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REDD in Vietnam

In 2011, Viet Nam's forest cover was reported at 39.7% of the total land area (MARD, 2011); a significant increase from 1990 when at 9.18 million hectares forest cover was 27.2% of the land area (FAO, 2010). This increase in forest has been attributed to a variety of economic and political factors, including various national reforestation efforts as well as the distribution of forestry land to households under the 1993 Land Law and a scarcity of land, which incentivised improved forest management and agricultural intensification (see: Meyfroidt and Lambin, 2008). Despite this progress, in recent years some regions still experience high rates of deforestation and forest degradation, and fragmentation is occurring throughout much of Viet Nam's remaining natural forests.

Viet Nam is considered a lower middle income country with a GDP per capita (purchasing power parity, PPP) of USD 3,500. In recent years, the economy has experienced annual growth of between five and seven per cent (CIA, 2013). While industry plays an increasingly prominent role in the domestic economy, accounting for 41% of GDP in 2012, the contribution of agriculture to national GDP continues to diminish, although it remains responsible for nearly half of Viet Nam's employment (*ibid*).

Viet Nam is one of 30 "extreme risk" countries in terms of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (UN, 2012). It lies in the tropical cyclone belt and is threatened by a number of natural hazards, which between 2001 and 2010 resulted in 9,500 fatalities and missing persons, as well as a yearly loss of 1.5% of national GDP (SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, 2011).

In response, the country has formulated various national programmes that aim to address climate change and set the country on a path towards sustainable development and a low carbon economy. Its policy framework demonstrates its willingness to collaborate with the international community to address climate change (REDD VIETNAM, 2012). For example, the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change (NTP-RCC), the umbrella programme to address climate change, aims to address the impacts of, and identifies measures to, combat climate change and strengthen the capacities of the organisations involved. The National Green Growth Strategy for 2011-2020 (with a vision to 2050) aims to facilitate the restructuring of Viet Nam's economy to promote the efficient use of natural resources, address climate change and drive sustainable economic growth.

Viet Nam recognises the importance of sustainable forest management and has developed a number of initiatives aimed at protecting and restoring its forests, including the National Forest Development Strategy (NFDS) and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) programmes within the forest sector (GLOBE International, 2013).

The country aims to decrease emissions in all economic sectors, and expects to demonstrate a 20% reduction of GHG emissions in the agricultural sector and a reduction of 19 million tons of CO₂ equivalent per decade through reduced deforestation and forest degradation (REDD Vietnam, 2012). REDD+ is therefore an important component of Viet Nam's climate change mitigation efforts and is central to the National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS). The National Action Programme on REDD+ 2011-2020, approved in June 2012, is the major framework for REDD+ implementation in Viet Nam.

Viet Nam demonstrated its interest in REDD+ via a submission to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2008 (REDD VIETNAM, 2011a). Since then, it has received support in its preparations for REDD+ implementation from the UN-REDD Programme, where it became one of the original UN-REDD pilot countries, and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) under the World Bank, where it was also one of the earliest countries to receive support.

Phase I of the UN-REDD Viet Nam Programme, through which USD 4.38 million was allocated to assist the Vietnamese government in preparedness activities, was completed in October 2012 (UN-REDD PROGRAMME 2012a). Subsequently, at COP18 in Doha in December 2012 Viet Nam and Norway signed a joint declaration for 2012 to 2015 to work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions from, and increase carbon removals through, Viet Nam's forests. This partnership allows the expansion of the UN-REDD Programme into its second phase, which includes the piloting of REDD+ interventions in six provinces. The second phase officially began on 29 July 2013 (Royal Norwegian Embassy, 2013).

Viet Nam is a REDD+ Country Participant of the FCPF and in January 2013, the FCPF project

“Support for REDD+ Readiness Preparation in Viet Nam” was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) (Decision 58/QD-BNN-HTQT). The project aims to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the National REDD+ Steering Committee, the Viet Nam REDD+ Office and relevant central organisations and 3 pilot provinces (Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Dak Nong) to be REDD+ ready and contribute to the successful implementation of the National Action Programme on REDD+.

The Government of Viet Nam, the UN-REDD Programme and FCPF are coordinating their concurrent initiatives (REDD VIETNAM, 2011a). As well as these activities, a variety of projects are being implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are active in the region.

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Institutional arrangements

At the government level, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) is responsible for managing Viet Nam’s climate change programmes and is also the focal agency for both the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (REDD VIETNAM, 2011b). In January 2011, the Viet Nam REDD+ Steering Committee, chaired by the Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) was established under authorisation of the Prime Minister, to coordinate REDD+ implementation between all government agencies, private organisations, civil society, NGOs and international partners (REDD VIETNAM, 2011b). In the same decision, the Viet Nam REDD+ Office was established to act as the standing office for the REDD+ Steering Committee within the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST), the key agency within MARD responsible for development of the forestry sector.

The National REDD+ Network is responsible for overall coordination of REDD+ and supports REDD+ readiness in the context of the government’s climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts as identified in the National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change (NTP-RCC). The REDD+ Network provides an avenue for stakeholder involvement in the development of REDD+. The network’s current members include representatives from a number of MARD departments, including VNFOREST, various research institutions, NGOs and international development partners.

A Technical Working Group (TWG) and six Sub-Technical Working Groups (STWGs) have also been established to support the National REDD+ Network in technical and administrative aspects. The six

STWGs in operation work on: 1) REDD+ and governance; 2) Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV); 3) REDD+ financing and benefit distribution; 4) Local REDD+ implementation; 5) Private sector engagement; and 6) Safeguards. As is the case with the National REDD+ Network, membership to the TWG and STWGs is open to all.

Last updated:
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Stakeholder engagement and participation

The open-ended nature of the National REDD+ Network aims to facilitate stakeholder engagement for REDD+ at the national level, with one of its main tasks being to share experiences and lessons learned from REDD+ implementation between stakeholders. The REDD+ Network is meant to meet on a quarterly basis, however as of April 2013, it had not had a meeting for over six months. Its members include a diverse set of institutions, including government agencies, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and its sub-departments, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE); international development partners such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Asian Development Bank, the German Organisation for International Cooperation (GIZ), SNV Netherlands Development Organisation; research institutions, including the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the Research Centre for Forest Ecology and Environment (RCFEE); and NGOs, including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Fauna and Flora International (FFI).

Under the REDD+ Network, a Technical Working Group (TWG) shares information on the technical aspects of REDD+. Six Sub-Technical Working Groups (STWGs) also support the network in stakeholder involvement, capacity building and awareness-raising at provincial and district levels, aiming to ensure that information about REDD+ is accessible to all stakeholders.

The UN-REDD Programme is piloting a participatory governance assessment (PGA) process in Lam Dong province between 2012 and 2013, with the potential to expand it to the six REDD+ pilot provinces if successful. Through participatory dialogue among stakeholders from provincial, district and commune level governments and academic and civil society organisations, the PGA exercise aims to identify a set of indicators for monitoring changes in governance throughout the implementation of REDD+.

Updated date:
6/2013

Land tenure arrangements and carbon rights

The Constitution of Viet Nam states that all forest resources (including land, trees, and wildlife) are owned by Vietnamese citizens. The Government, on behalf of the people, legally entrusts the management of forests to specific groups. Eight types of forest “owners” (effectively leaseholders) are recognised in Viet Nam: 1) state enterprises (state forest enterprises; SFEs, and state forest companies); 2) joint venture enterprises; 3) individual households; 4) management boards for protection forest (MBPFs); 5) management boards for special-use forest (MBSFs); 6) army units; 7) people’s committees (PCs); and 8) collectives.

These eight types of forest “owners” are represented in three forest tenure arrangements. Private tenure, the most common form of tenure, applies to state enterprises, joint venture enterprises and

individual households. Under this arrangement forest is allocated to the tenure-holder for long-term management (typically 50 years). Most forest tenure holders under this arrangement are entitled to a legal land-use certificate. State tenure applies to MBPFs, MBSFs, army units, people's committees and collectives. Under this arrangement forests are typically allocated for an unspecified period. For special-use or protection forests managed by MBPFs or MBSFs, tenure holders are entitled to receive a management budget from the state. Finally, common tenure is found in forest managed by collectives legally recognised by the state. Currently, only a small area of forest falls under common tenure arrangements (TAN, 2006), which are typically allocated for an unspecified period.

The National Forest Inventory and Statistics Programme, approved by the Prime Minister through Decision 803/QĐ/TĐg in 2012, involves inventories conducted on a five-yearly cycle (commencing 2011-2015), which aim to identify forest boundaries and forest resources by owner (UN-REDD PROGRAMME, 2012b) and thus review the status of forest land tenure in Viet Nam.

Last updated:
6/2013

Forest management

Forests in Viet Nam are classified into three categories: special-use, production and protection forests. Special use forests are designated primarily for nature conservation, tourism and for the protection of areas of historical and cultural importance. Special use forests cover in the region of 15.7% of the total forest area (UN-REDD PROGRAMME, n.d.) and comprise national parks, nature conservation zones, landscape protection areas and forests for scientific research (Article 4, Law on Forest Protection and Development). Production forests are classified for the trade and production of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Production forest makes up around 48.2% of Viet Nam's total forest area and includes both natural and planted production forests as well as 'seeding forests' (Article 4, Law on Forest Protection and Development). Finally, protection forest is classified for environmental protection, to protect land and water sources, to regulate climate and to prevent erosion, desertification and natural disasters (Article 4, Law on Environmental Protection and Development). Protection forest comprises around 36.1% of total forest area (UN-REDD PROGRAMME, n.d.)

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is responsible for the state's management of forest protection and development, and coordinates with other important ministries such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Defense, as well as other ministries and agencies.

Viet Nam has a number of laws and policies on forest law enforcement. The Law on Forest Protection and Development (No. 29/2004/QĐ11) specifies a range of prohibited acts, including illegally logging or exploiting forests; illegally destroying forest resources or ecosystems; illegally encroaching upon, appropriating, or changing use purposes of, forests; and, grazing cattle in strictly protected zones of special-use forests or newly planted forests, amongst others (Article 12). On 8 February 2012, the Prime Minister promulgated additional regulations strengthening enforcement of forest protection measures (Decision No. 07/2012/QĐ-TĐg).

Viet Nam began negotiations for a Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union in November 2010 and is now undergoing formal negotiations (Phase 2). The VPA aims to improve governance and illegal logging by strengthening forest management and promoting trade in legally produced timber, through the development of a legally-binding agreement ensuring the legality of timber exported from Viet Nam

and into the EU (EFI, 2012). Until the VPA is negotiated and FLEGT licensing has been achieved, Viet Nam's companies exporting timber and timber products are required to exercise due diligence under Regulation 995/2010 of the EU.

Viet Nam has also established a legal framework for Payment for Environmental Services (PES) schemes. Decision 380/QD-TTg, passed on 10 April 2008, on the Pilot Policy for Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES) established the basis for the development of the national legal framework for a national policy on PFES. Following the success of the initial piloting phase, Decree No. 99 on the Policy for Payment for Forest Environmental Services was subsequently passed in 2010. The decree establishes an obligation upon various users of forest environmental services to pay service providers for their use, and outlines a detailed framework for the implementation of this obligation. It is expected that the PFES decree will ultimately contribute to the protection of over 12 million hectares of forests as well as improve the livelihoods of over 20 million people (USAID, n.d.). Other policy instruments aim to promote community involvement in forest protection. For example, in Ngoc Son-Ngo Luong Nature Reserve, the National Parks and Protected Areas Association has engaged different stakeholders to participate in forest protection, in return for a number of benefits, which include land for cultivation, access to loans, and the development of social infrastructure. Clarification of the rights and responsibilities of those involved has had a positive impact on forest protection (NHU, 2013).

Last updated:
6/2013

Reference levels

The National REDD+ Action Programme (NRAP) (Decision No. 799/QD-TTg) identifies key tasks for the period 2011-2015. These include conducting a survey to compile the necessary data for the establishment of a baseline emission level and a projected level against which to monitor the outcomes of REDD+. It states that national and provincial reference emissions levels (RELs) and forest reference levels (FRLs) will be established at national and provincial levels (if necessary) in compliance with provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the technical guidance of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It proposes the establishment of temporary RELs/FRLs at the national level and in the pilot provinces.

Viet Nam's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) states that since late 2009, with support from the Finnish Government, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the FAO through the UN-REDD Programme, steps have been taken to develop reference scenarios. This work has included the digitising and harmonisation of forest maps and field data from past national forest inventory cycles, for 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2010. The R-PP identifies convergence from all relevant stakeholders on the technical methodology of REL-RL development, including: RELs/RLs will be developed for all carbon related activities within the scope of the REDD+ mechanism; a historical REL will be developed based on historical rates of deforestation dating back to 1990; subnational RELs/RLs will be developed based on stratification of the national territory; and, Viet Nam will develop a single national REL/RL for each of the eligible activities under REDD+. Generation of RELs/RLs for forest degradation has been deemed more complex. This understanding is echoed in the R-PP, which states that Viet Nam is considering foregoing accounting for historical emissions from degradation, so that only carbon stock enhancement will be accounted for in areas of degradation (Social Republic of Vietnam, 2011). Viet Nam's Social and Economic Development Plan, and Forest Development Strategy will also inform the establishment of the reference scenario based on historical trends (IGES, 2012).

In parallel with the establishment of a national reference level, various subnational efforts are being implemented to test different mechanisms and approaches. These are being carried out with financial and technical support from international development partners, strengthening the capacity of the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST). As part of this effort, interim subnational reference levels are under development in Lam Dong Province (with the support of USAID's programme Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (LEAF)) and Dien Bien Province (with the support of JICA). LEAF has continued to build national and subnational stakeholder capacity for RL development.

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MRV

Viet Nam is making significant progress in the establishment of its MRV system. Version 1 of an MRV Framework Document was produced in September 2011. This document is a 'living' document and therefore is being reviewed and updated throughout the readiness phase and will continue to do so in the demonstration phase of REDD+ in Viet Nam. The methodological basis of Viet Nam's MRV system will be the 2006 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Guidelines, which suggest calculating GHG emissions from a combination of information on the extent to which human activity takes place (Activity Data; AD) with coefficients to quantify emissions or removals per activity unit (Emissions Factors; EF). This information will be sourced from a Land Monitoring System (LMS) (for AD) to assess forest area and forest area changes and a National Carbon Inventory (NCI) (for EF) to assess biomass and collate data to analyse carbon pools. The NCI will include a national forest inventory, currently the National Forest Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Programme (NFIMAP), and a carbon inventory for other land use types. These components form the 'measurement' component of Viet Nam's MRV system and will be combined within a national greenhouse gas inventory (GHG-I), which will contribute to the country's National Communications to the UNFCCC and therefore comprise the 'reporting' component of MRV (VRO, 2011).

Viet Nam's MRV system is being developed through collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). Under MONRE, the General Department of Land Administration (GDLA) is responsible for monitoring land use including areas designated as forest land. The GDLA conducts inventories in five-year cycles; however these do not contain adequate data to use for the estimation of GHG emissions/removals (VRO, 2011). Within MARD, the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) is responsible for the monitoring of forestry land, delegating it to its service units the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) and the Forest Protection Department (FPD). The FPD conducts annual monitoring of forests and forestry land use changes and releases the data to MARD. The FIPI has been implementing the NFIMAP since 1990, covering four cycles and currently in its fifth. This inventory system has undergone changes in the past, and is in the midst of two processes of review.

Phase I of the UN-REDD Programme involved working on the development of allometric equations for key forest types in several forest-rich eco-regions in the country. The allometric models are compiled in a national database and have been made accessible to neighbouring countries which may benefit from their use. The Government has mandated the fifth cycle inventory to depart from its past methodology in order to improve consistency between the national inventory and data from the field level (i.e. management level inventory). From 2011 to 2012, a piloting process was conducted in two provinces to test a new inventory method, producing a proposal of a new inventory

methodology. In the years up to 2015, the inventory will be rolled out for remaining forest provinces applying this new proposed methodology. A review is also being implemented through the FAO-Finland Forestry Cooperation Programme to assess past and currently proposed methodologies to propose a further option of a multi-purpose forest inventory targeting the national level (as opposed to management level) which will address information needs for policy level decision-making as well as for international reporting (including to the UNFCCC.) The intention is for the two review processes to be integrated and for the sixth cycle to be implemented applying the proposed methodology.

In line with the National REDD+ Action Programme 2011-2020 (NRAP), specifically in the period 2011-2015, Phase II of the UN-REDD Programme aims to operationalise the MRV system which will include a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) and National Reporting Information System (NRIS) and to develop a monitoring system and methodology sufficient to ensure demonstration activities are results-based. The NRIS will include information on safeguards to ensure that relevant stakeholders can readily access information on how safeguards are being addressed (UN-REDD PROGRAMME, 2012b). Subnationally, it is anticipated that UN-REDD Phase II aims to develop an MRV system in six pilot provinces. Subnational activities already operational include the SNV High-Biodiversity REDD+ (HB-REDD+) project, through which participatory forest, carbon and biodiversity monitoring has been piloted at the commune and individual household level in Lam Dong Province.

Last updated:
6/2013

Safeguards

Following the Cancun Agreements requiring countries implementing REDD+ to develop a system for providing information on how REDD+ safeguards are being addressed and adhered to, Viet Nam is working on a Safeguards Information System. To this end, one outcome of Phase II of the UN-REDD Programme is that a National REDD+ Information System (NRIS) on Safeguards is operational (UN-REDD PROGRAMME, 2012b). The Safeguards NRIS aims to gather information on current legislation relating to land-use and indigenous peoples' rights as well as information on what measures the government is taking to promote these. This system intends to help secure the full and effective participation of all relevant stakeholders in the REDD+ process by ensuring that information on how safeguards are being addressed is readily available (VRO, 2011).

The R-PP suggests that improved legal safeguards are needed in Viet Nam to prevent further damage to national forests. It also calls for a more robust Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regime, with more effective sanctions for people or companies failing to comply with environmental safeguards. The R-PP also urges that safeguard procedures be integrated into the MRV system, with emphasis on the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services and other social and environmental benefits.

One of the six sub-technical working groups supporting the REDD+ Network focuses on safeguards for REDD+ and the development of the above safeguards information system designed to promote social and environmental co-benefits from REDD+ at national, subnational and local levels. The SNV 'Delivering Environmental and Social Multiple Benefits from REDD+ in South East Asia' (MB-REDD) project is assisting the government to implement a national REDD+ programme that enhances multiple social and environmental benefits. One of the outcomes of this project is the production of a national government-led environmental and social safeguard roadmap as part of the National

REDD+ Action Programme (NRAP). The work is currently being coordinated by SNV, and supported by international consultants (Climate, Law and Policy Ltd). A draft roadmap is due to be published in 2013.

Last updated:
5/2015

Gender Equality

Vietnam's 2011 R-PP recognises that gender issues should be given special consideration during REDD+ development and implementation. It also states that in the process of developing the R-PP, consultations were made with a range of stakeholders, including the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development, with whom the issue of gender balance was discussed. The Gender and Community Development Network and the Women's Union are also identified as key stakeholders to be involved in the REDD+ process. The R-PP also mentions that "Specific effects [of REDD+ implementation (changes of land use practices, land acquisition etc.)] on women as a vulnerable group shall also [be] considered in the National Programme".

In 2013, through support from the USAID LEAF program, Vietnam identified opportunities to incorporate gender perspectives into the Roadmap for Environmental and Social Safeguards for Vietnam's National REDD+ Action Programme in order to promote and equitable involvement of women and men in various arenas of safeguards. The government also carefully examined gender issues in the development of a second key document, the proposal of the National REDD Fund. In this case, close attention was given to integrating gender considerations into the function, duties, organizational structure and financial management of the proposed fund.

In addition to a law on gender equality in 2006, the Vietnamese government has adopted a series of policies to promote women's rights. For instance, after Vietnam's 2001-2010 National Strategy for the advancement of women and the 2001-2005 National Action Plan for the advancement of women, Vietnam has adopted a strategy on gender equality for the period 2011-2020. The general objective of the strategy is for "[b]y 2020, substantive equality between men and women [to] be basically ensured in opportunity, participation and benefits in the political, economic, cultural and social domains, contributing to fast and sustainable national development." (2. Objectives of the Strategy, a) General Objective).

The 2011-2020 national strategy on climate change also mentions the need to guarantee gender equality in the context of climate change (Article III, 2 strategy specific targets) and to support women as part of vulnerable social groups in order for them to be able to better cope with climate change (IV. Strategy's missions, 7. Building communities which can effectively cope with climate change b.) Additionally, the 2006-2020 forestry development strategy states that "employment should be created, capacity and awareness and livelihoods of people should be improved, particularly [for] women in remote areas". (II. Objectives and tasks until 2020, 2. b.)

More recently, work was undertaken to analyse gender shortcomings in the Lam Dong Provincial REDD+ Action Plan (PRAP). USAID LEAF and the UN-REDD Programme have worked with parties involved in this process to ensure that gender equality, which is a core component of the REDD+ negotiation process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is addressed in the PRAP. A report with the findings of the gender analysis was released in March 2015.

Vietnam's 2014 ER-PIN makes references to women, identifies them as important forest users and

highlights the need to engage them in consultation processes. The time and venue of locations must be chosen in line with women's engagements to increase participation (Section 6.2). Special consideration has to be given to ethnic minority women. The ER-PIN also recognises women's traditional use of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and the need to include this in forest management plans (Section 14.1.2(b)).

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Contributors



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