



Livelihood Improvement through Generation and Ownership of Forest Information by Local People in Products and Services Markets

The Forest Certification for Ecosystem Services, or ForCES project, uniquely works to establish Forest Stewardship Council certification of ecosystem services by mapping the forest functions to ultimately determine appropriate and fair compensation measures.

BACKGROUND

In Viet Nam, considered one of the world's ten centres of mega biodiversity, the government is exploring various mechanisms to handle payment for ecosystem services. The certification project presumes that ecosystem services can be provided alongside sustainable forest management. Innovatively, the pilot test will help develop national standards and indicators for ecosystem certification. Over the project's duration, the FSC certification also will be tested for application to additional services and allied activities, such as recreation.

The project covers two pilot sites encompassing 41,000 ha of forest land: Vinh Tu Commune in Quang Tri Province and Huong Son District in Ha Tinh Province. Both sites are commercially used forest and have potential for a certification mechanism. They provide a range of ecosystem services, including watershed protection, biodiversity conservation, recreation and carbon storage.

The Vinh Tu project site covers land owned by the community members. The total natural area is 3,539 ha, of which around 1,000 ha is forested land. The natural forests are important for water regulation and controlling soil erosion from coastal winds. In 2012, 249 ha of Acacia plantations across 112 households in Vinh Tu received FSC certification. The sustainable management of these plantations is important for stabilizing the sandy soil, which is prone to wind erosion and to heavy dust pollution that negatively impacts on the agricultural areas and villagers' health.

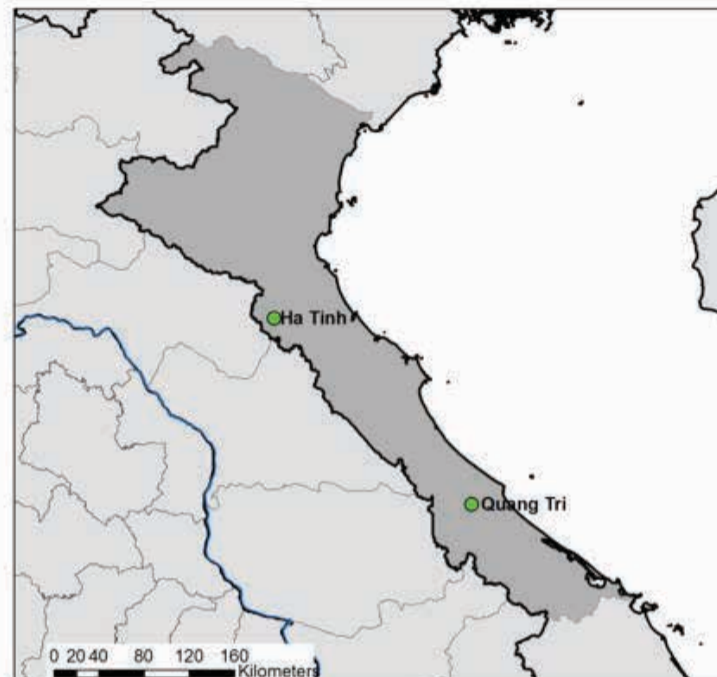
The Huong Son site consists of around 38,000 ha of hilly and lowland forest, classified as production forest, which is managed by Huong Son State Forest Company. Communities in the site live with considerable threat from deforestation and degradation as well as poaching of wildlife. The province in general is also one of the new sites for the UN-REDD programme.

APPROACH

RECOFTC is partnering with the ForCES project to set up a system and thus test the viability for community monitoring and the certifying of ecosystem services. Through its ForInfo project, RECOFTC is training communities to conduct:

1. Forest function mapping to capture the ecosystem services in relation to commercial harvesting.
2. Assessments of the opportunity and implementation costs of potential payment schemes in both pilot sites.

This information is of particular importance for smallholders and communities required to deviate considerably from their traditional forest use patterns (such as fire management, forest grazing and fuel wood/timber extraction). To ensure equity and credibility under the proposed PES schemes, the information will help them make informed decisions and be fairly compensated if they need to change their livelihood-based behaviour – either stop specific practices or do something new and different.



Partners

Forest Stewardship Council, the Global Environment Facility and SNV-Vietnam

Project duration:

3 years (April 2011–December 2014)

Location:

Vinh Tu Commune in Quang Tri Province and Huong Son District in Ha Tinh Province, Viet Nam



Contact

Fabian Noeske

ForInfo Technical Advisor,

P.O. Box 1111, Kasetsart Post Office, Phahonyothin Rd. Bangkok 10903, Thailand

ForInfo@recoftc.org

Tel: 66-2-940-5700

Fax: 66-2-561-4880 or 66-2-562-0960

About RECOFTC

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests is an international organization with a vision of local communities actively managing forests in Asia and the Pacific to ensure optimal social, economic, and environmental benefits. Headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand, RECOFTC works throughout Asia and the Pacific. Learn more at www.recoftc.org.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

1. Vietnamese national standards and indicators developed for ecosystem certification.
2. Viable business model defined for marketing ecosystem services at the site level.
3. Ecosystem service certification pilot tested in two sites: Vinh Tu and Huong Son.
4. Monitoring system to follow the project as well as the long-term impact.
5. Increased awareness and capacity of communities regarding ecosystem services certification.

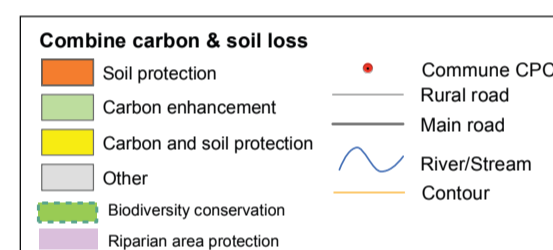
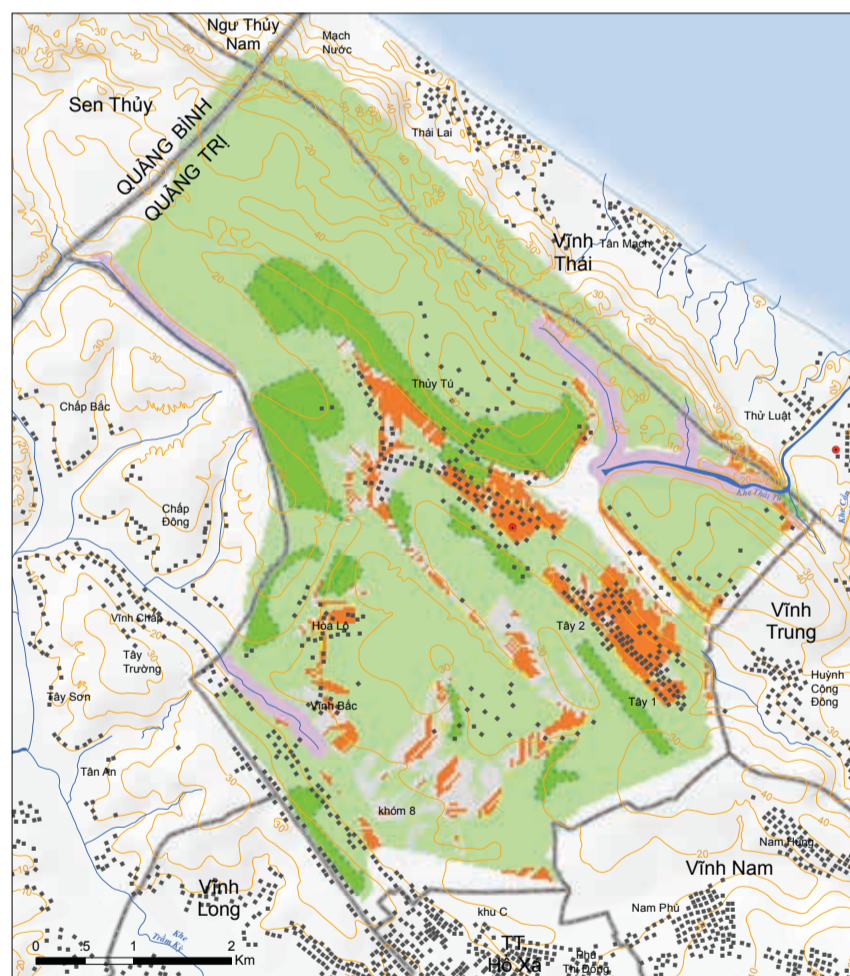
Baseline	Targets
Provision of environmental services cannot be related to smallholder or community land ownership	Communities know whether forest areas under their control fall under a PES scheme
Opportunity and implementing costs to households or communities in the provision of environmental services are not known	Communities can self-assess their costs in providing ecosystem services and can balance them against expected income from the PES schemes

PROJECT OUTCOMES & IMPACT

The project contributes to national programmes for natural resource management and sustainable forestry. It includes a component to ensure community ownership of information through the community monitoring system.

1. Generic and national indicators for the management and monitoring of ecosystem services.
2. A methodology to assess social and environmental benefits of Forest Stewardship Council certification.
3. A viable business model for rewarding the provision of ecosystem services.
4. Integrating a method into the PES protocols to determine smallholder and community responsibilities in ecosystem services and appropriate compensation in the payment schemes.

Vinh Tu commune - Ecosystem service map



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



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About ForInfo

ForInfo is a 2 million euro project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland working with communities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam to link them with existing and new markets, such as ecosystem services, and help them sustainably maximize their profits. ForInfo's work generates information with communities to improve their access to markets and achieve stability in their livelihoods while using their forests sustainably and efficiently. Learn more at www.recoftc.org/site/resources/ForInfo/