FAO-NETHERLANDS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT,
RURAL AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND
POVERTY REDUCTION IN VIETNAM

PROPOSED WORK PLAN

Background and rationale

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is strongly committed to improving management of its forest resources. Of a total land area of 32.9 million hectares, as of 2001 it was estimated that 10.9 million hectares (33 percent) were covered with forest. Vietnam is the most densely populated country in Southeast Asia, with a human population of over 80 million, therefore the human-forest interface is a daily reality and challenge for forest managers. More than 70 percent of the population is rural, gaining their livelihoods from agriculture and related activities, including forestry and fisheries. Forestry-related activities are critically important especially in many of the more remote mountainous communes, which are also areas where numerous ethnic minorities live, often in extreme poverty.

Currently Vietnam is undergoing major economic and social transformation, following the adoption of doi moi (economic renovation) policies. The country’s overall development objectives are guided by the national socio-economic development plan (2001-2005) and the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS). These two documents are to be merged and updated in the preparation of the next national socio-economic development plan (2006-2010).

The 5 Million Hectare Reforestation Programme (5MHRP), being carried out over a 12-year period from 1998-2010, addresses protection of existing forests as well as reforestation for environmental purposes, bio-diversity conservation and production of raw materials for forest industries. The 5MHRP is expected to generate considerable employment, improve forest-based production, increase income levels for ethnic minority groups and contribute to improved livelihoods. The programme is also contributing to the overall national goals of hunger elimination and poverty alleviation. To maximize the effectiveness of such a massive and diverse undertaking, however, it is necessary to strengthen the enabling policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks underpinning the programme.

Work is currently ongoing in Vietnam to update the overall national programme, policies, laws, and strategies for the forest sector. A revised Law on Forest Protection and Development was approved by the National Assembly in late 2004. Considerable work is subsequently needed to update the supporting decrees and regulations.

Work is also ongoing to prepare a new National Forest Strategy (2005-2020), which aims to merge and update the existing National Forest Development Strategy (NFDS, 2001-2010) and the Forest Sector Support Program (FSSP) Framework (2001). The Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development is simultaneously revising Decree 661, which guides the implementation of the 5MHRP.
As a result of the extensive policy and programme revisions underway, there are numerous opportunities for targeted support from the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP) to influence and shape forestry in Vietnam for years to come.

For each of these ongoing processes, efforts are needed to better link the work related to development and revision of forest strategy, policy, law and programmes with macro national strategies—especially in matters of how forestry can contribute to economic development, poverty reduction and the promotion of rural livelihoods. These issues require applied research and analyses as well as work on policies and strategies at national, provincial, district and commune levels. Key efforts are needed to improve land-use planning and forest land allocation, and to enhance extension and technical support to better enable rural households and communities to participate in, and benefit from, sustainable forest management.

Objective

To enhance the role of forestry in poverty reduction through an enabling national forestry strategy and supportive linkages with rural development, national economic development and poverty reduction.

Major outcomes

- A comprehensive widely-recognized National Forest Strategy, developed in a participatory and decentralized manner, effectively used to guide forestry development over the 2005-2020 period, with particular focus on forestry’s potential to contribute to poverty reduction (Forestry Theme, Outcome 1);
- Appropriate and effective forestry regulations/decrees developed in support of the recently revised “Law on Forest Protection and Development,” leading to enhanced implementation and compliance (Forestry Theme, Outcome 2);
- More sustainable, equitable and participatory forest management achieved, through the introduction and implementation of community-based forest management approaches that emphasize integrated land-use assessment and planning and poverty reduction in rural communities (Forestry Theme, Outcome 3); and
- Strengthened capacity and political support for effective forest policy analysis and implementation, particularly in areas related to enhancing the effectiveness of forestry agencies, strengthening decentralized participatory approaches, forest valuation, environmental services, use of incentives, forest ownership and resource tenure, forestry development oriented toward achieving poverty reduction, and more effective involvement in international forestry processes (Forestry Theme, Outcome 4).

Main activities

- Support development of a new National Forest Strategy through a participatory process of national, regional and provincial workshops, consultations, and awareness raising activities, and integration of forestry concepts in the national socio-economic development for 2006-2010 (Forestry Theme, Outcome 1);
- Explore prospects for establishing a national forest programme secretariat/sectoral coordination structure (Forestry Theme, Outcome 1);
- Facilitate consultation of stakeholders at central, provincial and local levels regarding implementation of the Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004) (Forestry Theme, Outcome 2);
Analyze key issues and experiences related to implementation of forest laws, and support the participatory development of implementing regulations/decrees underpinning the Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004), with particular emphasis on a decree for community forestry (Forestry Theme, Outcome 2);

Support the activities of the National Working Group on Community Forest Management, including review of past experience, formulation of standard operating procedures, development of guidelines, field testing, support for scaling up of community forestry, and development of linkages among national and regional networks on community forestry (Forestry Theme, Outcome 3);

Strengthen capacity in policy analysis and implementation through training and participation in national/regional studies related to topics of current relevance in Vietnam (e.g., “reinventing forestry agencies,” forest ownership and resource tenure, incentives for plantations and smallholder tree planting, environmental services, etc.) (Forestry Theme, Outcome 4).

Indicators

- National Forest Strategy, formulated through a broad-based participatory process, widely recognized as the guiding document for forestry development in the country
- Forestry issues and programmes effectively incorporated in the socio-economic development plan (2006-2010)
- Concept note and consultations on options for establishing a national forest programme secretariat or alternative mechanism for coordination structure
- Widespread awareness and appreciation of the new Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004)
- Decrees and implementing regulations in support of the Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004) formulated and given widespread recognition and support for implementation
- Standard operating procedures, guidelines, and a legal decree formulated in support of community forestry development, reflecting principles of participation, equity, integrated land-use and poverty reduction
- Broad involvement of stakeholders in the National Working Group on Community Forest Management, and effective linkages with regional networks on community forestry
- 50 professionals trained in policy analysis, techniques and approaches
- At least three forest policy studies completed, using participatory processes, covering current issues (e.g., “reinventing” forestry agencies and institutions, incentives for plantation development, policies to promote smallholder reforestation and community forestry, forest ownership and resource tenure, etc.
- Effective involvement of Vietnam officials in international forestry dialogue and in meeting international forestry commitments, exemplified by submission of high-quality written and verbal reports to regional and international bodies such as the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission and enhanced participation in regional and international meetings

Approaches and strategies

Support provided through the FNPP in Vietnam will be based on priorities and needs identified by established mechanisms and recognized coordinating bodies. Overall guidance will be drawn from the inter-ministerial Strategic Planning and Monitoring Working Group established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (comprised of representatives from 17 different institutions and stakeholder groups) and the Forest Sector.
Support Program and Partnership (FSSP&P), a partnership between the Government of Vietnam and 22 international organizations (multilateral and bilateral donors, international NGOs and international research organizations).

Focused support will be guided by, and channeled through, established working groups and steering committees whenever possible. For example, work in support of the development of community forestry will be carried out through the National Working Group on Community Forest Management. Such working groups offer well-established and recognized multi-sectoral bodies (involving representation from various ministries and organizations) that ensure cross-sectoral consideration of issues.

FNPP support will be provided strategically to complement the resources being provided to Vietnam in the forestry sector through the National Forest Programme Facility, other FAO-supported projects, and other international donors.

Vietnam is in the early stages of decentralization of natural resource management. Particular effort will be made to reinforce these initiatives, broaden the involvement of stakeholders, and support decision making at regional, provincial and local levels.

**FAO and collaborating partners**

As an active member of the Forest Sector Support Program and Partnership (FSSP&P), FAO will undertake support under the FNPP consistent with the FSSP annual work plan. Activities will be carried out largely by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in collaboration with related ministries, universities, NGOs, and international partners.

FAO is currently supporting the forest sector in Vietnam through the “Capacity Building, Extension, Demonstration and Support for the Development of Market-Oriented Agroforestry in Quang Nam Province” (GCP/VIE/027/ITA) and the Regional Project on “Enhancing Sustainable Forest Harvesting in Asia” (GCP/RAS/192/JPN). Two recently completed projects provided technical support to the 5 Million Hectare Reforestation Programme (TCP/VIE/0066) and to Participatory Watershed Management in Hoanh Bo District, Quang Ninh Province (GCP/VIE/023/BEL).

Vietnam has also recently been accepted as a partner under the National Forest Programme Facility. Several of the proposed activities in the NFP Facility Concept Note complement and reinforce those anticipated under the FNPP work plan. Close collaboration will be maintained between the two programmes.

A Concept Note has been prepared by FAO and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) outlining a possible project on “National Assessment of Forest Resources and Long-term Monitoring,” which would involve close collaboration with the international Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) work of FAO. Should this proposal be funded, activities will be closely coordinated with work carried out under the FNPP.

There will be close collaboration among staff from FAO HQs, RAP, and the FAO country representation in providing coordination and technical backstopping to the project at national, provincial, district and commune levels of Government.
Beneficiaries

National, regional and local stakeholders in the forest sector, particularly poor households in forest-dependent communities.

Duration and location

3 years, Vietnam, at selected locations.

Inputs

- International and national consultants, including travel/DSA
- Technical backstopping by FAO (HQs, RAP)
- Support for stakeholder networking, field work (needs elaboration)
- Training (workshops, study tours, fellowships)

Estimated budget (over 3 years)

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Initial activities (first half 2005)

1. Launching workshop

To increase awareness and understanding of the FNPP and planned support, and further elaborate specific activities and areas of support, it is proposed to organize a launching workshop at the earliest opportunity (March/April). It is proposed to convene the launching work in concurrently with a proposed NFP Facility launching workshop to highlight the desired synergy of the two programmes.

2. Support development of the new National Forest Strategy

A 30-member inter-ministerial working group, assisted by a team of international and national consultants, is currently drafting a new National Forest Strategy that is intended to guide forestry development in Vietnam during the period 2006-2020. To ensure broad stakeholder involvement in the development of the National Forest Strategy, it is now essential to facilitate consultations on the draft strategy at the regional and provincial levels. FNPP support is requested for required for 3 regional and/or 12 provincial consultations (March/April), followed by a consultation with international partners (April) and a national workshop of all stakeholders (May).
3. Support consultation of stakeholders at central, provincial and local levels on the revised Law of Forest Protection and Development (2004) and initiate development of supporting regulatory guidelines and decrees

The revised Law of Forest Protection and Development (2004) was approved by the National Assembly in late 2004 and is scheduled to become effective on 1 April 2005. The revised law has 8 chapters and 86 articles. For full implementation, however, a series of legal decrees are required, as well as several decisions and circulars and ministerial and joint-ministerial levels. Through the FNPP, FAO has an opportunity to help build widespread awareness and understanding of the new legislation and to assist in crafting the supporting decrees and implementing regulations. It is recommended that support from LEGN and FONP be provided to assist with these activities, which would begin in the first half of 2005. Work on developing a decree on community forestry will be scheduled in the second half of 2005 or early 2006.

4. Support activities of the National Working Group on Community Forest Management

The National Working Group on Community Forest Management (NWG-CFM) was established in 1999. As community forestry was, and is, a relatively new concept in Vietnam, the initial focus of the NWG-CFM was on advocacy, awareness raising, and exploration of options for the development of community forestry in the country. With the promulgation of the revised Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004), which gives recognition and support to community forestry concepts, it is acknowledged that the NWG-CFM needs to shift from advocacy to facilitating the implementation of the revised policies. To accomplish this, the NWG-CFM has developed a work plan for 2005 that focuses on formulating implementing guidelines and standard operating procedures, and developing supporting systems for training and capacity building for scaling up. There are also proposals for expanding the composition of the NWG-CFM. It is recommended that FNPP support be provided to assist with the finalization of CFM guidelines and procedures, and to begin work on preparation of legal documents pertaining to community forest management. Later support for the implementation of a limited number of CFM pilots would be anticipated.

5. Capacity building in policy analysis and implementation

The ongoing transition from central planning to a market economy, and from central-dominated planning and decision making to decentralized forest management, presents numerous challenges for policy makers and analysts in Vietnam. Strengthening capacity for policy analysis and implementation will be a continuous priority of FNPP support to the country. This will be accomplished through a wide range of training, involvement in regional studies, and participation in regional and international workshops and meetings. Two regional studies (with participating countries conducting case studies that are shared and discussed with analysts and experts from other countries) will be initiated in the first half of 2005: 1) assessment of forest ownership and resource tenure; and 2) review of experiences in “reinventing” forestry agencies and institutions. Vietnam has officially requested to participate in the first activity and indicated interest in the second. It is recommended that support be provided under the FNPP to facilitate Vietnam’s active participation in these policy analysis activities. Similar studies and training opportunities are anticipated throughout the duration of FNPP support, including an intensive forest policy short course to be organized by FAO/RAP in late 2005 or early 2006.