



Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Sustainable Natural Resource Management Project (SNRM)

CASE STUDY

Promoting village-based forest protection against encroachment in Thanh Hoi commune, Tan Lac District, Hoa Binh Province, Vietnam

Nguyen Huu Tien - Provincial Coordinator in Hoa Binh Province

Nguyen Tuan Anh - Project Technical Officer

Yamamoto Wataru – Forest Management and Livelihood Development Monitoring Specialist

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All queries should be addressed to:

Officer in Charge of Forestry Projects/Programmes

JICA Viet Nam Office

11F CornerStone Building, 16 Phan Chu Trinh, Hoan Kiem, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

Tel: +84-4-3831-5005

Fax: + 84-4-3831-5009

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List of Abbreviations

CPC	Commune People's Committee
FPD	Forest Protection Department
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
PRAP	Provincial REDD+ Action Plan
SNRM	Sustainable Natural Resource Management Project
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
VMBFMLD	Village Management Boards for Forest Management and Livelihood Development
VFPT	Village Forest Patrolling Team
VF	Village Fund
VND	Vietnamese Dong

I. Background and Objective

In order to increase forest cover/biomass, Sustainable Natural Resource Management Project (SNRM) funded by JICA aims to promote sustainable forest management for multi-benefits of local people through development and implementation of Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (PRAP) in the Northwest Provinces. PRAP considers village-based forest protection is one of the core activities for reduction of deforestation and forest degradation.

In order to strength Village-based forest protection, three factors need to be strengthened: village organization to undertake activities, forest management regulation to be accepted/followed by villagers, and villager's awareness itself.

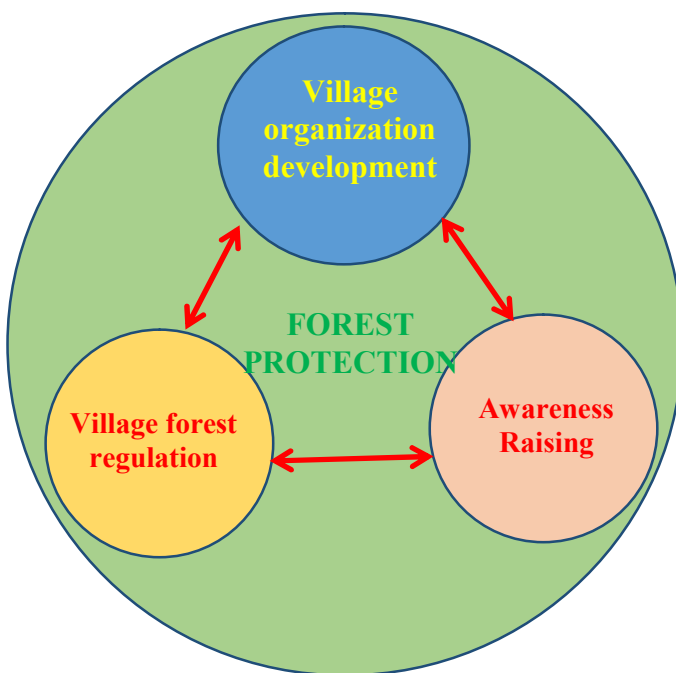
In Thanh Hoi commune, there are two types of forests: natural forests for water resources and plantation for livelihood (acacia plantation). Thanh Hoi has over 1,872 hectares of forest land (70.5% of total area). Most of forests are acacia plantation, with small natural forests¹.761 hectares (41% of forest land) are protection forest. Acacia plantation is harvested with four-year cycle for chip industry with one-year cassava cultivation in between the acacia cycles.

The water resources of Thanh Hoi commune relies on forest catchment inside the commune, the protection of the catchment are extremely important to people. However, the area of forest land in the commune tends to decrease, especially in the area of natural forest due to gradual encroachment for cultivation.

II. Support Process

2.1 Establishment and capacity building for VFPTs

Three factors to strength Village-based forest management



For forest areas owned by Commune People's Committees (CPCs), forest protection is assigned to village communities, but the rule is not clear; neither organization nor individual is responsible for patrolling and protecting these forests. Therefore, developing the organizational structure of forest protection at village level was an essential task. The villagers decided to organize Village Management Boards for Forest Management and Livelihood Development (VMBFMLD) and Village Forest Patrolling Team (VFPT) with the support from SNRM.

¹ Forest Inventory in 2015.



Poster on forest protection in Thanh Hoi



Forest Protection Officer are promoting FP regulation

In order to ensure that the effective operation, each VFPT has a clear and transparent operational regulation, developed with the participation of most households. In order to augment the capacity of VFPTs, SNRM organized training courses and a study-tour and supplied with essential equipment such as maps, binoculars, compasses, and uniforms.

761 hectares of natural forest area have been protected by six VFPTs² with 17 members covering 13 villages (3-5 members in each VFPT). These VFPTs operate directly under the management and supervision of VMBFMLD. The VFPTs have developed a forest patrolling plans with 12 patrolling routes. The patrolling has been operated once a month or by irregular patrols to meet ad-hoc needs. Every month, the VFPTs report the patrol results to the CPC. The members of VFPT receives 100,000nVND/person/month from the Village Fund (VF) managed by VMBFMLD.

In order to promote and strengthen coordination, SNRM has organized quarterly briefings (every 3 months) between local Forest Protection Officers and VFPTs.

2.2 Development of village regulation on forest management

SNRM facilitated to develop Forest Protection and Development Regulations in each village based on the existing practices and institutions of the community. The regulation was decided by all villager participation and approved by CPC. Illegal activities received penalty based on the regulations.

The whole process of developing regulations has the villager participation since the regulation need to be accepted and followed by villagers. The regulation clearly mentions violating activities and penalty.

Steps of forest protection regulation development

Step 1: Collection of related documents and information for the formulation of the regulation.

Step 2: Formulation of the regulation outline. A regulation outline was drafted to ensure the orientation and objectives of the regulation.

Step 3: Development of draft regulation. The village heads and leaders of village associations take lead in holding meetings to develop a draft regulation with detailed provisions.

Step 4: Meeting villagers to publicise the content of the draft regulation and get people's feedbacks on the draft; Based on the comments of the people the draft was adjusted and finalized. Finally, the regulation was voted by people attending the meeting.

Step 5: The regulation was submitted to the CPC for approval.

Step 6: Communicate the regulation content to each villager (publicly posted in public places; through village's radio system; communicated during village meetings and contest).

² Two inter-VFPTs were established where forest are assigned jointly.

Step 7: To increase the binding of the regulation, all households in the village signed a commitment to comply with the regulation.

Prohibited things	Handle violations and compensation
Group 1.	Households, organizations and individuals who commit violations listed under the Group 1 provision of this Convention shall be simultaneously penalized by applying the following forms of sanctions:
1. Illegal forest clearing/logging	1. Violations will be informed to the competent authorities (forest rangers and Commune People’s Committee) in order to be handled by following effective regulations; and the village head will make public announcement on the detected violations; 2. Compulsory compensate for loss of forest owners as agreed by the two parties based on effective regulations and laws. 3. Compulsory take responsibility and fulfil obligations within scope of the community as follows: - pay a fine of VND 200,000 to the village fund for the first violation; - pay a fine of VND 400,000 to the village fund for the second violation; will not be given priority to be benefited by the Project; - pay a fine of VND 500,000 to the village fund for the third violation; will not be given priority to be benefited by the Project; not considered to be ranked as cultural household.
2. Illegal hunting forest wildlife	
3. Violate regulations on forest fire prevention and fighting	
4. Encroach, or convert forests into different land use purposes without permissions	
Group 2	Households, organizations and individuals who commit violations listed under the Group 2 provision of this Convention shall be simultaneously penalized by applying the following forms of sanctions:
1. Cattle grazing in young forests (less than 3 years-old forests).	1. Violations will be informed to the competent authorities (forest rangers and Commune People’s Committee) in order to be handled by following effective regulations; and the village head will make public announcement on the detected violations; 2. Compulsory compensate for loss of forest owners as agreed by the two parties based on effective regulations and laws. 3. Compulsory take responsibility and fulfil obligations within scope of the community as follows: - pay a fine of VND 100,000 to the village fund for the first violation; - pay a fine of VND 200,000 to the village fund for the second violation; will not be given priority to be benefited by the Project; - pay a fine of VND 300,000 to the village fund for the third violation; will not be given priority to be benefited by the Project; not considered to be ranked as cultural household.
2. Illegal mineral exploration and other natural resources within area of household forests and natural forests managed and protected by the local communities.	
3. Destroy works that serve purposes of forest protection and development	

2.3 Awareness raising on forest protection

With recognizing the goal that every villager is a forest protector, SNRM supported a series of communication activities in various forms to raise awareness and create a sense of responsibility of each villager on forest protection and development: installation of signboards, distributing leaflets and posting posters, and organizing a festival and a school event on forest protection. Student contests and acting performance were organized at the school event and the festival.

According to our interview survey, 100% villagers know the village forest regulation, 85% of them think forest protection is better now.

Beekeeping requires high investment costs, space to keep hives, techniques and commitment to labor. Based on the assessment survey of the current situation of the households, SNRM conducted: (1) technical assistance: study tours and technical trainings, (2) material supply: bee breeds, hives and others, (3) producer organizing through forming interest groups, and (4) market development.

III. Achievement

3.1 Violation against forest protection detected

Between March 2017 and April 2019, 10 violation cases were detected and settled for six hectares of forest land encroached. Two violators were from outside of commune encroaching at border areas. These violations have been handled by the VFPTs based on the village regulation on Forest Protection and Development. It was decided by meeting between encroachers and CPC/Sub FPD, encroached natural forest by acacia plantations will be returned to natural forests after the next harvest.

Activities	Quantity
Detected violations	10 cases
Detected forest area affected	5,9 ha
Number of violators in the commune	6 Persons ³
Number of violators outside the commune	2 Persons

3.2 Public funding for VFPT by DPC

Since the allowance for the VFPT's forest patrolling work in each village is very low, Tan Lac District People's Committee decided to allocate budget for village level forest protection in Thanh Hoi commune (VND 30 million in 2018).

VI. Lesson learnt

Village forest management regulation established by full participation

The main objective of the regulation is to encourage community to participate in forest protection and development based on the contents agreed by the community. This regulation has been built on the community's demand, by the community themselves. It is very important to ensure that the contents of the regulation are not imposed by anyone outside commune, contributing to improving voluntary and proactive villager's participation in complying with the regulations.

Involvement of local authorities and related departments

Involvement of local authorities and related departments is also key for successful village-based forest protection. Thanh Hoi CPC plays an active role in giving directions to VFPTs, village heads, and other related stakeholders to detect, and verify violations related to forest protection and development. District FPD made technical support for the CPC with regard to the management and verification of suspected violations and advising on how to handle them. The coordination and cohesion between the CPC and District FPD were also improved through quarterly briefings on forest patrolling.

³ Two persons violated two cases.