in different line ministries/institutions and central ministries/institutions
- Capacity building to facilitate regular and relevant information sharing (supply side of accountability) as well as the active use of information for increased accountability (demand side of information)
- Establish mechanisms through which forest dependent communities can voice their concerns

A typical set-up

- 1) **Identify and convene relevant stakeholders** – the basis of a PGA is that it is inclusive and participatory in nature. Therefore, a first step will be to identify, consult and convene a group of key stakeholders that are involved, have an interest in, or are affected by the REDD+ initiative.

Typically, this includes a mix of government representatives (from relevant agencies and sectors), civil society representatives, and academic institutions, and representatives of forest dependent communities. In addition to an Advisory Group (made up of a combination of different stakeholders), a Research Team is also set up separately, who, based on the advice from the Advisory Group, implements the PGA.

- 2) **Identify the scope and framework of the assessment** – what is the objective of the assessment? (Examples include: Is it the Government desire to understand the needs and feedback of citizens on expectations from REDD+? Is it to better understand how services are being delivered at the local level, and where the bottlenecks are? Is to understand the state of governance generally?) Based on this, a framework will be identified in which indicators will be developed.
- 3) **Agree on data identification and collection** – agree on the types of qualitative and quantitative data sources to be used. This can include administrative, archival and secondary data, as well as survey data. (In the case of Viet Nam, it may also include the FGM methodology of FAO). It will also be necessary to reach an agreement on the data collection methods, such as whether to conduct desk reviews, surveys, target group discussions, or a combination of these different elements. The methodologies selected will impact on the timing, as well as the required budget for the process.
- 4) **Data analysis** – once the data is collected, it is necessary to use the information and raw data generate to turn into useful information, suggesting conclusions and making recommendations for future decision-making. It is important to get the procedures for the data analysis agreed upon at the start of the overall assessment process in order to avoid potential manipulation or politicization of the data later on.
- 5) **Data presentation and dissemination** – the accessibility and transparency of the information generated from the assessment is a critical component of the assessment process. Communicating the results of the assessment is in itself an element of strengthening the democratic process. There are many options to be considered for disseminating the information, including producing papers, launching a website, holding dialogues or workshops, public launch of the results etc. Once again, this depends very much in the priorities, purpose and intended outcome of the assessment process.

II. Possible application of PGA on REDD+ in Viet Nam

I. Identifying the scope of the PGA in Viet Nam

The thematic and geographical scope of the PGA will be identified by a group of multiple stakeholders. However, in order to facilitate discussion at the workshop, the following points are being proposed as possible discussion points:

Thematic and geographical scope

Most policy discussions on REDD+ happen far away from forest-dependent communities, of which many are Indigenous People. It is important to state that IPs have rights, cultural and social affiliations to the land, and all stakeholders involved in the REDD+ process have an obligation to recognize and protect these rights. Given that the REDD+ implementation will impact forest dependent communities the most, it may seem logical to focus on this group of stakeholders. The internationally recognized principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent is an entry point to address such issues. For instance: “(i) information about and consultation on any proposed initiative and its likely impacts; (ii) meaningful participation of indigenous peoples; and, (iii) representative institutions.”¹ Several stakeholders, both representing the Government of Vietnam and national NGOs, expressed at a workshop organized through FAO and MARD’s project Forest Governance Monitoring in Hanoi 13 January 2012, the importance to focus on participation of forest dependent communities in local decision making processes, and downward accountability. This topic should be strongly considered for the PGA.

Another potential area that the PGA could address is whether there are opportunities for civil society and forest-dependent communities to participate in decision-making processes related to REDD+. The assessment could examine the existence and effectiveness of mechanisms that are already in place for meaningful and broad stakeholder participation, or identify potential additions to make it more effective. Some of the issues that could be explored here is the extent to which communities are organised and engage with their local representatives to express their thoughts on issues that impact them. Similarly, it may also be useful to look at the ways in which these are taken into account in policy and other decision-making processes.

Although inputs from a vast array of stakeholders will inform the decision on the site selection of the PGA, one possible option would be to look at one of the six pilot provinces (Bac Kan, Lao Cai, Binh Tuan, Ca Mau, Ha Tinh, and Lam Dong) for UN-REDD Phase 2. The Government of Viet Nam is currently looking to align all REDD+ initiatives and projects from different donors under the National REDD Programme (NRP). It would also be important to consider the province in which province the sub-contracted national NGO has a presence and established trust with REDD+ stakeholders. In the first preparatory phase the PGA could look at one province, and then expand to other pilot provinces thereafter.

II. How could the PGA fit into Viet Nam’s relevant strategies on REDD+, already existing stakeholder fora and information sharing systems?

National REDD+ Programme

¹ UN DESA, PFII/2005/WS.2/10, 2005

The planned National REDD+ Programme (NRP) serves as the key institutional instrument for integrating governance monitoring on REDD+. Although the NRP as per February 2012 is still in the shaping phase, the PGA could play a key part in informing the Government of Viet Nam on which governance topics and challenges that stakeholders find to be most pressing. Once the NRP has been shared with the wider group of stakeholders it will be key to identify the specific entry points for a PGA into Viet Nam's institutional REDD+ structure. REDD+ safeguards would need to be elaborated further in the NRP, and will help to inform the PGA on the institutionalizing of those safeguards in Viet Nam.

The National REDD Network's sub-technical Working Group on Governance

The National REDD Network is by definition an open group for all stakeholders interested in REDD+ in Viet Nam. The sub-technical working groups (STWG) under the main body convene meetings on a more frequent basis, where stakeholders working under each topic, such as MRV, BDS and Local Implementation gather to discuss and share information. The STWG have also been used for national level consultations on elements in the National REDD+ Programme. A STWG on Governance was formally established in 2011. As precedence from the other STWG, the STWG on Governance is co-chaired by a Government representative and representative from civil society.

Forest Development Strategy

The Forest Development Strategy (FDS) outlines a monitoring framework in which indicators for forest monitoring will be implemented and followed up. Although REDD+ is just one part of the bigger forestry picture in Viet Nam, there should be room to integrate REDD+ governance as one of the possible entry points in the monitoring framework. It would also matter what FAO's Forest Governance Monitoring initiative would chose as the entry point for their capacity building activities on up-scaled forestry governance monitoring. The General Statistics Office (GSO) was tasked to establish the monitoring framework in close collaboration with MARD² and VNForest.

Forest Sector Support Partnership

The main stakeholder forum on forestry issues is the Forest Sector Support Partnership (FSSP). The FSSP is also the national stakeholder forum that MARD and VNForest look to when discussing elements in the Forest Development Strategy. FSSP is a good alternative to the STWG on Governance to secure stakeholder ownership of the PGA. It should be noted that both the FSSP and the STWG on Governance as they are described above, are stakeholder forums at national level.

²Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Alignment with existing information sharing systems

As mentioned, an idea worth considering is for the PGA to link up with the existing monitoring system under the Vietnam Forest Development Strategy. Furthermore, it is worth considering how to utilize the information sharing system that the Finland and TFF (Trust Fund for Forest) – funded FORMIS (Forest Management Information System) project is developing. Specifically, the FORMIS project aims to establish a “modern information system from central to local level in order to provide accurate information for making decisions in forestry”. Should the UN-REDD Phase 2 materialize the PGA would also need to take into account the establishment of a National REDD Information System.

Who could be responsible for assuring government ownership?

The Forest Protection Department (FPD) under MARD has already expressed strong interest to take lead from the government’s side. FPD is also co-chairing the STWG on Governance as well as leading the Working Group of the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) under FLEGT, which would ensure secure coordination. Operationally, FPD could constitute one of the members in the Advisory Group.

Management and Implementation Arrangements

After the scope of the PGA has been decided, a formal structure would need to be in place. Following models from the PGA in Indonesia as well as the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Index (PAPI) project in Vietnam, the management structure could look the following way:

Research Team – responsible for the implementation of the PGA on a day-to-day basis. Will consists of a sub-contracted national NGO to drive the PGA process in the pilot province together with UNDP/FAO focal points and UN-REDD PMU Project Coordinator for PGA. The Research Team, with strong knowledge on the assessment issues, will be responsible for reviewing and improving the overall design of the assessment, finalizing the instrument/methodologies, conducting data analysis, formulating findings and developing recommendations. If possible, an actor such as the IPSARD could also add much value to the Research team.

Advisory Group – small group to facilitate decision-making composed of representative from government and civil society from national and provincial level. This group will endorse the process, as well as the findings. It will provide advice to the Research Team to strengthen the assessment design based on actual experiences. The VNForest co-chair of the STWG on Governance would preferably be member of this group.

Provincial Working Group – multi-stakeholder group responsible for providing input on the improvement of the assessment design, facilitating data collection in the field, verify the findings and recommendations formulated by the Research Team, and facilitating the implementation of action plans for follow-up activities based on the recommendations.

The PGA will be incorporated into the existing UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, which has been under implementation since 2009. An initial phase of the PGA will be operated for about 12 months, from Jan – Dec 2012. Provided funding will be available, a second phase could then expand into more provinces guided by the advice of REDD+ stakeholders.

III. Timeline, activities and budget

For the initial phase it will be important to establish the management and implementation structures of the PGA through stakeholders' input and participation, in addition to undertake more thorough mappings of both stakeholders and existing forest governance initiatives. Possibly, depending on stakeholders views on the scope of the PGA, more provincial and district consultations could be held first two quarters of 2012.

Timeline	Task	Objectives	Key actors
December 2011 – January 2012	Engage in two stakeholder consultations at national level.	Present the PGA format to relevant stakeholders and get initial directions of the scope of the PGA	Sub-technical Working Group on Governance (21 November), Forest Sector and Support Partnership (12-13 January)
February - March 2012	Advertise and contract a PGA Project Coordinator	A resource person in the PMU to assist the process	UN-REDD Programme
6 March 2012	<u>Workshop 1</u> Have a first kick-off meeting for stakeholders in Hanoi	Get consent from PGA stakeholders on the scope of the exercise.	Open meeting for all interested stakeholders
January – March 2012	Identify a national NGO to lead the Research Team. Identify members for the Advisory Group	The PGA will be more effective if run by key REDD+ stakeholders with knowledge of the field	UN-REDD Programme
March – April 2012	Mapping of governance issues and stakeholders of relevance to REDD+ in the pilot province	REDD+ mapping exercises in the pilot province: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REDD+ stakeholder analysis; • Identification of key governance issues and risks; • Assessment of other forest governance initiatives ongoing; • Existing capacity levels, challenges and opportunities of indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities with regards to their participation in REDD+ governance 	Research Team
17-18 April 2012	<u>South-South Lessons Learned Exchange</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from the other 3 PGA pilots in the UN-REDD programme 	PGA Project coordinator, Research Team, UNDP focal points

End of April 2012	<u>Workshop 2</u> Stakeholder workshop to present the PGA approach for provincial/district stakeholders in the selected pilot province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To secure understanding and interest for the PGA across stakeholders • Initial awareness rising on REDD+ • To debrief on, and review the mapping exercises • To learn about relevant assessment methodologies • To reach a consensus on critical issues to be assessed in the PGA • Agree on a first cut of possible indicators 	Research Team
May-June 2012	Drafting of monitoring framework as a basis for the PGA data sampling		Research Team
July 2012	<u>Workshop 3</u> Stakeholder consultation in the pilot province	Get feedback and endorsement on the draft monitoring framework and the indicator set	Research Team
July – August 2012	<u>STWG on Governance</u>	Present the findings from the PGA for the STWG on Governance in Hanoi	Research Team; STWG; UNDP; UN-REDD Programme
July – August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing data collection instruments • Field testing of data collection instruments in pilot province • Assessments of training needs of data collectors 		TBD
September 2012	Data collection		TBD
October 2012	South-South exchange	Delegation from Indonesia to visit Viet Nam to share experiences from their REDD+ PGA	Members of the Expert Panel and/or UNDP/PMU representatives in Indonesia.
October – December 2012	Data analysis and dissemination		TBD

2012 ANNUAL BUDGET PGA

(From 1/1/2012 - 31/12/2012)

Key Activities	Objectives	Budget in USD
1.7.1 National kick-off workshop	To get stakeholder's endorsement on the scope of the PGA and especially on the selection of the pilot province.	7,245
1.7.2 Establishment of a Research Team to undertake operational aspects of the PGA, including mapping exercises	<p>A national NGO will be contracted for the Research Team to drive the PGA process in the pilot province. More specifically, the NGO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * map REDD+ stakeholders and provide a baseline for existing governance initiatives in the selected pilot province * organize and conduct a stakeholder workshop to present the PGA approach for provincial/district stakeholders in the selected pilot province, and conduct initial awareness rising on REDD+, present the findings from the mapping exercises and get consent for a first cut on the draft indicators * consult with Advisory Group regularly * draft the indicator set to be used for the data collection * organize and conduct a stakeholder consultation in the pilot province to get feedback on the draft indicator set 	Removed due to procurement regulations
1.7.3 Establishment of Advisory Group	A larger group of REDD+ stakeholders that include GoV, CSO and Academia to advise the Research Team.	6,000
1.7.4 South-South exchange - delegation from Indonesia to visit Viet Nam to share experiences from their REDD+ PGA	Exchange visit from Indonesia for inputs based on experiences with the PGA	7,975
1.7.5 Preparation for data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing data collection instruments • Field testing of data collection instruments in pilot province • Assessments of training needs of data collectors 		Removed due to procurement regulations
1.7.6 Data collection		Removed due to procurement regulations
1.7.7 Data analysis and dissemination		Removed due to procurement regulations
1.7.8 Lessons Learned Exchange workshop in Indonesia	Focal points from the four PGA for REDD+ pilot countries will meet to discuss lessons learned and exchange experiences	8,624
Programme Management		

<i>Travel costs for UNDP regional Governance expert in Bangkok</i>	To give expert advice on the governance approach	9,000
<i>Programme Coordinator salary</i>	To facilitate the PGA process	Removed due to procurement regulations
<i>Traveling to the field for workshops</i>		3,000
<i>Miscellaneous</i>		5,000

Total (excl. 1.7.2, 1.7.5 - 1.7.7 and parts of Programme Management)

46,844