

Forest Governance Learning Group

Report of a Learning Event, Vietnam 2012

About the project

For more information about this report, or the Forest Governance Learning Group, visit www.iied.org/forest-governance-learning-group, or contact: James Mayers, James.Mayeres@iied.org

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Information on the Forest Governance Learning Group

The Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG) is an informal alliance of in-country teams and international partners, currently active in seven African and three Asian countries, facilitated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). It aims to connect those marginalised from forest governance to those controlling it, and to help both do things better. A shared belief motivates the group: that forestry can contribute to the eradication of poverty and to sustainability, but only with good forest governance – the right leadership, institutions, policy decisions and practical systems. FGLG became firmly established in 2003 and in subsequent years had the benefit of financial support from the UK and Dutch governments and the European Commission (EC). Since 2009, a five-year phase of work has been underway with finance from the EC and the UK government.

In each country there are four interconnected parts to the work:

- Team of 'governance-connected' individuals from a mix of agencies with experience and ideas
- Policy work on forest livelihood problems due to people being marginalised from decisions
- Development of practical guidance and tools for making progress
- Creating and taking opportunities to make governance improvements

FGLG country teams are well networked, motivated and targeted in their approach – each has a communication strategy within its work plan, and these are made publicly available on the web. Country teams, backed by IIED and international partners, carry out focused studies, learning and training events, network building, supported uptake of governance tools, and taking direct opportunities for governance reform. Inter-country capacity-building work and engagement with key international policy processes aims to achieve creative transfers of insight from one location to another, and to install findings in international policy.

The main partners involved in FGLG, in addition to IIED, are:

- Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia-Pacific (RECOFTC) – backstops the work in Asia and convenes the team in Vietnam
- Civic Response – convenes the team in Ghana
- Forestry South Africa – convenes the team in South Africa
- Centro de Integridade Pública – convenes the team in Mozambique
- Centre for Development Management – convenes the team in Malawi
- Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment – convenes the team in Uganda
- NESDA-CA and the African Model Forests Network – convenes the team in Cameroon
- Enviro Legal Defence Firm – convenes the team in India
- Inspirit – convenes the team in Indonesia
- Tanzania Natural Resources Forum – convenes the team in Tanzania

Since FGLG began it has produced:

- 10 country teams engaged in forest governance improvements in Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Indonesia, India and Vietnam
- 7 major international learning events focused on impacts achieved, lessons learned and plans ahead, involving participants from all the teams and other players
- 100+ policy research outputs and tools
- 120+ press, TV and radio advocacy outputs – and a set of films on ‘*Justice in the forests*’
- 40+ international organisations and forums engaged with to achieve capacity-building, transfers of insight between locations, and to install findings in international policy
- An independent evaluation, which concluded that FGLG has had major impacts: a good balance struck – targets hit whilst fostering processes, learning and innovation; international organisations influenced; strong governance impact with local effects in Uganda, Ghana, South Africa, Indonesia and India and conditions for achieving impact in Mozambique, Malawi and Vietnam.

For further information on FGLG:

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Executive summary

We should not wait for those calling the shots in forestry to make better decisions. We should join others and show how forests and trees can be sustainably managed for local livelihoods. But first, we have to make better decisions ourselves.

Forestry can be productive and sustainable when it is based on fair and effective local control and investment. Securing rights, strengthening organisation and building capacity are the key ways to bring this about. The Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG), now in its tenth year, contributes to this goal using a variety of tactics. Teams in ten countries – Cameroon, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Vietnam, Indonesia and India – generate primary research on key forest issues, identify necessary governance changes, develop guidance on how such changes can be made, and collaborate with others to create and take opportunities to make that change happen. The initiative is facilitated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) with support in Asia from RECOFTC – the Center for People and Forests.

Periodically, FGLG teams get together at an international learning event. In March 2012, the eighth such learning event was held in Hue Province in Vietnam. The objective was to share experience of work on forest rights, organisation and capacity, to receive feedback from colleagues, and to plan our forest governance work for the year ahead. Over four days, we: peer reviewed each other's progress and plans; explored the context of Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), and of community forestry in Vietnam; and agreed ways forward. This report summarises the results. Separate progress reports from each of the FGLG teams for 2011, and work plans for 2012, were finalised after the learning event. These can be found at www.iied.org/fglg, along with a wide range of past thematic and country reports, tools, media pieces, evaluations and films.

Some FGLG country team highlights in 2011 included:

- Team members in India sitting on key national committees and coordinating their inputs.
- Forest priorities installed in national development strategy by the team in Malawi.
- Communities supported and networked to strengthen their voice in the national forest forum in Ghana.
- Improved public understanding on ways to reform laws to strengthen legitimacy in Cameroon.
- REDD pilot projects governance group formed in Tanzania, with effective impact on national strategy.
- NGOs networked and led at the Durban climate conference by the FGLG team in Uganda.

At the international level, highlights in 2011 included:

- The launch and widespread broadcasting of the six Justice in the forests films and the Just forest governance report on the impacts and plans for FGLG work.
- Combined work and dialogue amongst the Asian FGLG teams, supported by RECOFTC, resulted in a well-received position paper on REDD+, governance and community forestry.
- An independent external review of all of IIED's work singled out FGLG and said: "...action-learning with communities, collaborative reflection on policy and governance issues, in-depth rigorous reporting, accessible outputs... FGLG work stands out in quality". Evidence of such a track record helped secure some new support for FGLG through a grant made to IIED by the British Government in early 2012.

Participants at the 2012 learning event engaged with forest governance issues in Vietnam, through both workshop dialogue and field visits. They found that prospects for strengthened and locally beneficial community forestry in Vietnam, in the context of evolving programmes for FLEGT and REDD, are promising but compromised. Links between national and local processes are extremely weak. Groups such as FGLG are vital to improving understanding and for making practical progress towards productive community forestry. The Vietnam situation on these issues resonates strongly with the other countries involved in FGLG too. In general, the group found the prospect of REDD to be more nebulous than the pragmatic approach of FLEGT. More specifically, a central focus on securing local rights to productive forest assets is of paramount importance. Without this foundation, wider governance improvements and REDD programmes may not be possible.

Key actions in the country plans for 2012 include:

- Cameroon – strengthening the team and wider group as the country’s key forest governance hub.
- Indonesia – enabling the high-powered network developed to craft and use key joint messages.
- India – optimising the impact of the team’s well-connected people on key national committees.
- Vietnam – inserting well developed local community forestry expertise into national processes.
- Malawi and Mozambique – installing charcoal trade, rights and enterprise understanding in REDD+.
- South Africa – strengthening the integration of formal policy with practical small enterprise work.
- Uganda – developing a range of public dialogues towards a state-of-forest-governance report.
- Tanzania – making films on local forest governance and REDD+ issues, and making use of them.
- Ghana – synthesising evidence and joining forces with others for a big push on forest tenure change.

Internationally, 2012 sees FGLG working to:

- Synthesise evidence and perception in China and Africa on China’s links to forest governance issues in Africa and network with stakeholders to establish the China-Africa forest governance platform.
- Identify how, with whom and where FGLG can branch out to develop prospects for investment in climate-smart and integrated land use from a basis in effective and equitable forest governance.
- Record and disseminate ‘stories of change’ linked to FGLG and conclude how stronger tracking and recording of impact can be made more routine in FGLG work.
- Finish and use a Guide and Toolkit on How to shape forest governance.
- Explore cross-team work on: a joint position on carbon rights; and on cross-border timber trade issues and lesson sharing on REDD+ in East and Central Africa.

FGLG’s relative longevity gives it major strengths. It has a track record of impact and understanding on how best to operate, and of participants who have typically become increasingly well-connected and promoted. It also presents challenges, however, with the need for constant interrogation and rejuvenation of ideas and approaches. The peer review and group interaction in FGLG remains critical in responding to this.

Other challenges that stand out for FGLG in the coming year and beyond include: Achieving optimal impact on FGLG’s ‘core business, particularly with our current phase of funding coming to an end in 2013. This means generating more substantial evidence, better products and changed decisions for improved rights and accountability. Teams need to work as much as

possible on what they are best at – their specialities and unique selling points. The time of key busy people, particularly to plan, deliver and use well-targeted research and advocacy outputs, needs to be secured now more than ever. Further, FGLG needs to step up its engagement with key international processes, notably FLEGT, REDD+, Free Prior and Informed Consent, and investing in locally controlled forestry. Finally, FGLG teams sometimes operate in an oppressive political environment. This has been the case recently for the Uganda and Malawi teams in particular. The teams' response is to be confident of their record and to put forward strong, transparent and credible plans for their work. But specific threats remain and FGLG will aim to ally with others in providing its support to these teams.



1. Spotlight on Vietnam

Holding the 2012 learning event in Vietnam provided the opportunity for participants to engage closely with the local context, seek out similarities, and learn from their Vietnamese colleagues' experiences. This section summarises presentations given in welcoming and setting the scene for participants in the Vietnam event; and from in-depth presentations on REDD+ in Vietnam from representatives of UNDP, UNREDD, EFI and RECOFTC.

1.1. Vietnam in context

The concept of forest governance, which emphasises the participation of all stakeholders in implementing forest initiatives, is a relatively recent concept in Vietnam, according to Dr Nguyen Minh Hieu of Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry (HUAF). In recent years, HUAF has participated in many activities, including REDD+, designed to address the impacts of climate change and to prevent forest loss.

This prominence of climate change to the discussion was reiterated by Deputy Head of the Vietnam Forestry Administration's International Co-operation Department, Ms Nguyen Tuong Van, in describing how forests in the context of climate change have become a priority issue on the international political agenda. Vietnam, particularly the coastal areas, is one of the most vulnerable countries to the potential impacts of climate change. The role forests play in the absorption of carbon, and in the increased carbon emissions resulting from forest loss and degradation, therefore places them in a position of vital importance.

In response, Ms Nguyen Tuong Van explained, efforts to increase forest land by the Vietnamese government have been undertaken over the past decade, including efforts to successfully implement REDD+ initiatives. The creation of a master plan for forest development – a continuation of the Five Million Hectare Forest Programme – is now in place for 2010-2020. The heavy responsibility on the forest sector, with its implications not only for Vietnam, but also for the international community, requires new initiatives and ideas. Participation of the local community, including attention to culture and social situations will remain crucial to prevent the deterioration of the forest.

Reiterating this community focus, Dr Tint L Thuang, Executive Director of host organisation RECOFTC, highlighted the organisation's commitment to the development of community forestry and its three guiding principles, so pertinent to FGLG: secure rights for communities, strong institutions and capacity building.

1.2. REDD+ developments in Vietnam

With the wide reaching potential impact of REDD+, there are different perspectives on its progress, problems and its interaction with other processes.

Representatives from the host nation, Vietnam, provided insight into the recent experience of the REDD+ process in Vietnam. Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, of UN-REDD Vietnam, presented an overview of the activities undertaken and the lessons that have so far been taken from the process. Tim Dawson, from the European Forest Institute, considered the relationship and linkages between REDD+ and the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. Dr. Lam Ngoc Tuan, Dean of the Natural Resources Management Faculty at the University of Da Lat and consultant to RECOFTC, discussed conflict in natural resource management and its implications for REDD+. Finally, John Parr, of Flora and Fauna International Vietnam, talked about governance in REDD+ in Vietnam.

The following sections are taken from speeches by these individuals, and represent their perspectives on particular aspects of REDD+ and the REDD+ process in Vietnam.

Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, UN-REDD Vietnam

Achievements and Challenges

Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, of UN-REDD Vietnam, presented an overview of the activities undertaken and the lessons that have so far been taken from the process.

The REDD+ process in Vietnam is supported by the Government of Norway, through the FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Vietnam was one of the first countries to submit a proposal and to sign UN-REDD Joint Programme Document.

Support from many quarters in Vietnam's REDD process has aimed to strengthen institutional capacity to enable the government to be ready for REDD. This has included collaborative work between UN-REDD and RECOFTC. As explained by Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen, achievements so far have included a study conducted in Vietnam on a benefit distribution system, now being used as the basis for other countries in the region; the piloting of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for REDD+; and the development of a National REDD+ programme.

Within the pilot province, participatory forest carbon measurement has been piloted and FPIC has been piloted in twenty communes. In practical terms in this pilot province, facilitators have been trained, and awareness-raising on forests, climate change and REDD+ has been undertaken. Meetings have been held with local people, including a consultation on benefit distribution. Historical forest status mapping for the period 1990 to 2011 has been developed, to help the province develop priorities, and the government has supported the area in the development of a forest protection plan for 2011-2020. Further research has been undertaken looking into benefit distribution systems. In collaboration with SNV and CERDA (The Centre of Research and Development in Upland Areas) a consultation on this issue has been undertaken.

Sharing the learning from this has also been an important part of the process. International and local delegations have visited the pilot site and communication materials have been developed to share information further. These include a REDD website (<http://www.vietnam-redd.org>) and video created by the Global Canopy Programme (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0WeGw3h2yU>).

The pilot phase of REDD+ has brought its challenges. It is a cross-sector issue, and therefore needs mainstreaming, for example into social planning. There are challenges around stakeholder engagement: people need to be engaged on the provincial, local and national level and expectations of local people need to be managed, particularly on the FPIC process.

The second pilot phase is now being developed by the government over six provinces. Under the UN-REDD programme in Vietnam, there is a Participatory Governance Assessment, which is very relevant for REDD+. The PGA-REDD pilot phase has just started, with a workshop to prioritise a list of governance challenges for REDD in Vietnam.

Tim Dawson, European Forest Institute

The relationship between REDD+ and FLEGT

Vietnam is currently negotiating a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) under the EU FLEGT Action Plan. FLEGT arose in the 1990s as a result of concern about illegal logging, loss of forest, and forest degradation. It addresses the supply and demand aspects, by negotiating agreements between partner countries to ensure timber exports are legal, which become legally binding trade agreements once concluded.

Common challenges and needs are faced by both REDD+ and FLEGT. Both systems require good governance, markets, multi-stakeholder planning processes, credible monitoring systems and public confidence. Both also require leakage to be controlled and other unintended circumstances to be mitigated; they both must deal with unclear or inconsistent legal and regulatory frameworks, particularly regarding land use and resource access.

Despite these significant requirements and complications, Tim Dawson also highlighted the synergistic opportunities these two processes bring. Both require the clarification of resource rights and tenure, and offer opportunities for strengthening law enforcement systems. There are collaborative opportunities in addressing the drivers of deforestation; addressing the challenges of governance and illegality; building effective processes; designing and implementing systems of monitoring; and in coordinating the multiple actors supporting these initiatives. The need for clear objectives and an integrated approach both across and within governments and CSOs has been clearly demonstrated by the process so far.

Opportunities for collaboration have already been taken up in Vietnam. For example, in the draft REDD strategy, monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) is integrated with national forest monitoring system and supply chain monitoring in the VPA process. Further opportunities exist, however, including NGOs working on REDD+ and climate change making use of existing networks and structures that have been developed for FLEGT; and the REDD+ process learning from the criticisms levied at the level of support for participation that the RPP process faced. As Tim Dawson pointed out, both processes are dealing with common issues: good governance and the drivers of deforestation. Strong communication of these issues themselves means offering a solution focus, rather than a project focus.

Lam Ngoc Tuan, University of Da Lat

Conflict in natural resource management and its implications for REDD+

In 2011, RECOFTC and Da Lat University (DLU) conducted a study on REDD+ and conflict, considering the complex issue of conflicts related to forest land and governance. Lam Ngoc Tuan, of the University of Da Lat offered a synopsis of this research and its importance for the future of REDD+. The context is the growth of the Vietnamese economy in the past year, with the key growth factor being the plantation of natural resources, leading to the higher demand forest resources and forest land for commercial use.

Societal conflicts, the study identified, can result from a lack of resources for development or be due to weak capacity. These underlying causes can be exacerbated by factors such as intervention or

population growth. Conflict is often between the local people and the forest owner, and the resulting behaviour is to act against the legal enforcement, thereby deteriorating the forests. Trends discerned have been that resource conflict has increased in frequency; the conflicts themselves have become more drawn out and more complex; and that violence is being used to deal with conflicts related to forest governance. Greater profits from harvesting have resulted in the strength to fight law enforcement agencies, culminating in an armed response by those forest law enforcement agencies. The capacity of law enforcement is, however, limited with the increased number of people involved.

Lam Ngoc Tuan also outlines the causes of conflicts sought out in this study: the inappropriateness of some laws and policies on forest governance for current demand; that land in Vietnam is the property of the people as a whole and private property rights over land are not recognised by the government – the property system means that trees are seen as held in common and benefit being for the common good. Further, there is a lack of respect for people's rights because property rights are for all people. The local government can therefore take decisions regardless of the rights of local people using that area.

- The benefits from forests are distributed unevenly and not in a transparent way. Forest areas are mostly distributed for state enterprises and most people receive no benefit.
- The capacity of the law enforcement agency is insufficient to enforce the law in the country context.
- There is a lack of cultivation land, an important issue for people who use slash and burn cultivation and agriculture. Populations increased very quickly, increasing the need for cultivation land for new families.
-

Conflict causes both deforestation and degradation of forests, and a change in forest use, as the benefits gained from forests become more important for local people, who try to convert local forest for plantation. This raises challenges for future REDD+ implementation, with the potential consequences of decreasing livelihoods, human rights and security.

To take a specific example, Truong Hop Cu The was an evergreen forest in the 1980s. The forest area was allocated to an ethnic group but local people turned it into a cultivation area. With land suitable for coffee plantations and a rising coffee price, local people felt encouraged to change the forest into an agricultural plantation. There was no action from the government during the time of deforestation and when it was deforested, companies wanted to take the area for coffee plantations.

The impact of REDD+ on forest governance can be positive, in terms of rights for local people. In Vietnam, it requires the empowerment of local people, and it requires the decentralisation of forest governance and the allocation of local land rights. Implementation of REDD may have negative impacts in terms of restricting the access of local people to forest resources. There are also high risks in terms of unplanned migration causing pressure on forest resources. We should first renovate the laws and policies; establish a fair benefit distribution system; and find a good mechanism for resolving the conflicts.

John Parr, Flora and Fauna International Vietnam

Governance in REDD+ in Vietnam

In general, the legal frameworks and the institutionalisation of forest management across Asia are extremely poor. There are REDD+ governance issues to consider at a national level and at a

landscape level, such as protected areas and waterherds. There are then enforcement networks in place, such as FLEGT or CITES. Finally, there are governance and management issues within villages.

It is possible to collect the various pieces of law and generate model pieces of legislation and then try to field test them to find model legislation. For good legislation, all institutional bodies down to grassroots level are all tightly interlinked; for optimal governance, there is a transparent cross-exchange of information, and financial and technical reporting. Under ideal circumstances, there would be a model with central ministerial responsibility, but linked to other ministries and other institutions. A protected area is linked to local communities and agencies, through this locking into communities at the village level. In the preparation of a management plan, different bodies at village and site level would all be involved.

FFI organise management advisory committees to guide the management of protected areas. Co-management regulations have been produced for three sites with three of the world's rarest primate species. Where villages have enacted a conservation agreement, this is one of the first places in Asia where there is conservation-development.

Conflicts in the field are a consequence of a lack of benefit sharing. There is not currently a satisfactory or healthy framework in Vietnam for introducing REDD+ without a suitable benefit sharing systems. The role of communities needs to be clearly defined in the legislation, or they will not receive eco-tourism benefits or carbon rights. There needs to be a community forum to raise conflict issues.



Discussion

- Model systems of legislation can be well organised in theory but have different impacts in practice. The actual map of tenure rights and institutions needs to be understood and recognised.
- The suggestion of a possible increase in conflict with the rise of REDD+ seems to relate to carbon rights. How the carbon itself relates to rights may be a conflict between institutional legal systems and customary systems, but they still come down to the issue of rights.
- In Vietnam, the development of a participatory carbon market is in the pilot stage. It needs to be prepared comprehensively with a legal framework to enable the distribution of benefit. The current systems for PES have already trialled this. The consultation for a REDD+ national programme is starting and it is hoped that the NGO community will engage with the design. There is more complexity with carbon as it involves benefits going through markets, rather than the state.
- There are complementarities between the concepts of REDD+ and of forest certification schemes. REDD+ involves consideration of leakage and avoidance and forest certification involves good management and traceability. Independent monitoring or verification within supply chains provides credibility in the marketplace. The overall goal is to use the forests as a mechanism in the most affordable way, to try to retain as much of the forest as possible to address climate change.
- FLEGT and REDD+ can be seen as fundamentally different – FLEGT is a compliance-based model, REDD+ is an incentive-based model. But there are complimentary processes with broader objectives, and similar mechanisms. They are both tools to enable work on these issues of improving governance and management and reducing poverty. The issues of communities, livelihoods and rights in the preparation and negotiation processes are part of FLEGT, even though it is about timber and trade.
- In terms of the allocation of rights, the Vietnam government is commissioning a review of forestry. Vietnam politically supports allocating forest land to communities and community forestry. But in the field, there are implementation issues that need to be addressed.
- Under Vietnamese law, all land is owned by the government. There is a pilot underway for co-management, and it needs to be understood broadly in terms of sharing benefits. Forest management plans are given to communities for 50 years with a maximum of 30 hectare for households or individuals.
- The costs of allocating these land rights range greatly. A few years ago, the figure stood at anything from three to ten dollars per hectare, depending on the inventory of resources.
- At the national level there is a pilot mechanism for benefit distribution, with upfront payment to the community to provide an incentive before the REDD+ money arrives. Later payment will be made once the MRV is completed. There are details of this mechanism on the [UN-REDD website](#).

2. Learning from the field in Hue Province

Facilitated by Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry and with the help of local translators, FGLG participated in an information exchange with villages practising community natural resource management in Hue Province. The purpose was to see these examples first hand, to ascertain how the management systems worked and whether and how community members were benefitting. Briefing notes were provided in advance by Hue University, to furnish participants with context for their visit.



Pho Trach village

Traditional forest governance of sandy forests

Pho Trach village's sandy forest is managed under customary rights, and whilst this system has continued for generations, it is not legally recognised so does not provide sufficient protection to the village. The potential for land title was unclear, as the government states that sandy forest does not meet the criteria required for allocation. However should it gain legal title (Red Book), Pho Trach village would have the legal authority to stop encroachers, technical support from the Government may be more forthcoming, and any further claims on the land for mining would have to go through official procedures. It appeared that the main benefit of the sandy forest, according to the villagers, was for watershed protection. They are afraid that loss of the forest will lead to the disappearance of two reservoirs.

The field visit provided much information but also left the group with some questions: is private investment possible? Does the Government of Vietnam really have the incentive to allocate tenure in such a small area? How can Pho Trach best prevent more of its forest being reclaimed for mining? Is the decision to locate numerous graves in the sandy forest a 'strategy' to protect, or claim the forest

area? There was some evidence of small businesses (such as basket weaving) but what other entrepreneurial activities could be developed? Would a 'landscape management' approach be more appropriate than forest management? And rather than (just) relying on their expressed belief that they will be granted land title in the future, what actions might the villagers take to advocate for allocation of land rights?

Thon 4 village

Community forest management

There are 54 households in Thon 4 village; 38 of these are a local Tu ethnic group and 18 are from the Kinh ethnic group, relocated into the area last year. In 2004, under a forest protection and development law for land allocation, the community received 68 hectares (ha) of forest land. Four ha of the allocated land were used to plant acacias in 2006, which are now ready to harvest; 43 ha are a rubber plantation; and four ha are home gardens. An acacia plantation of seventeen ha belongs to households.

The land, mostly very rocky, had been logged before by state enterprise and was very poor forest. Good forest is often in remote areas and difficult to access, a community would need to be located near the forest and be capable of forest management. There is also the further incentive of reforesting areas in order to create new benefits; poor natural forest can be regenerated and replaced extremely with plantations. Forest allocated to communities are limited to being used within the community, so timber cannot be harvested and sold. This is in contrast with acacia plantations, which are used as a cash crop. So whether the community receives degraded or high quality forest, the options for its usage are limited.

Various issues have arisen in the village. Firstly, over the new eighteen households, who are not seen as complying with rules by logging illegally in this forest and in an adjacent state forest. Secondly, over the lack of road to access to the plantation, which would provide much needed access to the market. Thirdly, more land is wanted on which to plant acacia, as it is seen as a high value tree with good market potential. Finally, the village's Red Book (their proof of forest tenure) was eaten by mice and the village now faces the task of trying to get a new one.

Thuy Duong village

Community forest management and village-based ecotourism

Village Chief, Phan Van Chien, along with further representatives from the village, explained the system of forest protection operating in Thuy Duong village to FGLG participants. In the 1990s, the forest belonged to the state, who were unable to protect it. As a result, 512 hectares were allocated to the community in 2002 and a further 98 hectares in 2007. As of 2007, a development fund and system of community forest protection were set up. The community are replanting exotic species to enrich the forest area, allowing them to harvest in five to ten years' time.

Funds received go some way to enforcing the forest protection. As well as the four per cent allocated to the management board, rangers, chosen for their physical strength and knowledge of the forest, receive VND 70,000 per shift. They patrol randomly, three times per month, and report illegal logging to the National Ranger. The fund also pays for further equipment for forest protection, such as uniforms, water tanks, machetes and a megaphone. Fire protection is also necessary from May to August, though fire-fighters are unpaid and not formally trained. Instead, two members of the management board receive training each year and pass it onto the villagers.



Despite providing the protection work to improve the environment, Thuy Duong village does not engage with or receive a great deal of income from ecotourism activities (one payment of VND 1 million has been paid so far), which are run by a co-operative at the commune level. To some degree, however, benefits have been received by the villagers already. The system does create employment opportunities for villagers to work at Elephant Stream. Further, farmers receive economic and ecological benefits from the forest through access to water and ecotourism. The community will have to wait ten years to see the benefits of their protection efforts, however, as the forest is not yet exploitable.

There are other potential problems facing the village. The first phase of funding will stop next year and the next phase from the Central Forestry Agency is not guaranteed; there is not yet analysis of whether the system will be sustainable without funding. The Fund will stop entirely when the village starts harvesting the protected forest. Although there are no problems currently in all villagers helping to protect the forest, there are no plans in place for management once it is ready for harvesting. Questions over crop rotation, income and markets have not yet been addressed. A feasibility study would be useful to consider whether other 'high value' sites might generate further value from ecotourism.

Nghi Xuan village

Community fishery management

The final group visited an example of community fishery management. Governance challenges existing in the area pushed the community to organise themselves in this way. The governance responses spanned zoning, committee forming, regulations, finances and capacity building efforts. Management of the fishery by the community resulted in an overall decrease in production – but the fish being caught were of higher value. In this way, the biodiversity management of the fishery has been improved. Capacity building work from a local university and NGO projects aided the community in improving their organisation, tracking rules and regulations and zoning using GPS.

Interesting parallels with community forestry were demonstrated by this management system, in terms of a clear beneficial return from a community managed asset, in a short time period. Different kinds of complexities between fisheries and forest management exist, however, as unlike forests, fish stocks are unstable and dynamic.

Overall, the combination of clear rights, stronger capacity and organisation has brought better governance and better livelihood benefits. Yet questions remain over the long term sustainability of such a system, where younger generations show a preference for jobs in cities and where the value added of products is unclear for a thriving SME.



3. Happenings beyond FGLG

Beyond the activities that are explicitly part of their work plans, many FGLG players are involved in initiatives of great relevance and interest to the wider group. Expertise and experience in many areas can inform and strengthen the work of the network. The section below gives a synopsis of presentations made to the FGLG network.

3.1. International processes

With international processes receiving the focus of much attention in forestry lately, ensuring lessons from each are passed on both nationally and internationally is as important as it is challenging. From inception stage through to implementation, processes such as FLEGT and REDD+ may be able to inform one another, or even work together, lowering transaction costs and avoiding potential pitfalls.

In Indonesia, for example, Yani Septiani of the Ministry of Forestry explained how the multi-stakeholder approach to consultation taken during the in-country Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiation phase, could be successfully applied to the REDD+ process. Similarly, tracking and monitoring of the VPA has so far produced lessons of relevance to the REDD+ process. In spite of their many differences, the similarities in various mechanisms and monitoring and reporting processes may allow them to work together.

Experience in Ghana has also established connections between these two processes. According to Kingsley Bekoe of Civic Response and work undertaken with FERN and its partners, it was the underlying issues of tenure and long-term land use planning that affected both FLEGT and REDD in Ghana. Tackling the governance issues and addressing deforestation requires time, political will and coordinated efforts to take effective, inclusive decisions. In Ghana, the Forest Investment Program (FIP) is taking the lead in the early stages of the REDD+ processes to act in coherence with other processes already in place.

3.2. Regional and bilateral cooperation

Regional cooperation or bilateral initiatives can capitalise on existing networks while enabling a more focused and relevant context within which to work. In 2011 in Asia, for example, RECOFTC held a workshop on REDD+, governance and local communities. As explained by David Gritten of RECOFTC, Thailand, the process reinforced that there are common regional issues – for example, that REDD+ will be impossible to achieve if communities are not involved.

In some cases regional cooperation may be necessary to establish the root causes of deforestation. For example, working bilaterally with neighbouring countries has proved illuminating for research into illegal logging in Tanzania. Cassian Sianga of the Tanzania Natural Resources Forum shared the results of an initial study involving a rapid assessment of the timber trade on three border posts between Tanzania and Kenya. The border post on the Tanzania side measured the timber exiting the country; and on the Kenya side, the volume entering. Where official records estimated the figure at 6km; the report showed it to be 110km in reality, resulting in an estimated four billion shilling loss annually. Charcoal is estimated to lose Tanzania 6.5 billion shillings annually. This research is now to be expanded to Malawi and potentially Mozambique.

There are further opportunities for bilateral learning where connections are far less understood, and reducing the gaps in knowledge may prove mutually beneficial and help shape better governance. One such prospect is the newly-established China-Africa forest governance learning platform. Initiated by IIED, it seeks to identify perceptions of the China-Africa relationship and to examine processes of engagement, in light of the trend of increasing Chinese actors in forest decisions in Africa.

With a broad geographical and conceptual scope, entry points have been identified for the work. As explained by Lila Buckley, Sun Xiufang and Ren Peng, this includes conducting a scoping study of the China-Africa timber trade, and looking at the imports from and the exports to Africa, to act as a comparator with Europe. While African timber is not a high percentage of China's total imports, it represents a large proportion of African exports. China-Africa timber trade therefore has a large and growing impact from the perspective of African actors.

From this starting point, there is then a need for better quality investigative reporting. Internews / ICCD are developing a toolkit for Chinese journalists and editors, and will then implement training on investigative reporting on Chinese trade and operations overseas. After this year, those journalists will link with FGLG teams to report on the ground.

The Chinese State Forestry Administration and Ministry of Commerce have already published guidelines for Chinese forest companies operating overseas. They set a non-enforceable benchmark for best practice for Chinese companies to follow when operating overseas. This could be a significant platform for trade and forests because there is a focus on sustainable development.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is the highest level engagement on China-Africa. There is potential scope for FGLG to put forest governance concerns onto the agenda. Possible activities around entry points: Engage with WWF China who are working with African partner countries to develop clear demands on sustainable development for next FOCAC meeting in Beijing at the end of July; in the longer term, FGLG country teams can engage with the ministries of foreign affairs offices to build understanding of good forest governance.

The question is perhaps a broader one than just engagement with China, though that relationship could work as a catalyst for discussion to consider the level of governance preparedness that Africa needs for investment.

3.3. Strengthening communication

Apart from the strategies, research, evidence and ideas themselves, finding innovative and appropriate ways to communicate them is integral to effecting real change. A learning group such as FGLG is an ideal network within which to share this wider knowledge and help create a far-reaching impact.

Cementing its role as an information hub, FGLG is contributing to a 'Governance of forest tenure' guide and toolkit, developed as part of a wider international process from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to implement the 'Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests'. The guide and toolkit represents an opportunity to compile all the tactics employed in improving forest governance, with around 80 tools, including summaries and pointers for further resources. The FGLG network will be integral to improving the toolkit through usage, feedback and linking with other initiatives.

Going beyond the usual methods of communication, a new initiative from RECOFTC will seek out new and compelling ways to tell the 'stories of change' that FGLG have to offer. As David Gritten of RECOFTC explained, there is a need to unravel and reflect on both the failures and successes of projects. This will involve establishing causal relationships between the actions of FGLG, and the outcomes or changes. Once the impacts of the work of FGLG have been established, they will be worked into the basic structure of a story: the beginning; the process and the expectations of change; and then months or even years later.

To successfully get the message across, the target audience of policymakers and their desire for fast information, limits on financial resources and target-country internet speeds all need to be considered.

3.4. New horizons

Following global trends, the possibility of integrating recent work on enterprises with a broader land use approach, might yet offer a way forward for FGLG. Duncan Macqueen of IIED proffers that intensified, climate-smart land usage can unify the expertise of FGLG with the global issues of finite resources, climate change and population expansion.

Taking Java, Indonesia as an example, it has an incredibly dense population and therefore the pressures on resources – timber, food, and energy – are extreme. With the right sort of conditions, however, you find that farmers make good living out of furniture and subsistence out of agriculture. Population projections for Africa give conservative estimate of three billion people in 2050, generating extreme pressures on resources. Governing the pressures on resources is going to get more intense.

The governance decision-making FGLG looks at needs to be taking into consideration this context. FLEGT is primarily about the timber trade and it has a certain driving force and impact. REDD+ is an incentive-based mechanism, which has a power to catalyse action. Beyond all of that, there is an overarching need for integrated land use. Activities from FGLG, the Forest Connect network for supporting small forest enterprises, and LCF dialogues are all pointing towards this integrated land use.

4. Fish bowl debates

Growing links between China and Africa in the timber trade have led to FGLG developing a new bilateral platform to engage with the emergent governance issues. Elsewhere, increased attention on climate change and growing pressures on land use and food security have demonstrated the potential for FGLG to expand its remit and engage with broader actors to tackle these pressing issues of environmental and social justice. International learning events represent an ideal platform to engage with these subjects and shape the future direction of the network; in this instance through 'fish-bowl' debates.

Fish bowl debates represent a lively debating method, designed to garner views from as many participants as possible. People enter the 'debating circle' one by one to make their opinion known and then return to the 'outer circle' to listen as it continues. Two animated debates were instigated around two motions, resulting in some interesting conclusions. We present here a snapshot of the two debates:

MOTION 1: The Chinese growth imperative is too strong to bow to pressure for justice and sustainability from tiny FGLG... we should abandon the China-Africa link.

The Chinese are so big, they have over one billion people; what can we do?
Nothing. It is a waste of money, a waste of our effort.

[With] the Chinese economy and the forces of capitalism, the imperative to get timber from places like Africa will continue regardless of what we say to them about sustainability.

We can make a difference.

We do small significant engagement in FGLG very well. This is one area where we could use the capabilities of our groups to make moves that others haven't made.

Five per cent of a massive market is still a hell of a lot of wood. I think it's a ludicrous proposition, you should reject it and get stuck in.

The fact that the timber trade might be insignificant for China, it does not mean it is insignificant for us [in Mozambique].

FGLG is a very small, very powerful group that is well connected. If we join forces we can make a difference. We can be heard, we can be loud and clear and we can make a change.

It is difficult to influence the decision-making in China. If you cannot influence it at a national level, the results you get from the effort will be very minor.

FGLG is a small group that makes a huge difference.

As we have heard from our colleagues within China, there is room for influence and particularly within forest issues. They have already proved to be an entry point for wider dialogues.

It is precisely groups like FGLG that need to engage in a process of helping the African countries to figure out what they want from China and we are also in a position to get China to listen.

There has already been policy research on illegal logging and it resulted in voluntary non-binding guidelines for the industry. Mileage is in places such as Europe and America in toughening up on imports. But that is not FGLG's job, it is FLEGT's job.

I think the fact that China is huge, it means they deserve attention. The perceptions we had on China, as to corruption, all those negative insinuations, FGLG has the opportunity, to test them, to dispel them.

China is a big market for timber in Africa.

I am not sure we can influence China's behaviour but that is not our role, our role is to facilitate, through lobbying, we are very diverse.

FGLG is uniquely positioned to tell the story of what forest governance actually means in a way that some of these broader scoping studies are missing. It is not about pressure and advocacy so much as building good networks and being able to have a voice that is meaningful for policymakers in China.

But we need to be careful, we need to emphasise the lessons we have made so far, and we need to prepare our approach well.

Verdict: MOTION REJECTED

MOTION 2: Moving beyond forest governance to tackle climate smart land use will disperse FGLG efforts and reduce our impact. We should stay focused.

There has been a lot of discussion that we should move beyond forestry to look at agriculture, resource management, because climate change is overarching. But I really think that doing more is not always better. We are limited in our capacity and we should limit our interventions. If you move beyond your niche you run the risk of minimising your impacts.

I do believe that we need to have a climate aware strategy that is not trapped by some of the REDD structures. I think it is part of our mandate.

I think it is still reaching the stage where we are beginning to understand the complexities of forest governance within our countries. We need to focus, rather than broad-basing understanding, or moving to an area that will disperse our energy.

I love you as friends but I must say you are crazy. I totally disagree with you. Staying focused, being in a comfort zone, you never learn. FGLG is a learning group, once you get out of the comfort zone, you learn. If we stay in what we do well, we will not be able to grow. We need to explain ourselves and learn from it and be strong.

We need to concentrate our efforts in doing governance. Once we have evidence, to pick it up and use it in any area that they want to.

Don't go down dark alleys, don't pretend to become agriculturalists. We are not negotiators, so concentrate on what we are doing, achieve small impacts but meaningful, rather than dreaming about big impacts but never get there.

Forest assets are not just trees, it is an integrated system. And from an impact perspective, we have an environment that impacts on us and that we impact upon. We have to think about the design perspective and that we are part of a broader landscape. We need to be focused on the issues that are related.

FGLG is an international group and there is a big issue going on internationally at this moment, which is climate change. This is a reality.

FGLG should not just limit its action on forest governance but should seize the opportunity to mitigate climate change and see what to do. It is a big opportunity for FGLG, let us take that opportunity.

I think we have a narrow understanding of what forestry is all about and you are limiting yourself to timber and charcoal.

The key word for me is governance, not forests. We are foresters but we are looking at the lens of governance. We have understood through all these processes that governance is one of the things that is affecting all of these processes. One we have tactics it can be extended to other land use. Once we get it right in forests, we can get it right in any kind of land use system. Then we can stay focused and get more impact.

We better get ourselves more of an understanding of all different types of forests and forest challenges before moving into other sectors.

If we are to broaden our movement, we can build bridges, but to do it ourselves, we should change our name – forest, agriculture, livestock learning group. Let's gather our evidence based research, build our capacity.

Verdict: MOTION REJECTED

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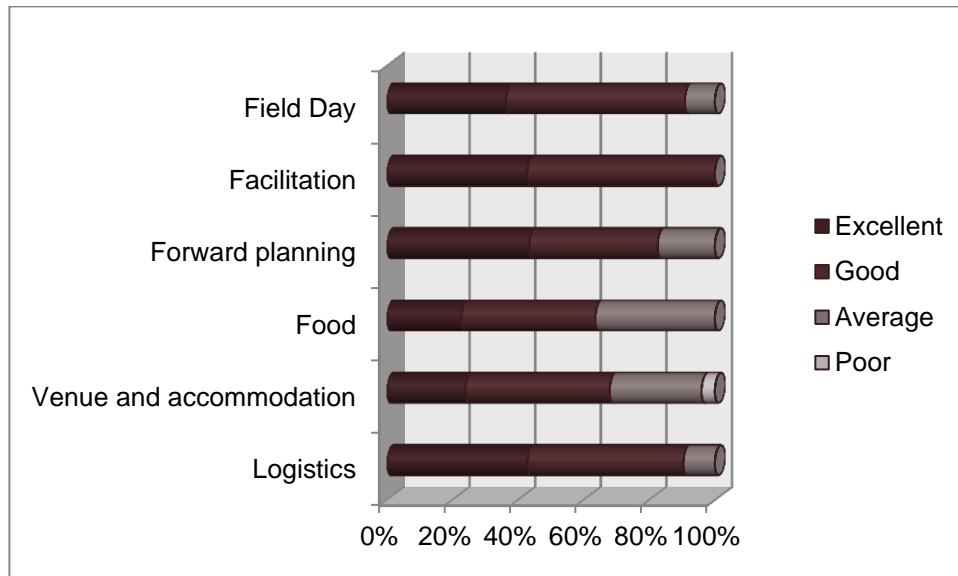
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Annex B. Evaluation

At the close of the learning event, participants were asked to evaluate all aspects of the event, by placing a cross on a 'target' corresponding to 'excellent', 'good', 'average' or 'poor'. Together with comments provided, this process helps IIED to plan future events more effectively.



“Absolutely fantastic field trip (group 3) well done!”

“Good pace this time – not too pressured by lots done.”

“Food is good but not excellent. Location is nice. Good teamwork.”

“Fairly good organization of group exercises, involving all participants.”

“Field trip marker ‘average’ but only because *not long enough* to get clear idea of issues – otherwise excellent!”

“In preparation for the field trip, it may be advisable to appraise group on local legislative context in order to enrich its understanding and discussion with communities / stakeholders concerned.”



The Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG) is an informal alliance of in-country teams and international partners, currently active in seven African and three Asian countries, facilitated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). It aims to connect those marginalised from forest governance to those controlling it, and to help both do things better.

Periodically, FGLG teams get together at an international learning event. In March 2012, the eighth such learning event was held in Hue Province in Vietnam. The objective was to share experience of work on forest rights, organisation and capacity, to receive feedback from colleagues, and to plan our forest governance work for the year ahead. This report summarises the results.



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Project materials

Forests

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