Plan Vivo Standard

Last updated: 8 March, 2016
Category Voluntary Carbon Standards

Type: Carbon accounting and reporting
Scale: Sub-national / jurisdictional
Scope: Project level
Scope: Enhancement
Afforestation and reforestation
Deforestation
Conservation
Forest Degradation
Date created 1994
Geographical Eligibility: Global

Content

- Scope
- Scale
- Reference Levels
- Additionality
- Leakage / displacements
- Permanence / reversals
- Social measures or requirements
- Environmental measures or requirements
- Procedural measures or requirements
- Monitoring and Reporting
- Registry
- Process
Plan Vivo is a “framework for supporting communities to manage their natural resources more sustainably, with a view to generating climate, livelihood and ecosystem benefits.” The standard aims to serve as a standalone, all-inclusive standard incorporating social and biodiversity safeguards along with certified emissions reductions.

**Introduction**

The Plan Vivo Standard has been designed to be accessible for smallholder- and community-based projects. The aim of the standard is to develop projects that have a strong community ownership and that contribute to reducing rural poverty by supporting communities to manage their natural resources more sustainably and generate livelihood benefits. In the Plan Vivo model, communities take a leading role in the production and implementation of their own land management plan – the “plan vivo” – according to their needs and priorities. The plan vivo builds the foundation of the project and is the basis for developing a Payment for Ecosystem Services Agreement (PES Agreement) with a project coordinator, which is typically an established non-governmental organisation active in the area. The project coordinator is the overall manager of the project in charge of coordinating project support and marketing and distributing staged PES payments to participants.

In 2012 Plan Vivo undertook a public consultation process in order to update its standard and guidelines, and in December 2013 an updated version of the standard was finalised. The 2013 version now covers all community-based land management activities in order to offer more integrated certification services for smallholders, and requires that PES Agreements are established based on the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Plan Vivo has a small but steadily growing market share (1%).

**Design Features**

**Scope** [11]

A number of activities are eligible under Plan Vivo, including afforestation/reforestation (only non-commercial plantations), agroforestry, avoided deforestation, forest conservation and restoration. The Plan Vivo Standard can be used in a range of PES schemes that provide benefits to people. These include payments for: carbon sequestration or greenhouse gas emission reductions - ‘climate services’; watershed services; biodiversity conservation or enhancement; other ecosystem services including for preservation of scenic beauty or other cultural services (e.g. as part of ecotourism); ‘bundled services’ in the event that more than one service is being quantified and monitored, or, if one service e.g. carbon sequestration, is being used as a proxy to demonstrate performance in delivery of other ecosystem services.

**Scale** [12]

Project-level. The standard is targeted towards small-scale projects. However the standard follows a ‘landscape approach’ according to which projects can be scaled up over time to include more participant communities and larger areas.

**Reference Levels** [13]
Plan Vivo requires projects to develop a baseline scenario for both socio-economic conditions and ecosystem services at the start of the project in order to measure impacts. The baseline scenario should describe current land uses and habitat types, existing major ecosystem services provided in the area, the socio-economic context, and how these are likely to change with and without the project. More specifically, information on socio-economic conditions should include details on demographics, access to and use of land and natural resources, income levels and livelihood activities, and local governance structures.

For projects generating climate services, an approved approach in line with IPCC Good Practice Guidelines for land-use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) must be used to quantify initial carbon stocks and emission sources and estimate how these are likely to change over the lifetime of the project as part of the baseline scenario.

**Additionality** [14]

Projects must be able to demonstrate that the climate and ecosystem services that they generate are additional and would not have happened in the absence of the project. This includes demonstrating that: a) the project is not the result of existing legislation or regulation, unless it can be shown that these are not enforced in practice; b) there should be no financial, social, cultural, technical, scientific or institutional barriers preventing the project from taking place. Approved third-party tools may be used to demonstrate this.

** Leakage / displacements** [15]

The Plan Vivo approach to integrated land use planning is designed to minimise the risk of leakage. Sources of leakage should be identified and mitigation measures implemented. For example, establishing woodlots to meet energy needs can reduce pressure on forests as can the introduction of alternative livelihood incomes to charcoal production, e.g. from PES payments or by developing other sources of income, such as non-timber forest product (NTFP) processing, sustainable timber production, beekeeping, etc. In areas where it is likely that there will be leakage that could lead to >5% reduction of climate services, an approved approach must be used to monitor leakage, and a conservative estimate must be deducted from any actual climate services claimed.

**Permanence / reversals** [16]

Projects are required to submit a risk assessment at least every 5 years to the Plan Vivo Foundation. The risk assessment should outline risks to the delivery of ecosystem services, the sustainability of project interventions, and which mitigation measures are put in place. Risk management is applied throughout the standard, most notably through the different safeguards measures, but also in the technical specifications of the project. The technical specifications identify potential risks and prescribe risk management and mitigation measures such as patrolling requirements, fire management plans, irrigation, pest control, and plant density checks. For climate services a risk buffer of at least 10% and a maximum of 30% should be set aside to ensure permanence. This is managed as a pooled non-permanence buffer across the Plan Vivo project portfolio.

**Social measures or requirements** [17]

The Plan Vivo Standard requires that project interventions take place on land where participant smallholders/community groups have clear and stable land tenure, either in the form of ownership or user rights. Areas that are not owned or subject to user rights of smallholders/communities may still be included in the project area provided certain requirements are met.
The Plan Vivo standard requires projects to apply a benefit-sharing mechanism. A description of the benefit-sharing mechanism that has been agreed with the participation of local communities should be included in a written PES Agreement, identifying how PES funding will be distributed among project participants, the project coordinator and any other identified stakeholders. Projects selling Plan Vivo Certificates (Verifiable Emissions Reductions) should aim to deliver at least 60% of the proceeds of sales to communities with the project coordinators taking no more than 40% of sales income to cover operational costs. Where less than 60% is delivered, it must be explained and justified how the project is fairly benefitting communities.

Prior to entering into a PES agreements the Plan Vivo standard requires participants to have been properly consulted about the project through a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The Plan Vivo Guidance Manual from 2012 includes instructions on FPIC and what consultations could cover.

The Plan Vivo standard also includes labour requirements and provides that community members, including women and members of marginalised groups, must be given an equal opportunity to fill employment positions in the project where they have the skills required for the roles or where they can be cost-effectively trained.

**Environmental measures or requirements** [18]

Plan Vivo certified projects must be able to demonstrate ecosystem service benefits and interventions designed to maintain or enhance biodiversity. At the very least, project activities should not result in any negative impact on biodiversity or ecosystem services. Planting activities are restricted to native or naturalised species (typically used for rehabilitation of degraded lands) and must not be invasive. Naturalised species are only permitted if there are clear livelihood benefits to planting this type of species above a native one, and if it can be demonstrated that the use of the species will not have a negative impact on biodiversity or ecosystem services in the project and surrounding area.

Projects should also describe the habitat types and main species present in the project area, including any areas of High Conservation Value (HCV) and IUCN red list species present (or locally defined important areas of biodiversity/vulnerable species), how these are likely to be affected by the project and how the impacts will be monitored.

In order to safeguard against any perverse incentives to alter land for the purpose of increasing the payments for ecosystem services to be claimed by participants, project areas must not have been deforested or cleared prior to project start.

**Procedural measures or requirements** [19]

The Plan Vivo standard puts strong emphasis on participation and transparency throughout the development and running of a project. It includes transparency requirements for governance structures, accounting, annual reports, and the system of payments, which are published as project documentation on the Plan Vivo website. Projects are required to demonstrate community ownership during the design and implementation phase of the project and be able to produce evidence of the participatory methods used to develop the plan vivos e.g. through videos, photographs or any other written outputs from community discussions. The emphasis on participation is also meant to support the development of the contractual agreement between communities and the project coordinator, which is based on the plan vivos. The PES Agreement specifies the rights and responsibilities of the contracting parties and outlines the conditions for receiving staged payments and project support in exchange for ecosystem or climate services.
A feedback and grievance mechanism should be established in the form of a forum, where communities can discuss the design and running of the project and raise any issues or grievances with the project coordinator. This does not have to involve the establishment of a new structure and existing forums could also be used for this purpose. At validation, projects are assessed by an expert reviewer for compliance with social and environmental requirements. Verification is carried out by an approved third-party verifier within 5 years of project registration.

**Monitoring and Reporting** [20]

The Plan Vivo standard requires projects to be able to demonstrate positive livelihood and socioeconomic impacts and to show that generated ecosystem services are real and additional. In order to measure and demonstrate impacts against the baseline scenario, projects are required to develop a monitoring plan for measuring and monitoring socio-economic and ecosystem services impacts. In order to do so ecosystem service benefits will need to be quantified and a socioeconomic baseline scenario will need to have been defined.

The monitoring plan must be developed in a participatory manner and should include details on (a) performance indicators and targets and how they demonstrate if ecosystem services are being delivered, (b) advances against the socio-economic baseline scenario, (c) how communities will participate in monitoring and how results of the monitoring will be shared and discussed with participant communities. Potential impacts or ‘knock on effects’ on communities living in surrounding areas should also be taken into consideration. For projects that generate Plan Vivo Certificates for climate services (carbon credits), monitoring results should be included in the annual report submitted each year to the Plan Vivo Foundation.

**Registry** [21]

Markit Environment Registry acts as the registry for Plan Vivo Certificates, which represent the long-term sequestration or reduction of one tCO2e plus biodiversity and local poverty reduction benefits.

**Process** [22]

Plan Vivo projects are encouraged to start as pilot projects and scale up regionally. Plan Vivo also allows for project activities that meet the pre-established criteria to be grouped with existing projects in order to achieve scale. Projects first (i) submit a Project Idea Note to be evaluated by the Plan Vivo Foundation, next (ii) a Project Design Document (PDD) containing the technical specifications is submitted and evaluated, (iii) the project then runs a “pilot activity cycle” where it is implemented and subsequently validated by the Plan Vivo Foundation or a selected expert reviewer and later registered, (iv) and a third-party validation/verification body conducts a verification every five years. Projects normally expand during this time period to include more participant communities and project areas. Where projects are not meeting expected results and emission reductions, corrective actions are imposed and in the case of significant losses, e.g. due to natural disasters, cancellation can be made from the pooled Plan Vivo risk buffer.

Plan Vivo takes a unique approach to project crediting in that it allows for both ex-post and ex-ante methodologies to generate Plan Vivo Certificates, depending on the project and activity, which means that projects can issue and retire credits for reductions before they occur. The standard requirements are the same for both ex-ante and ex-post methodologies. According to the Plan Vivo Standard, allowing for ex-ante crediting has proven to be particularly instrumental in getting reforestation and afforestation activities projects off the ground. It demonstrates the highly additional nature of such activities, where poor rural communities lacking any access to funding for
project start-up costs and have historically been excluded from carbon markets.

References


All standards in

Voluntary Carbon Standards▼

- Natural Forest Standard [24]
- Plan Vivo Standard [25]
- The Gold Standard Land Use and Forests Framework [26]
- Climate Action Reserve: Mexico Forest Protocol [27]
- Verified Carbon Standard | Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ (VCS JNR) [28]
- Verified Carbon Standard [29]

Initiatives on the REDD Desk linked to this standard

Tanzania (1)
- Emiti Nibwo Bulora [30]

Kenya (1)
- Mikoko Pamoja Mangrove restoration in Gazi Bay [31]

Cameroon (1)
- Community PES – Community Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in the Congo Basin [32]

Nepal (1)
- The Himalayan Community Carbon Project (Nepal) [33]

Sri Lanka (1)
- Hiniduma Bio-link Project [34]

Solomon Islands (2)
- South Choiseul Forest Carbon Project [35]
- The Nakau Programme [36]

Vanuatu (1)
- The Nakau Programme [36]

Fiji (2)
- The Nakau Programme [36]
- Drawa Forest Carbon Project, [37]

Mexico (2)
- Much Kanan K’ax [38]
• Scolel'Té [39]

Pacific Island Countries (12)

• South Choiseul Forest Carbon Project [35]
• South Choiseul Forest Carbon Project [35]
• South Choiseul Forest Carbon Project [35]
• South Choiseul Forest Carbon Project [35]
• The Nakau Programme [36]
• The Nakau Programme [36]
• The Nakau Programme [36]
• The Nakau Programme [36]
• Drawa Forest Carbon Project [37]
• Drawa Forest Carbon Project [37]
• Drawa Forest Carbon Project [37]
• Drawa Forest Carbon Project [37]

Non-REDD Desk Initiatives

The REDD Desk may not list all project activities that are covered by Plan Vivo. We list projects that are included in our "REDD Countries" section. Find more information on the full range of projects by looking at the Plan Vivo website.

External Links

Plan Vivo Standard Version 2013 [40]
Plan Vivo Website | About Plan Vivo [41]
Plan Vivo Project Database [42]
Plan Vivo | Frequently Asked Questions [43]
Summary of Plan Vivo registration and continued review process [44]

Related encyclopaedia articles

• Activity [45]
• Afforestation [46]
• Agroforestry [47]
• Baseline [48]
• Carbon Credits [49]
• Carbon Market [50]
• Carbon Sequestration [51]
• Carbon Stock [52]
• Deforestation [53]
• Ecosystem [54]
• Ecosystem Services [55]
• Emissions Reductions [56]
• Ex-Ante Crediting [57]
• Forest [58]
• Forestry [59]
● Free, Prior and Informed Consent [60]
● Land Tenure [61]
● Livelihood [62]
● Mitigation [63]
● Payments for Ecosystem Services [64]
● Perverse Incentives [65]
● Project Crediting [66]
● Project Design Document [67]
● Reforestation [68]
● Source [69]
● Stakeholders [70]
● Validation [71]
● Verification [72]
● Voluntary Carbon Market [73]

Source URL: https://theredddesk.org/markets-standards/plan-vivo-standard

Links
[57] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/ex-ante-crediting
[58] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/forest
[59] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/forestry
[60] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/free-prior-and-informed-consent
[61] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/land-tenure
[62] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/livelihood
[63] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/mitigation
[64] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/payments-ecosystem-services
[65] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/perverse-incentives
[66] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/project-crediting
[67] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/project-design-document
[68] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/reforestation
[69] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/source
[70] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/stakeholders
[71] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/validation
[72] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/verification
[73] https://theredddesk.org/encyclopaedia/voluntary-carbon-market