



DEVELOPING A NATIONAL REDD+ STRATEGY FOR VIET NAM

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The UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme is assisting the Government of Viet Nam in the Readiness Phase of REDD+. One of the key activities is the development of a National REDD+ Strategy. A team of national and international consultants has prepared a draft strategy for the National REDD+ Strategy as a basis for further discussions with government and civil society stakeholders.

The drafting process began with a review of international experiences in developing similar climate-related strategies, an assessment of how international best practice and UNFCCC guidance aligns with existing national policies. This helped to define the structure of the document. In parallel, information gathering on key elements of the strategy was initiated, including quantification of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, environment and socio-economic impact assessment, and the design of elements of the REDD+ implementation framework. These elements include a monitoring system for forest-carbon stocks and emissions, as well as benefits and impacts.

KEY ISSUES IN DEVELOPING NATIONAL REDD+ STRATEGY



- UNFCCC guidance should be followed as closely as possible, in “Methodological guidance for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries” (e.g. Decision 4/CP.15 and Decision -/CP.16 (Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention)).
- The National REDD+ Strategy should be fully compatible with the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory and contribute to the National Communications on Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- The National REDD+ Strategy should be integrated with other government programs and priorities, such as poverty reduction, rural development, forestry and timber production and processing, agricultural development, macro-economic policies.
- In designing the National REDD+ Strategy all relevant stakeholders should be consulted, ranging from representatives of government at the central, provincial, district and local levels, civil society (including those organizations representing ethnic minorities), academia, and the private sector. Consultations have to extend beyond the forestry sector, to all relevant sectors of the government, such as planning, finance, agriculture, rural development, transportation, education and communication.



LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: The National REDD+ Strategy needs to be nested within broader national development policies and programs.

In order to develop and maintain strong political commitment, as well as to promote multi-sectoral support for a National REDD+ Strategy it needs to be aligned with other programs and policies. In Viet Nam, the “National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change” provides such a framework. The benefits of the Program should also assist in achieving broader policy goals such as rural employment, gender equality and poverty reduction.

Lesson 2: In addition to describing key activities of implementing the National REDD+ Strategy, time-bound and quantifiable targets need to be set.

Many implementation strategies, while listing activities for achieving set objectives, fail to set time-bound and quantifiable targets, so that monitoring progress is impossible or subjective. For REDD+, which is intended to deliver benefits particularly to the rural poor, and meet international expectations in terms of equity and transparency, the definition of targets is especially essential.

Lesson 3: Lengthy formal review and approval processes of a National REDD+ Strategy do not preclude immediate action.

While broad stakeholder review and endorsement are essential in order to ensure support and sustainability, the critical interventions can start immediately. These include, for example, developing capacity for monitoring, strengthening law enforcement, and improving forest governance. As activities needed to achieve desired results are complex and inevitably time-consuming, implementation should commence even before formal approval and endorsement process have concluded.

Lesson 4: Involve multi-disciplinary teams in the development of a comprehensive strategy for the National REDD+ Strategy.

Multi-disciplinarity is a prerequisite for the development of a comprehensive and yet implementable National REDD+ Strategy. National consultants from different sectors of government provide insights on regulatory and institutional arrangements and options for embedding the National REDD+ Strategy. Civil society representatives can provide reality checks related to conditions on the ground. International consultants contribute their knowledge on best practices from other countries and assist in following UNFCCC guidelines.

DESIGNING BENEFIT DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS



REDD+ can only succeed if performance-based payments are effectively and equitably distributed. The UN-REDD Programme has assisted the Government of Viet Nam to identify key issues that need to be addressed in the design of a REDD+ compliant benefit distribution system (BDS). Such a system needs to embrace key principles required under REDD+ (see below). Over several months, a team of national and international specialists assessed challenges that need to be overcome in establishing such a system and provided policy recommendations for a REDD+ compliant benefit distribution system.

In 2011, Viet Nam will be finishing the Quick Start Phase of the UN-REDD Programme, and entering into Phase 2. The preparatory work on the BDS is expected to lay the ground for a successful design that will be tested when Phase 2 starts piloting performance payments.

PRINCIPLES OF REDD+ BDS

REDD+ monetizes the carbon stored in forests, and creates incentives for reducing deforestation and forest degradation, conservation, carbon stock enhancements and sustainable management of forests. To be effective, benefits need to be channeled to forest owners and users, especially forest-dependent communities, through a system that embraces the following principles:

Equity: refers to fairness in terms of the distribution of costs and benefits. In the past, there was frequently a tendency for poor local stakeholders to receive disproportionately lower benefits and to shoulder higher costs.

Transparency: refers to availability of relevant and up-to-date information and the capacity for all stakeholders to comprehend how and why benefits are transferred. Transparency is a fundamental safeguard the risk of corruption.

Additionality: captures the idea that stakeholders should be rewarded only for actions that they would not otherwise have taken. Application of the principle of additionality ensures the efficiency of the system, in that the total cost is not inflated.

Performance-relatedness: is required to ensure that action to reduce emissions actually occurs achieve results. This represents a departure from traditional approaches that focused predominantly on activities.

Lesson 1: REDD+ revenues need to be managed in a way that conforms with the principles of equity, transparency, additionality and performance-based results.

This could require a different financial system to the normal government budgetary system, since a REDD+ Fund will require participatory governance to ensure transparency. This means that all major stakeholder groups, including the ultimate beneficiaries, need to be engaged in the governance of REDD+.

Lesson 2: Regular independent, external audits of the National REDD+ revenues (and any revenues managed at sub-national levels) and their distribution are essential. Again, the principle of transparency, as a safeguard against corruption, requires such an approach.

Lesson 3: Mechanisms such as conditional cash transfers (CCTs) need to be used to ensure linkage to performance. In order to ensure continued stakeholder support and engagement, evidence of future payments rewarding performance needs to be apparent. CCTs have achieved such a result in other sectors such as education and health, and should be adapted for the implementation of REDD+.

Lesson 4: The benefit distribution system needs to be integrated with MRV processes. In order to ensure additionality, the entire REDD+ system including arrangements for monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) needs to be integrated.

Lessons 5: Benefit distribution for national REDD+ systems are likely to be more complex than those for project-based approaches, due to the greater number of stakeholders involved.

A project-based approach can involve direct contracts between sellers and buyers. Under a national REDD+ system credits will accrue at the national level, so benefit distribution is more complex. This could involve sub-national implementation within a national framework.

Lesson 6: Benefit structuring should be delegated to local governance structures

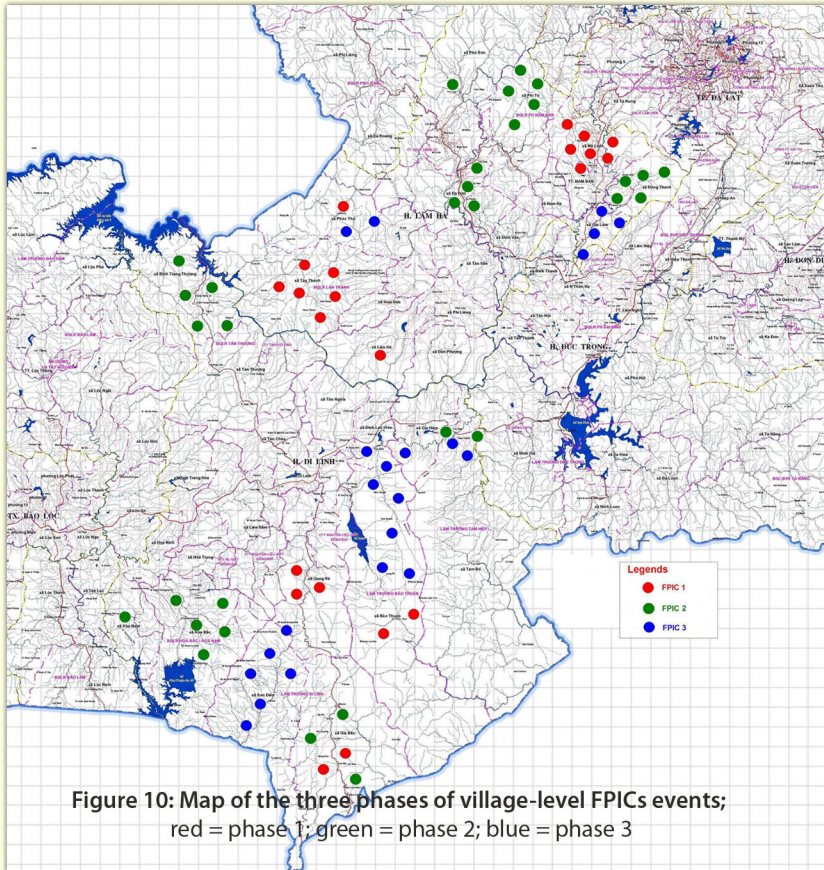
In Viet Nam there are differences in cultures and social norms across the country. Therefore, decisions on issues such as cash versus non-cash benefit transfers, and communities versus individuals households as the ultimate beneficiaries, should be delegated to local, participatory governance structures. Such structures need to be subject to checks and balances to prevent abuses or unfair decisions.

Lessons 7: Enhanced co-benefits can be incorporated into benefit structuring.

The use of weightings (termed R-coefficients) can allow co-benefit, such as biodiversity conservation, or poverty alleviation, to be integrated into REDD+ systems. For example, overall payments for performance in reducing emissions may be weighted positively for areas with high biodiversity or high levels of poverty.



WORK ON FREE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT



The FPIC process involved - eight steps and three phases, and was completed between April and June 2010. Phase 1 was undertaken in April 2010 (covering 22 villages), Phase 2 in May 2010 (31 villages), and Phase 3 in June 2010 (25 villages).

The UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme has moved swiftly to develop and implement readiness activities. Viet Nam was the first to conduct a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process under the UN-REDD Programme. The FPIC process was conducted in 78 villages in Lam Ha and Di Linh districts in the pilot province of Lam Dong (Figure 1) because of the prevalence of ethnic people: of the 53 ethnic groups present in Viet Nam, around 30 groups are found there. Within the UN-REDD Programme, the FPIC process was also a pilot activity owing to no prior experience or clear and detailed guidance on how to conduct it. Through this exercise, the Programme wanted to draw out lessons for the future implementation of the FPIC process in Viet Nam and beyond.

PRINCIPLES OF FREE PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT

FPIC for indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities must be adhered to, and is essential to, ensuring their full and effective participation in policy-making and decision-making processes within UN-REDD Programme activities. In this context:

Free implies no coercion, intimidation or manipulation;

Prior implies consent has been sought sufficiently in advance, and in respect to time requirements of those being potentially affected;

Informed implies that information is provided that covers (at least) the reason, nature, duration, size, pace, and reversibility of any proposed project or activity; the locality of areas that will be affected; an assessment of economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts; personnel likely to be involved; and procedures that may be required; and

Consent implies that consultation and participation are crucial components of a consent process. Consultation should be undertaken in good faith, and indigenous peoples should be able to participate through their own freely chosen representatives. The inclusion of a gender perspective is essential. This process may include the option of withholding consent.



Lesson 1: Adequate time needs to be allowed for awareness-raising.

Education and awareness raising at all levels is essential, and is more difficult than might be assumed. The concept of climate change, the role of forests in climate change, and the potential to generate income from reducing emissions from forests are all difficult to grasp, even for well-educated government officials, and much harder for less-educated local officials. The pilot FPIC process in Viet Nam recognized this and substantially increased awareness raising efforts from Phase 1 to 3, but should have made even greater efforts.

Lesson 2: Local FPIC events can be very time consuming and complex.

In Viet Nam, as in many other countries, indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities tend to be distrustful of new initiatives, especially if viewed as having government support. Similarly, not having had real experience of genuine consultation or the right to provide or withhold consent, it is difficult to build the necessary trust in a new process with regard to a new and complex issue. It is clear that local FPIC events need to be multi-phased, with an introductory session, followed by an opportunity for the community to reflect, followed by additional information sessions to allow any new questions or uncertainties to be addressed, and after another period of reflection, a decision-making process. Thus, at least three visits to each village should be planned by the same interlocutors – meaning that planning needs to be done very carefully. The cost incurred also needs to be taken into account.

Lesson 3: Engagement with local authorities needs to be managed carefully and flexibly.

Not unnaturally, local government agencies feel that they have the right to be engaged in any process likely to affect their administrative area, and this has to be respected. At the same time, direct and visible involvement of government officials risks violating the principle of “Free” consent. Therefore negotiations with government agencies are needed to clarify an approach and role, which satisfies their desire to be involved, but which does not invalidate the FPIC process and the final outcome.

Lesson 4: Local facilitators are essential for effective awareness raising and discussion of issues.

Communicating complex issues associated with REDD+ is even more difficult when speaking a person’s second language. Communication in stakeholders’ first language is essential, and this will normally mean recruitment of local facilitators. However, the facilitators are also unlikely to be well-educated on the issues initially, and so they also require intensive training.

Lesson 5: Documenting FPIC decisions can be challenging.

Indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities may fear submitting a written statement of their decision, especially if individuals’ signatures are appended. Verbal transmission of a decision may be preferred, but leaves open the possibility of future disagreements. A compromise, perhaps involving a written record of a verbal decision (omitting names of individuals) may be needed.

Lesson 6: FPIC is an on-going process, rather than a single event.

National REDD+ strategy with guide the implementation of REDD+. However, FPIC does not apply to the strategy itself, but to the process by which REDD+ is actually implemented. In practice, this means that interventions to reduce emissions need to be integrated with normal socio-economic planning, and it is this planning process that needs to incorporate FPIC. In this way, REDD+ can serve as a catalyst for greater participation by indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities in a process that affect their lives, thus increasing transparency and strengthening democratic processes.

Lesson 7: Expectations of the villagers.

Villagers in Viet Nam and elsewhere tend to focus on short-term benefits. A common question in the pilot exercise was “when will we see some benefits” (and “how much”). This makes the timing of the FPIC process and interpretation of the “Prior” in FPIC awkward. The process should be sufficiently in advance of any decisions or actions to honour the principle of “Prior”, but not so much in advance that the villagers lose interest and commitment before any benefits can be realized and distributed. When REDD+ and FPIC are effectively mainstreamed into planning, this issue will disappear, but in getting Ready for REDD+ expectations of benefits will need to be carefully managed.

Lesson 8: Activities/Training follows up FPIC.

Training grassroots REDD+ interlocutors following the FPIC training. The training will provide village interlocutors with the following knowledge and skills:

1. The role and tasks of grassroots interlocutors in raising awareness and changing behavior of the local community related to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.
2. How to use and apply the UN-REDD Programme’s communication materials, including the Manual for Interlocutors, for activities at the local level.
3. The basic skills of effective communication for facilitating meetings and community counseling sessions.
4. Skills to conduct and reporting on communication activities on REDD+ in the village after the course. Participants will have opportunities to test their skills in real situations and share experiences with each other.

Lesson 9: Target audience.

Viet Nam FPIC’s target audience is not only the local people who live in the village, but also the Kinh and ethnic minorities people, people who have forest and those who do not. The most commonly question that has been raised is: “If I do not have forest could I participate in REDD? If so, what are my possible benefits?”

CHALLENGES

The most important challenge in applying FPIC for REDD+ is scale. REDD+ applies to the entire forest estate of a country which, in the case of Viet Nam, covers nearly 20 million hectares, and affects tens of thousands of communities.

A second challenge concerns how the potential benefits of REDD+ are communicated, as raising false expectations can be detrimental to future implementation of REDD+.

In the case of Viet Nam, an additional challenge stems from the ethnic composition of most forest-dependent communities. Very few such communities are ethnically homogeneous. Rather, a very large proportion of such communities are composed of households of one or more ethnic minorities and households of the Kinh (Vietnamese) ethnic majority. Furthermore, there may also be households of mixed ethnicity.

FACILITATORS

Successfully training a large number of excellent male and female facilitators of different ethnic backgrounds was a major achievement. Many facilitators had previous experience working in the pilot districts. Most were lecturers from the local university, or worked for a local protected area.

After a series of training courses, a strong and sustainable group of facilitators was created; groups were able to work independently and help each other. Of particular importance were the great efforts made by ethnic minority facilitators. The group was also able to prepare issues and present them at commune/village-level awareness workshops.

PILOTING PARTICIPATORY CARBON MONITORING IN VIET NAM

Under REDD+, developing countries like Viet Nam will need to generate evidence of “results-based actions” to receive payments for the reduction of carbon emissions or enhanced removals of carbon. The national Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system holds the key for producing this evidence. The MRV system needs to record information on activity data (area of forest land) and emission factors (changes in forest biomass).

In Viet Nam, stakeholders are now engaging in discussions for collecting such data at two levels:

Level 1 Through Participatory Carbon Monitoring (PCM) involving participants in the National REDD+ Programme, activity data and emission factors can be collected in a statistically significant number of sample plots;

Level 2 For the comprehensive national data, activity data will be collected primarily through a satellite-based land monitoring system, while emission factors can be based on the data collected for the National Forest Inventory (NFI).

Level 1 data will be limited to basic forest mensuration on forest area and properties (e.g. DBH and tree species). Data collected will amount to a very large and statistically significant number of samples. Up to a million plots can be measured per year, assuming all households managing forests in Viet Nam are engaged as REDD+ participants. The Level 1 data will then be supplemented by Level 2 data, to estimate biomass per management unit and eco-zone.

OBJECTIVES OF PARTICIPATORY CARBON MONITORING (PCM)

There is a strong rationale for engaging local REDD+ participants in data collection, particularly for forests which are managed by local communities or individual households. PCM recognizes and capitalizes on the potential of local people's knowledge and skills. It is also considered an important mechanism for REDD+ for the following reasons and values it adds (Skutsch M. and McCall M.K. (2011)):

- Changes in carbon stocks in managed forests over a typical accounting period will likely be too small to be detected accurately by remote sensing from satellites. The National Forest Inventory will collect highly accurate data, but with insufficient resolution in space and time to properly capture local changes in biomass. Changes will need to be measured on the ground in a dense pattern to reach an acceptable accuracy.
- Mobilizing communities can be more cost-effective compared to the use of professional surveyors in conducting ground-based surveys.
- Community's understanding of carbon monitoring will work as an incentive to promote further improvements in forest management, thereby securing further carbon payments.
- Community's engagement in carbon monitoring will increase the likelihood that carbon payments received at the national level will be distributed down to communities at the local level.

Within the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, PCM is being explored as a methodology and piloted in two districts in Lam Dong Province.



VOICES FROM THE PCM PARTICIPANTS

A local villager from Village 14, Hoa Bac Commune, Di Linh District:

The theory of PCM sounded like PCM was going to be complex and difficult, but once we got to the forest and started the measurements, we were confident in using the tools, setting up the sample plots, measuring DBH, weight of shrubs, grass, herb, litter and collecting its samples. We hope that managing our own forests and providing basic forest information through participating in PCM will link to more income for us in the future.

A local officer of Forest Protection Department at Lam Ha District:

PCM is new for us. We are used to supporting local people only to carry out patrolling of their forests. Now we can help them monitor the changes of forest area and carbon stock. We think that PCM is useful to raise local people's awareness on forest management for environmental objectives. With revenue from UN-REDD (REDD+ payments), communities and households can engage in better forest protection and management.



KEY STEPS IN CONDUCTING PCM

The following are the main steps of the PCM exercise piloted in Lam Dong Province. Analysis of lessons learned will be undertaken to further improve the PCM model.

- Training of PCM facilitators and assisting technical staff: Local forest officers at the district level were identified as potential future PCM facilitators. Facilitators should be trained to be equipped with the technical and communication skills to effectively engage with people from different backgrounds and levels of understanding.
- Orientation session on PCM methods: An orientation session on PCM methods was conducted and "PCM teams" were formed with ten to fifteen people per team.
- PCM field survey: Each PCM team went to the field, located a sample plot with their GPS, and took basic forest measurements for each of the carbon pools. The data were recorded and later submitted to the facilitator. Data collected included:
 - Local name of tree;
 - Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) of all trees $\geq 6\text{cm}$;
 - Weight of sample of living biomass other than living trees (i.e. shrubs, herbs and grass);
 - Weight of litter sample;
 - Weight of dead wood sample;
 - Weight of soil sample.
- Follow-up session: The PCM facilitator should convene a meeting to review the collected data, and make preliminary data conversions into forest biomass and carbon.

NEXT STEPS IN FOR PCM UNDER THE UN-REDD VIET NAM PROGRAMME:

Based on the experienced gained during the PCM pilot exercise a PCM manual is being developed for training PCM facilitators and local technical staff on the technical aspects of PCM, and for the use during the PCM orientation sessions. During 2011, PCM will be implemented throughout Lam Ha and Di Linh districts in Lam Dong Province.