



Report on

Vietnam's NDC: Strengthening forest governance to ensure successful forest restoration

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| BAU | Business As Usual |
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| FLEGT | Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade |
| GHG | Greenhouse gas |
| INDC | Intended Nationally Determined Contribution |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LULUCF | Land use, Land Use Change, and Forestry |
| MARD | Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Department |
| MONRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment |
| MRV | Measurement, Reporting, and Verification |
| Mt CO₂e | Million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contribution |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| VNFOREST | Vietnam Administration of Forestry |
| VNGO-FLEGT | The network of Vietnamese non-government organisations on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade |
| VPA | Voluntary Partnership Agreement |



Executive summary

The Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reflects Vietnam's commitment to mitigate GHG in important sectors, such as energy, agriculture, waste, and LULUCF. Of which, forestry is affirmed as the core mitigation sub-sector within the LULUCF sector and the only carbon removal in the NDC.

Good forest governance provides a concrete framework for successful forest restoration, which contributes to achieving the targets in the NDC. This paper elaborates on current forestry issues in Vietnam from forest governance standpoint and the role of civil society in helping solve these issues.

One way to engage civil society is by strengthening information sharing between the government and civil society organisations (CSOs). Cooperation mechanisms should be in place to promote the role of civil society in the joint implementation of the NDC. One such mechanism would be the engagement of CSOs in independent monitoring of the NDC process, in order to ensure a transparent and accountable NDC process.

This paper also provides several case studies to demonstrate the importance of forest governance and community tenure rights in forest restoration. The participatory approach is key to ensure successful forest restoration. Consultations with local communities should be done during the design and implementation. There should be mechanisms for full participation of civil society to ensure successful forest restoration in the NDC incorporating forest governance and community tenure rights.



1. Introduction

Background

Located on the tropical typhoon belt, Vietnam is extremely vulnerable to climate change. Average temperature in Vietnam has risen by 0.62°C in the period 1958 – 2014. Annual rainfall has decreased in the North while increased in the South. Data from 1959 – 2015 illustrates a rising trend in tropical depressions and typhoons in the East Sea (located in the Pacific region between Vietnam and the Philippines). Satellite data 1993 – 2014 also indicates that the average sea level of the East Sea rises 4.05 ± 0.6 mm/year, higher than the global average during the same period (MONRE, 2016).

Vietnam has put in efforts to control GHG emissions in order to keep global average temperature increase, since pre-industrial times, to below 2°C by the end of 21st century. In cooperation with the international community, Vietnam submitted to UNFCCC the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2016, which lays out the GHG mitigation roadmap for the period 2021 – 2030. Accordingly, GHG emissions by 2030 will be reduced by 8% compared to the BAU scenario with domestic resources, and up to 25% with international support. The NDC demonstrates Vietnam's commitment to the fight against climate change by strengthening the implementation of potential GHG mitigation measures in important sectors, such as energy, agriculture, waste, and LULUCF. Of which, forestry is affirmed as the core mitigation sub-sector within the LULUCF sector and the only carbon removal in the NDC.

Vietnam has recognized the importance of forests for climate change mitigation. Vietnam's NDC includes measures on forests to achieve its mitigation targets, such as sustainable forest management, afforestation, reforestation, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and agro-forestry livelihood development for forest-dependent communities. However, the NDC has yet to show how forest governance will be integrated into these measures. Since 2017, the revision of the NDC provides an opportunity to increase the level of ambition both in terms of participatory process and in forest initiatives promoting good forest governance.

Research objective and structure

The overall objective of this paper is to demonstrate the need for an NDC process with transparency and participation - to increase ambition, improve the likelihood of successful delivery, and create opportunities for citizen monitoring of the NDC implementation.

The scope of this paper covers the forestry sub-sector of the NDC (hereinafter referred to as NDC). As stated earlier, forest plays a crucial role in the NDC, as it is one of the core mitigation measures and the only carbon removal potential in the entire NDC. This paper will elaborate on how forests in Vietnam can be better managed and developed with good

forest governance (ie. transparency, participation, accountability, etc.), as well as suggest ways forwards to ensure forest restoration promoting good forest governance and community tenure rights.

With this objective in mind, the paper is structured as following. First, a review of current literature will be conducted to fully understand the commitments of the forestry sub-sector in the first NDC and the current NDC revision. Next, a brief analysis of the current forest governance in Vietnam will be presented from an international perspective. Then, the paper will elaborate on the link between successful NDC and good forest governance. The paper also discusses opportunities for engagement of civil society and how they can work in a collaborative manner with the government in order to represent the needs of vulnerable groups. Experiences drawn from the FLEGT initiative help demonstrate that the participation of stakeholders is important for successful NDC. Several case studies of civil society involvement in forest restoration will be presented to further support this statement, and demonstrate the importance of successful forest restoration promoting forest governance and community tenure rights. Finally, the paper advocates for civil society involvement in monitoring the forestry sub-sector in NDC.

Research method

This small research is based on the review and analysis of existing materials and data. The literature review is drawn from current policies, strategies, program/project reports, technical reports, research materials published by the government and civil society, including local and international NGOs, associations, universities, research institutes, and other experts.

For the case studies, site visits are carried out in selected communes of several provinces, where several forestry projects have been implemented by CSOs. The case studies feature different forest categories and ownerships, including terrestrial forest, mangrove forest, community forest, protected forest, etc.

Survey questionnaires are used for information collection. Information is gathered from representatives of relevant stakeholders, including local authorities (provincial Forest Protection Department, communal People's Committee, socio-political organisations), NGOs, research institutes, forest associations, and individual forest smallholders.



Collecting information in the field of forest restoration projects implemented by CSOs (Photo: SRD)



Photo: MoNRE

2. Vietnam's NDC and the mitigation targets for forestry

The ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016 laid the course for all countries to establish NDCs for mitigation and adaptation activities in response to the global climate change. Vietnam submitted the INDC document to UNFCCC in 2015 and approved it in 2016. At the request of the UNFCCC, Vietnam has begun to review and update the NDC since 2017. The updated NDC, which is the official national implementation plan, will be submitted to the UNFCCC by the end of 2020.

The NDC specifies the sectors in which GHG emissions reduction and removal are to be undertaken. These sectors are energy, agriculture, industrial processing, waste, and LULUCF. Vietnam also commits to increasing forest coverage to 45% by 2030. The proposed target of emissions reduction and removal for each sector is detailed in the Appendix.

Mitigation targets for forestry

Forestry is the core mitigation sub-sector within the LULUCF sector and the only carbon removal target. In the INDC submitted in 2016, nine mitigation options (from F1 to F9) were presented for the forestry sub-sector, including:

- With domestic resources: Protecting 1 million ha of natural forest (F1), Protecting 100,000 ha of coastal forests (F2), Planting 10,000 ha of coastal forests (F3), Regeneration of 200,000 ha of natural forests (F4), and Planting 150,000 ha of large timber production forests (F5). The removal potential under domestic resources scenario is estimated at -22.67 Mt CO₂e annually by 2030.
- With international support: Protecting 2.2 million hectares of natural forests (F6), Planting 30,000 hectares of coastal forests (F7), Regeneration of 200,000 ha of natural forests (F8), Regeneration of 400,000 ha of production forests and natural forests (F9). Hence, the removal potential under international support scenario is estimated at -43.34 Mt CO₂e annually by 2030.

3. Forest governance and the role of civil society in the NDC

Vietnam's NDC includes measures on forests to achieve its mitigation targets, such as sustainable forest management, afforestation, reforestation, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and agro-forestry livelihood development for forest-dependent communities. The question remains: how forest governance will be integrated into these measures?

In order to judge how forest governance is reflected in the NDC, it is necessary to analyse the current legal framework, and more importantly, the actual implementation of forestry policies in practice. Good governance requires accountability, coordination, equity, gender equity, transparency, and participation.

Accountability

Numerous policies and regulations have resulted in overlap and inconsistency in forest management, and shared responsibilities between various agencies and government levels have undermined the accountability in the forestry sector. This hinders the progress of afforestation and has potential impacts on the NDC implementation. The new Forestry Law effective in 2019 is expected to improve clarity around the responsibilities of forest agencies.

Current legal framework mostly prevents local people from accessing special-use forests and protection forests, as these high-quality forests are reserved for state entities. Meanwhile, according to customary law, indigenous ethnic communities consider themselves as legal forest owners. This confusion leads to forest encroachment and disputes over the use of forest resource (Nguyen & Hoang, 2013), which cause negative impacts to the NDC commitments.

Coordination

Forestry policies are often imposed top-down from the central and provincial governments. Local governments (district and commune level) who may best comprehend the situation on ground have little say in policy formulation. As a result, this structure sometimes brings incoherence between macro-policy and practical implementation. The allocation of forest land is an good example of this incoherence.

Mechanisms to enhance inter-ministerial coordination on forest issues are not well established, particularly between MARD and MONRE. Although MARD is responsible for overseeing Vietnam's forest resource, MONRE is in charge of the administration of land resource. Consequently, the process of land allocation and issuance of land use right certificates is not well-aligned with the forest allocation process and results in many forest areas without legitimate users. This is also the cause of illegal exploitation and forest degradation.

Planning for forest protection and development has not been well synchronised with land use planning or socio-economic development plans, not least because the plans tend not to reflect reality. Much of the land and forests have not been properly surveyed and inventoried on field (MARD, 2015), which slows the progress of land allocation and afforestation in many localities. This has a negative impact on the NDC implementation.

Equity

Among different categories of forest users, individual people and communities have lower access to forest resource and state support than state entities. State forest enterprises and forest management boards receive significant state support (financial and human resources) to manage forests, while communities typically receive little support to conduct meaningful activities (To & Tran, 2014). Even if communities are granted forest land to manage, they are typically unclear about what this entails, how their success will be judged, and what benefits they can expect to derive from managing the area. This issue escalates when benefit-sharing mechanisms are specified based on the initial forest volume allocated as part of state capital.

The new Forestry Law has provisions for benefit-sharing. There are instructions on the implementation of PFES scheme. However, in practice, the benefit sharing mechanism has not brought tangible benefits to stakeholders as expected, especially in the case of community forest. There are several reasons behind this, such as community tenure rights are not well-defined and impractical in many cases.

Gender equality

Although gender equality is addressed in the legal framework, in practice, women have limited access to forest land, and most of the land use certificates are registered under the husbands' name. Regarding forest plantations, although both men and women participate in discussion and decision-making, more than half of the labour is done by women. Time-consuming and menial tasks, such as clearing, seeding, and weeding are often carried out by women (Vu & Nguyen, 2018).

Small and medium-sized timber processing enterprises employ more male workers than female workers. The monthly salary for male workers is also higher than for female workers. Enterprises prefer to employ male workers because timber processing requires physical strength. In addition, businesses are hesitant to use female workers who might go through pregnancy (Vu & Nguyen, 2018).

Participation

Although the legal framework allows the participation of stakeholders, especially at grassroots level, the guiding documents in the forestry sector provide unclear instructions and mechanisms to ensure stakeholder participation. Regulations on participation have been only in the form of principles, not specific in methodologies or resources for implementation (Truong et al., 2017).



Participation of CSOs in forest governance monitoring was discussed in many forums (Photo: SRD)

Several socio-political organisations (quasi-government organisations) are given greater importance in participating in decision-making processes, such as the Fatherland Front, the Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA), Farmers' Association, Women's Union, and the Vietnam Forest Owners' Association (VIFORA). Regardless, there are different views about the extent to which these socio-political organisations are structurally able to meaningfully represent stakeholders in the process of policy formulation. Without effective participation of stakeholders, the forestry sector risks failing the targets in the NDC.

Transparency

Recently there are more efforts to improve transparency, such as in the new Forestry Law. In practice, even though information on planning is disclosed, it lacks necessary details to enable community monitoring of the implementation. The processes of forest allocation, lease and withdrawal, and forest use purpose conversion have been implemented without adequate public awareness and consultation (Le et al., 2011).

The new Forestry Law has no provision for independent forest monitoring. The topic of independent monitoring is still being discussed within the VPA multi-stakeholder core group mechanism. Both INDC and the current NDC revision have no mention of independent monitoring. Only state actors are given a role in monitoring and verification. Without a mechanism for independent monitoring, there is no guarantee that the NDC is inclusive of the rights of all stakeholders, especially the vulnerable communities.

Table 1: Forest governance in Vietnam

| Governance pillars | Key highlight |
|-----------------------|---|
| Accountability | <p>Overlap and inconsistency in forestry policies, and shared responsibilities between agencies and government levels have undermined the accountability;</p> <p>Conflict between customary law and current legal framework leads to confusion and forest encroachment;</p> |
| Coordination | <p>Top-down approach brings incoherence between macro-policy and practical implementation;</p> <p>Mechanisms to enhance inter-ministerial coordination are not well established;</p> |
| Equity | <p>Individuals and communities have lower access to forest resource and state support than state entities;</p> <p>Community tenure rights are not well-defined and impractical in many cases;</p> |
| Gender | <p>Women have limited access to forest land due to many reasons, including inheritance;</p> <p>Less employment opportunities and lower pay for women in forestry production;</p> |
| Participation | <p>Unclear instructions and mechanisms to ensure stakeholder participation, especially civil society;</p> |
| Transparency | <p>Information disclosure often lacks the details to enable community monitoring of the implementation;</p> <p>No provision for independent forest monitoring;</p> |

The role of civil society in the NDC

Strong forest governance is the basis for successful NDC implementation. In order to improve forest governance, it is imperative to engage vulnerable stakeholders in the process, namely forest-dependent communities. In Vietnam, civil society has extensive knowledge and experience about local communities, whom the central policymakers might overlook in the process of policy formulation and implementation. Civil society organisations serve as an extended arm to local communities, voicing their issues and concerns to policymakers so they can be recognized and addressed effectively.

CSOs have effectively participated in improving forest governance in Vietnam through major forestry initiatives, such as REDD+ and FLEGT. The role of civil society in forest governance has become important in the process of policymaking. The government has acknowledged the role of CSOs in policy dialogue. In early 2012, the role and capacity of CSOs in forestry sector in Vietnam were viewed as weak. Since 2014, this view on CSOs has become positive. (Pham et al., 2012, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2014).

The VPA FLEGT process provides an excellent example of how CSOs can participate proactively and contribute positively to improving the capacity and livelihoods of forest-dependent communities in the face of drastic changes in the timber industry. The Network of Vietnamese Non-government Organisations on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade (VNGO-FLEGT) consists of over 60 CSOs who represent forest-dependent communities in various provinces in the VPA process. Forest-dependent communities include forest smallholders, small and micro timber-processing enterprises, and ethnic minority households whose livelihoods depend on the forests. The VNGO-FLEGT network has conducted various studies related to livelihoods and vulnerability of forest-dependent communities in the VPA process. These studies have covered important issues, such as the limited capacity of forest-dependent communities to comply with stricter regulations, and subsequent impacts on their livelihoods. These issues are brought to the attention of the government and international community so that they can take appropriate action to support these vulnerable stakeholders. In addition, the VNGO-FLEGT network has conducted many activities to raise awareness of vulnerable stakeholders about the VPA and provide capacity building for them to adapt to stricter legal environment. It has provided comments to improve the new Forestry Law, the Legality Definition of timber, and the current development of VNTLAS Decree.



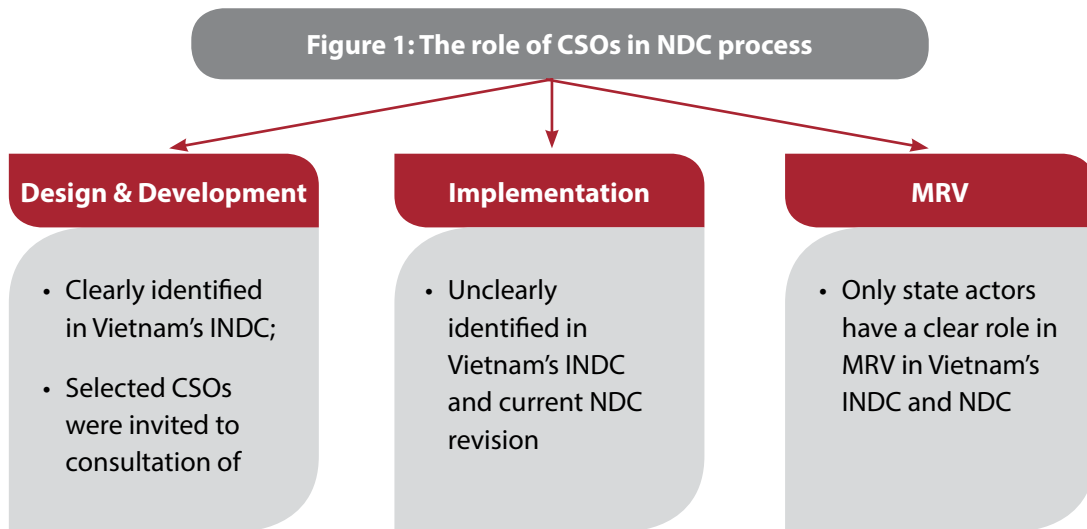
The VNGO-FLEGT network collected information from forest growers and small and micro-sized timber processing enterprises in 2018 (Photo: SRD)

Active participation of civil society contributes to better policies for grassroots' needs. It also helps connect actors and stakeholders, including forest-dependent communities, the government, and international partners. The VPA signed between the EU and Vietnam recognizes the important role of civil society and an effective mechanism needed for engagement. In 2017, the Joint Preparation Committee (JPC) on the VPA agreed on the establishment of a shared forum called Core Group. The Core Group is responsible for communication and information exchange in the VPA process. The group is facilitated by VNFOREST deputy director and another representative in rotation. The Core Group composes of representatives from state management agencies, timber associations, non-government organisations, research institutions, timber enterprises etc, and reports the recommendations directly to the interdisciplinary technical working group (JEM) and Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) established in early 2019. The VPA has a provision about facilitating the effective operation of the Core Group.



*The 6th VPA/FLEGT Multi-Stakeholders Core Group Meeting on July 6, 2019
(Photo: VNFOREST)*

As with the FLEGT initiative, civil society can contribute to strengthening forest governance and successful NDC implementation. Currently, the participation of civil society in the NDC process should be improved. CSOs' involvement in the design and development phase is clearly identified in the INDC. Selected CSOs were invited by the government for consultation during the development of INDC. However, CSOs' involvement in NDC implementation is still unspecified. Regarding the process of measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV), only state actors are given the role, which means no mechanism for independent monitoring is intended. There is no sign that the current revision of NDC will incorporate this important issue.



4. Civil society in forest restoration: case studies

Overall, the protection and regeneration of natural forests is expected to contribute 19% of Vietnam's overall "unconditional" reductions in GHG by 2030 (i.e., without international support), and 27% of Vietnam's "conditional" reductions (i.e., with international support). The challenge of this is that it is an extremely high target to be fulfilled. This is demonstrated by the fact that 'As per the INDC Technical Report, this objective is to be achieved by protecting 1 million ha of natural forests in an effective manner and regenerating 200,000 ha of natural forests unconditionally by 2030 (note: with international support the targets are 2,2 million ha protected and 200,000 ha regenerated)'. Considering that natural forests are among the most depleted and vulnerable, it is reasonable to say that Vietnam's NDC commitment depends on the successful regeneration and protection of natural forests.

The previous section shows that civil society has a crucial role in improving forest governance by working closely with and representing vulnerable groups, such as forest-dependent communities in the NDC process. This section illustrates the contribution of civil society in forest restoration with several case studies.

Case study: Participatory approach to forest restoration in Phu Luong district, Thai Nguyen province

The National Forestry Development Strategy 2006 – 2020 calls for rational planning, management, and effective use of 5.68 million ha of protection forest. Following this national strategy, Phu Luong district developed the forest planning for 2013 – 2020. Total area of protection forests in Phu Luong district was 3,232 ha, in which there were 303 ha of acacia plantation previously invested by 131 households.

The process of forest planning in Phu Luong district at that time lacked community participation and consensus. Local forest smallholders had no opportunity to express their opinions and concerns in the forest planning. When their acacia plantations were converted to protection forest, those 131 households were severely affected. To supplement their meager income, many households harvested acacia illegally in their former forest land and sold short

to traders who could take care of paperwork. Others ended up leaving their homeland in search of jobs.

Recognizing this issue, Thai Nguyen province made a provision for acacia harvest in the converted forests. Specifically, converted acacia plots of less than 2 ha could be harvested 100%; if the converted plot was more than 2.5 ha, 50% of the plot could be harvested first, and the remainder after 3 years; if more than 5 ha, 50% of the plot could be harvested first, 30% after 3 years, and the remainder in the fifth year. In return, households pledged to restore the converted forests with indigenous trees. This provincial policy was carried out in many areas, including Phu Luong district.

However, the implementation of this policy had some difficulties. Paperwork for selective logging in protection forests, including proposal, harvesting plan, map etc. had to be submitted to many levels of authority. According to local people, this procedure took too much time and effort for households with small forest plots. In addition, the cost of replanting indigenous trees was high, so many households chose to plant indigenous trees in low density or even replant acacia entirely. Moreover, slow growth of indigenous trees meant economic benefits would not be immediately available for local people who were poor ethnic minorities. This posed a significant challenge to the task of forest restoration.

Facing this challenge, the Center for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) has worked with Phu Luong district to restore natural forests by developing nursery gardens for indigenous plants. SRD established 5 community nurseries for 7 indigenous species: Lat, Xoan, Khao, Gioi, Sau, White Canarium, Black Canarium. SRD also supported forest-dependent communities to plant vegetable and medicinal plants under the forest canopy, beekeeping, and raise livestock (buffalos, cows, pigs, and chicken). These activities generated short-term income and encouraged farmers to grow perennial native trees around their homes for the purpose of beekeeping and providing shade. Their agricultural products were highly appreciated in the markets and brought stable income for local people.

The participatory approach was essential in the development of plant nurseries and other livelihood activities. Local people were consulted and encouraged to participate throughout the process. With SRD's support, there was a strong spirit of cooperation between the people and local authorities to jointly develop plans for acacia harvest and replantation of indigenous trees. Thus, the complications with logging paperwork were solved.



SRD supported people in Phu Luong district in developing nursery gardens of indigenous plants to restore protection forests (Photo :SRD)

In sum, the conversion of production forests to protection forests had caused negative impacts on the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities in Phu Luong district. People either abandoned forests or continued to harvest timber illegally. This was a major challenge in the rehabilitation of protection forests. SRD successfully handled this challenge by developing capacity for forest-dependent communities to implement alternative livelihood options, thereby promoting reforestation and sustainable management of protected forests.

Case study: Community-based mangrove restoration in Da Loc commune, Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province

In September 2005, Damrey typhoon broke 3.7 kilometers of sea dyke. Another part of the dyke about 1.7 kilometers long was protected from the violent typhoon by mangrove forest. Since then, people have realized the importance of mangrove forest and actively participated in mangrove restoration. Multiple projects on mangrove restoration have been implemented in Da Loc commune to generate 382 hectares of mangrove.

Among those projects, the project implemented by CARE "Community-based Mangrove Reforestation and Management" is evaluated as the most successful model of civil society involvement in mangrove restoration. CARE took a community-based approach to mangrove restoration, in collaboration with local socio-political organisations, such as Farmers' Union, Women's Union, Youth's Union.

As project coordinator, CARE developed and coordinated activities, including capacity building, awareness raising, mangrove plantation, to trash collection. CARE provided capacity building on participatory forest land use plan (PLUP) and climate risk assessment for local communities. Socio-political organisations provided support in mobilizing local participation in reforestation activities. They also provided the human resource for trainers of trainers on planning, risk assessment, and organisational skills.

Interviews with local stakeholders (local forestry agencies, socio-political organisations, farmers etc.) indicated that the project was successful in raising awareness and connecting local communities in mangrove protection and restoration. By now, deforestation caused by firewood collection and aquaculture has been mostly stopped.

In sum, the participatory approach by CARE was highly regarded. Good cooperation between civil society and local socio-political organisations brought successful mangrove protection and restoration, winning trust from the people and local governments.



*CARE supported people in planting, caring and protecting mangrove forests in Da Loc commune
(Photo: CARE international in Vietnam)*



*CRD supported local people to generate income from planting medicinal plants under forest canopy
(Photo: CRD)*

Case study: Limited participation of civil society in state-run forest restoration in A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province

Both the government and civil society implement forest restoration projects in A Luoi district in Thua Thien Hue province. Interviews with local stakeholders indicate that CSOs have contributed to forest protection and development, and therefore are welcomed by local governments. Nonetheless, most of the projects implemented by CSOs are small-scale and thus not sufficient to fund ambitious activities and create thorough changes or reforms. Instead, they focus on awareness raising and training on concept and techniques of forest restoration, and developing small agro-forestry pilot models to conserve forest biodiversity. Except for the CarBi project by WWF which funded forest restoration activities, other projects by civil society do not have sufficient funding for forest plantation and nursery.

In contrast to small-scale projects by CSOs, there are large reforestation programs implemented by the State. These programs are financed by state budget and loans from development banks, such as ADB, WB. Civil society is usually not engaged in state-funded projects, even though they have experiences with supporting communities and vulnerable groups. These large state-run reforestation programs tend to focus more on plantation activities without consultation with local communities. In the past, these large-scale reforestation programs organized mass planting of 'commercial' acacia species, which are fast-growing but significantly decrease forest quality and bio-diversity.

Benefit-sharing mechanism has not brought tangible benefit to stakeholders, especially in the case of community forest. There are several reasons for the shortcoming of the benefit-sharing mechanism in practice. First, community tenure rights are not well-defined and impractical in many cases. Every decision made regarding benefits needs consensus from the whole community and approval from the local authority. In A Luoi district, ethnic minority (Co Tu) people account for large percentage of local population. They have limited knowledge and education, so they may not understand the complexity of legal rights and obligations in community forest as stipulated in the Forestry Law. Awareness raising and capacity building for these marginalised stakeholders are necessary in order to improve their understanding and exercise of community tenure rights. Secondly, forest restoration can generate long-term benefits but not short-term provision for forest-dependent communities. During the interviews, local people say they need support for short-term income and livelihoods in order to participate in forest restoration. Thus, the government needs to design good forestry programs which must account for the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The unprecedented momentum for implementing the Paris Agreement presents an urgent opportunity for Vietnam to revise its climate plans to address gaps, increase ambition levels where appropriate, and strengthen the role of forest governance. This includes developing more inclusive policy frameworks and legislation that incorporate the needs and views of different stakeholder groups through dialogue and participation, and ensure transparent and accountable implementation process. The NDC revision to be submitted by 2020 should be an opportunity for a national dialogue about priorities and approaches to addressing the climate crisis. That means better engagement of CSOs and more inclusive and participatory processes and approaches that reflect the needs of citizens. This is critical in the case of climate actions in the forestry sector.

Vietnam has recognized the importance of forests for climate change mitigation. Vietnam's NDC includes measures on forests to achieve its mitigation targets, yet fails to show how forest governance will be integrated into these measures. Strong forest governance is needed for successful completion of forestry targets in the NDC. This paper has elaborated on the current forest governance in Vietnam from an international perspective. Forestry issues in terms of accountability, transparency, participation, equity, coordination, and gender need to be addressed, whether caused by inadequate legal framework or failure in actual implementation. The engagement of civil society can help the government identify the issues and develop effective and inclusive solutions.

The NDC is certainly a faithful effort of the Vietnamese government in response to the call for action from international community. In order to achieve the most from this effort,



Strengthening the participation of CSOs and local communities in forest change monitoring can contribute to the deforestation reduction (Photo: SRD)



it is imperative to involve all stakeholders, including grassroots level, in the process of implementing the NDC. One common challenge identified in NDC is the level of technicality that may not be fully comprehended by ordinary people in local communities. Being 'a technocratic process', **the NDC implementation may cause unintended negative impacts to marginalised groups, such as forest-dependent communities.** Furthermore, the benefits from the NDC should be directed to the people, especially vulnerable stakeholders in this process. Fortunately for Vietnam, there exists a strong body of CSOs who are passionate and knowledgeable about helping vulnerable groups and communities. As mentioned above, the VNGO-FLEGT network is a good example of CSOs who work tirelessly on behalf of forest-dependent communities, to voice issues and concerns to the government's attention. **Experiences and lessons learnt from the VPA FLEGT process can be used in the NDC** to ensure a transparent and accountable NDC process.

Many CSOs in Vietnam have expressed their support for the NDC implementation, especially the National Adaptation component. There are multitude of projects in agriculture and forestry implemented by CSOs across Vietnam which are in line with the NDC. These initiatives can be integrated into the NDC process through improved **information sharing between the government and CSOs.** Furthermore, **a cooperation mechanism should be defined to identify the role of CSOs in the joint implementation of the NDC.** One such mechanism would be the **engagement of CSOs in independent monitoring of the NDC process,** in order to **ensure a transparent and accountable NDC process** to the benefit of vulnerable groups.

Restoration of natural forest is crucial to achieving the NDC targets. This paper has provided several case studies to demonstrate the importance of forest governance and community tenure rights in forest restoration. Policies imposed top-down may lead to impractical situations. **The participatory approach is key to ensure successful policy implementation,** as in the case of replanting indigenous forests in Phu Luong district. **Community tenure rights must be well-defined** as a legal basis for implementing policies for the benefits of forest-dependent communities, such as the one related to benefit - sharing mechanism. **State-run reforestation programs need to take into account bio-diversity and living environment** of forest-dependent communities. **Consultations with local communities should be done** during the design and implementation of these large-scale reforestation programs. There should be **mechanisms for full participation of civil society** to ensure successful forest restoration in the NDC incorporating forest governance and community tenure rights.



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Appendix

GHG emissions mitigation target by 2030 compared to the BAU 2010

| Sector | With domestic resources | | Với sự hỗ trợ quốc tế | |
|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| | Target (%) | GHG (Mt CO ₂ e) | Target (%) | GHG (Mt CO ₂ e) |
| Energy | 4.4 | 29.46 | 9.8 | 65.93 |
| Agriculture | 5.8 | 6.36 | 41.8 | 45.78 |
| Waste | 8.6 | 4.16 | 42.1 | 20.23 |
| LULUCF | 50.05* | 22.67 | 145.7* | 66.0 |
| Total | 8% | 62.65 | 25% | 197.94 |

* Carbon absorption

Source: MONRE, 2015. INDC Technical Report

Contribution to GHG emissions mitigation

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Sectors and sub-sectors | <p>1. Energy</p> <p>a. Fuel combustion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy industries; • Manufacturing industries and construction; • Transport; • Others: residential, agriculture and commercial services. <p>b. Fugitive emissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mining; • Natural gas and oil. <p>2. Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enteric fermentation; • Manure management; • Rice cultivation; • Agriculture soils; • Prescribed burning of savannas; • Field burning of agricultural residues. <p>3. Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest land; • Cropland; • Grassland; • Wetlands; • Settlements; • Other land. <p>4. Waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid waste landfills; • Industrial wastewater; • Domestic wastewater; • Human waste; • Waste incineration. |
| Business-As-Usual scenario | <p>Viet Nam's BAU scenario for GHG emissions was developed based on the assumption of economic growth in the absence of climate change policies. The BAU starts from 2010 (the latest year of the national GHG inventory) and includes the energy, agriculture, waste and LULUCF sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GHG emissions in 2010: 246.8 million tCO₂e • Projections for 2020 and 2030 (not included industrial processes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020: 474.1 million tCO₂e • 2030: 787.4 million tCO₂e |
| Unconditional contribution | <p>With domestic resources, by 2030 Viet Nam will reduce GHG emissions by 8% compared to BAU, in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emission intensity per unit of GDP will be reduced by 20% compared to the 2010 levels; • Forest cover will increase to the level of 45%. |
| Conditional contribution | <p>The above-mentioned 8% contribution could be increased to 25% if international support is received through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and through the implementation of new mechanisms under the Global Climate Agreement, in which emission intensity per unit of GDP will be reduced by 30% compared to 2010 levels.</p> |

Source: Gov 2014. *Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Vietnam*

Mitigation options in LULUCF sector

| | |
|----|--|
| F1 | Protection of natural forest (1,000,000 ha) |
| F2 | Protection of coastal forest (100,000 ha) |
| F3 | Plantation of coastal forest (10,000 ha) |
| F4 | Natural forest regeneration (200,000 ha) |
| F5 | Plantation of large timber production forest (150,000 ha) |
| F6 | Protection of natural forest (2,200,000 ha) |
| F7 | Plantation of coastal forest (30,000 ha) |
| F8 | Natural forest regeneration (200,000 ha) |
| F9 | Natural forest and production forest regeneration (400,000 ha) |

Source: MONRE, 2015. INDC Technical Report

