

# **REPORT ON PILOT DEMONSTRATION OF THE INTEGRATED PFES, REDD+ AND FLEGT/VPA SUBNATIONAL FOREST MONITORING**

September 2020

## **Summary**

Testing of the integrated forest monitoring tool (first iteration) was implemented in Hieu Commune, Kon Plong District, Kon Tum Province, in the first quarter of 2020. The process lasted around three months, following a technical training held in early January 2020. This report provides an overview of that process and a first review of the newly designed system, including a collation of practical feedback and recommendations from the practical testing. The Working Paper 'Developing and piloting a tool for integrated PFES, REDD+ and FLEGT/VPA subnational forest monitoring' contains additional detail and analysis.

## **1. The monitoring framework**

The framework was launched out at the provincial kick-off workshop held by the Forest Protection Department (FPD) on 4 December 2019, with participation of representatives of the relevant forest actors: Provincial Forest Protection and Development Fund (FPDF), Kon Plong District Forest Protection Department (SubFPD), on-site forest ranger (Hieu commune), Thach Nham Protection Forest Management Board (PFMB), and the Kon Plong Forestry Ltd Company and its agency Mang La State Forest Enterprise (SFE).

Workshop participants discussed and ultimately shared an understanding of the monitoring indicators, which are at different levels (i.e. activities and outcome/impact) and temporal scales, per the current reporting regime as regulated by the law. For example, regarding Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES), Provincial FPDF's representatives welcomed the inclusion of the 'social outcome' level monitoring indicators, i.e. 'the use of PFES money and livelihood improvements' and 'wellbeing change'. The Provincial FPD representatives informed participants that the department's current focus is on the use and effectiveness of PFES money to positively influence forest protection. Provincial FPD explained that activities and payments given to local communities, as part of forest protection contractors, primarily aimed at improving local livelihoods. However, the FPD also noted that the social impact of PFES and/or other state-funded programmes is often hard to measure given that all payments are made directly via each household's bank account. They also noted the usefulness of monitoring indicators to improve their reporting of statistical and descriptive forest data, which is conventionally collected, and in-depth impact analysis.

The design and implementation of the PFES programme contain stages, including setting standards/requirements, verification, validation, approval, and (crucially) monitoring and evaluation. During the design process and the testing for this tool, we discovered that there was limited attention to the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for PFES, as the primary focus has been on the other stages of the PFES design and implementation. Up until the end 2020, the M&E for PFES was still being retrofitted and its development has been largely led by NGOs and development partners.

Regarding the monitoring of the PFES legal framework, the initial design meetings and the testing of the tool recognised that the legality issues can be present both at the front (policy) end and the bottom (impact) level. Hence, another indicator was added to take this into account. We agreed to include the metric(s) on the number and percentage of feedback/complaints relevant to the current legal framework and policies (annually), and disaggregated in PFES, 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 (REDD+), FLEGT, state-funded programmes and forest governance generally.

Regarding the REDD+ component, social safeguards are integral to the REDD+ design as per the Cancun Safeguards for REDD+. At the project level, the social safeguards described in any REDD Project Design Document (PDD) need to be verified and approved before project implementation. At the project level, REDD+ verification and validation is undertaken against the given carbon standard and related safeguards monitoring. It is therefore suggested that the safeguards indicators be taken out from the framework as there are several different standards (although core principles remain). As such, core, overarching principles of the Cancun Safeguards<sup>1</sup> were kept, but we could not retain the various and specific safeguards outlined by the different project-level REDD+ standard bodies.

## **2. Data collection**

The Circular No. 12/2019 on forest statistical regulations provides reporting templates to province-level FPD and district-level (namely sub FPD). To be compatible with the templates, a simple Excel-based data report template was designed as part of the first version of the tool. Testing in the field was done using this Excel version, although the project has subsequently looking at other data collection tools, including Google Forms and how this could be converted to a mobile application ('app'). The initial Excel version was provided to FPD and after consultation and some minor revision (as described in the previous section), the FPD made the

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<sup>1</sup> 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate (COP16) in 2010.

tool (data sheets) available to the data collectors, including the Commune People's Committee, on-site forest rangers, state forest organisations and local communities.

The project recognised the importance of collecting feedback on the data collection templates from the primary users, namely the data collectors. We surveyed local stakeholders, including the Hieu CPC and on-site forest rangers, as well as other data collectors (e.g. Thach Nham Protection Forest Management Board and Mang La SFE/Kon Plong Ltd Forestry Company) to determine the suitability and usefulness of the chosen metrics and design of the data collection templates.

For example, we asked about monitoring data needs and data that is currently collected. In terms of the needs (objective), monitoring data can be grouped around: 1) project/programme design, or what is usually called 'process' data; and 2) project/programme implementation and thus 'impact data'.

In terms of process data, for example, we need to understand 'what has happened' with allocated or contracted forestland area (in hectares) and participation data for REDD+, PFES, and FLEGT meetings/workshops. Such data is available in the project/programme design documents (e.g. PDD for REDD+ and forest protection contract for PFES), which are verified and approved by certain organisations (e.g. local authorities or carbon certification body such as Plan Vivo Foundation), minutes of meetings, etc. Therefore, only a few basic or indicative data that is essential for local decision makers should be included, rather than detailed data such as REDD+ safeguards data (templates 9 & 10) and PFES communication data (template No. 11). Copies of the project design documents shall be made available and submitted to the focal point (Sub-FPD) for data entry (i.e. after approval of the project/programme documents), so the additional and project-specific metrics do not need to be added to the tool, which is for general use.

In terms of impact data, for example, we need to understand 'what was the result' in terms of PFES payment, participation data and feedback and/or complaints acquired from village meeting activities, or violations. At the activity level, this data is collected and reported monthly. At the outcome/impact level, data is collected monthly (for example, forest change in area and timber volume) or yearly (wellbeing change). During the testing phase in our pilot in Hieu Commune, yearly impact-level data is unavailable as yearly impact assessment exercises have not been carried out yet.

For the monitoring of forest change (in hectares), forest patrol data sheets acquired from forest patrol activities are then copied and submitted to the on-site forest ranger, who is in charge of subsequently handing over the data sheets to Sub-FPD for entry into FORMIS. However, the FORMIS system is currently facing issues because of technical errors, hindering data entry. Officers of Sub-FPD and Provincial FPD indicated that, as a solution, data on forest change is

imported into GIS/MapInfo software temporarily. A system has been designed to be compatible with that software.

In terms of where data is collected, the project explored data needs and existing collection protocols at the local level, as well as how and where this data feeds into. At the local level, 'monitoring data' means both primary and secondary data in the format of documents/papers. These include: the 'forest patrol sheets', which include data on violations of timber and biodiversity regulations; the list of households receiving PFES money; and the village meeting minutes that contain participation data. Local forest actors/data collectors who are provided with photocopied sheets of these or using smartphone photos, take the filled sheets to the FPD office for storage under the existing paper-based filing system. However, the level of detail of the data collected differs widely among official data sheets and other documents. There is inconsistency regarding: recording of data/capacity issues; standards and definitions; including or excluding ethnicity (ethnic minority vs majority/Kinh); household wealth (poor vs non-poor); and locations (village, commune). This also leads to inconsistency among data sources. Synchronisation and standardisation of this data is often needed.

Some surveyed people noted that the data templates include metrics that each stakeholder might not need to collect, at least currently. For example, template No. 1 'forest patrol sheet' is intended to be applicable to different patrol purposes, for example forest violation monitoring, carbon (biomass) monitoring and biodiversity monitoring. FFI explained to participants that this tool is supposed to be comprehensive and will eventually facilitate data collection, and that when operational, data fields/metrics will be 'selectable' (from a set of model data) to suit site-specific context.

For example, some suggested templates that are relevant to the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) were not used in this test because the harvesting of both natural and planted timber for commercial purposes is very scarce in the pilot site. For Hieu Commune, only PFES and REDD+ metrics are currently needed, although after the VPA M&E is agreed/approved and implemented, VPA data will be needed.

### **3. Data storage**

This testing of the tool and evaluation shows that at present, locally collected forestry data is poorly and unsystematically managed by all forest actors. Some forest actors in Hieu even do not have a simple, numerical database. Actors do not use Excel sheets for collected data consistently. Instead, paper-based documents, stored in cabinets, are more popular. When needed, data is extracted from the paper-based documents (for example, village meeting minutes or lists of PFES

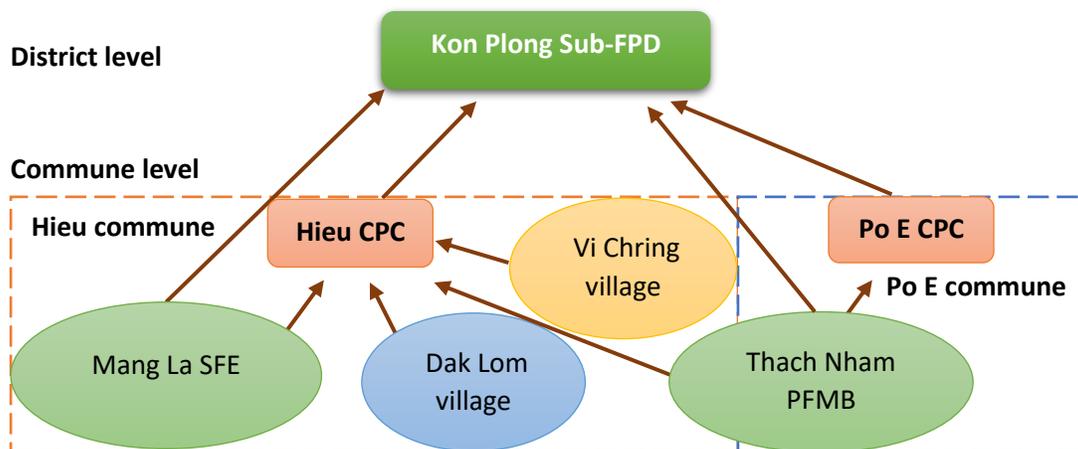
money receivers) into the monthly narrative or sometimes Excel-based reports, which are then submitted to Sub-FPD by email.

Offices have internet access. However, this is not the case at the lowest level, for example at the Commune Forest Management Board or ranger stations. According to local forest actors, there is an ongoing demand for the development of a database and reporting system with Excel-based/web-based data management. Our system tries to help meet this demand, but also takes it further, in the form of app/mobile-based data collection and automated upload functionality. We recognised, however, that our system must meet legal requirements and fit local capacity/infrastructure.

#### 4. Data integration

According to the Prime Minister Decision No. 245/1998 on forest and forestry land state administration at different levels, the Commune People’s Committee (CPC) is legally mandated to complete commune-wide forestry administration (including monitoring) and is advised legislatively and technically by the Sub-FPD rangers. Different forest actors and ‘forest owners’ within a commune administrative boundary, for example, local communities, Thach Nham PFMB and Mang La SFE, are thus obligated to collect and report forest data to CPC (see Diagram 1 below).

Diagram 1: Illustration of forestry reporting regime for Hieu Commune



Such a reporting regime is improperly managed at present. Often, both paper and digital data is not adequately provided by all forest owners to Hieu CPC, according to the on-site forest ranger. Specifically, monthly forest patrol sheets are not photocopied, and no smartphone photo is taken

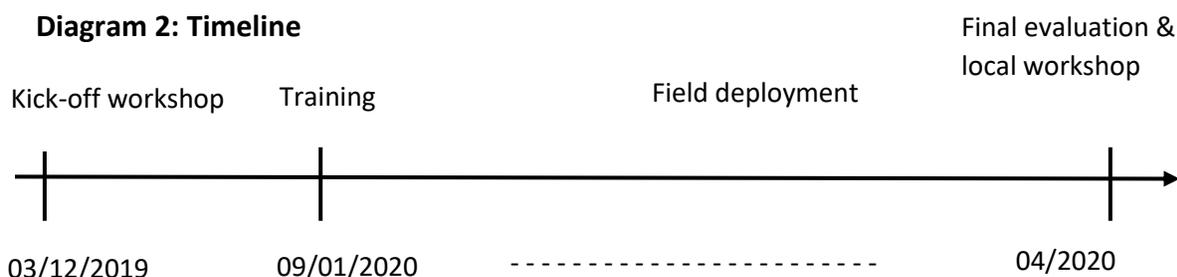
or provided. Usually, according to staff of Thach Nham PFMB and Mang La SFE, data reporting means paper-based presentations/submissions made at weekly and monthly commune meetings. Data sources are not standardised. As a result, the monthly dataset is not accurate and hardly integrated. It cannot provide the basis for commune-level decision making.

At the district level, the District People’s Committee (DPC) is legally mandated for district-wide forestry administration and monitoring and is legislatively and technically advised by the Sub-FPD. All data from different state forest owners and CPCs/on-site forest rangers is submitted to the Sub-FPD for data entry and reported to FPD and DPC at higher levels.

At the same time, in Hieu commune, both state forest owners (SFE and PFMB) and the CPC concurrently do numeral data reporting to Sub-FPD (as shown in Diagram 1). Consequently, this caused inconsistency/overlaps in the reported data. To address this, during the testing of the tool, some stakeholders suggested requiring set attributes for better data integration. These include, for example, attributes for ethnicity (ethnic minority vs majority/Kinh), wealth (poor vs non-poor), location – ‘village’ (useful for commune-level forest management) and ‘commune’ (useful for district-level forest management) as per requirements for REDD+, PFES and FLEGT. Most importantly, all those involved in the testing agreed that the integration requires an advanced database and reporting system, at least Excel-based but ideally Web-based for all forest actors. The database should be sortable, aggregative and shareable. Thus, numeral data reports can be produced easily for one or more communes or one or more forest owners (across different communes).

## 5. Monitoring plan

The proposed monitoring system is envisaged as an improvement to the existing Forest Protection sector management system, with a focus on integration, rather than creating a new system. The pilot was therefore carried out under the state-based approach, in which local forest actors played the role of data collection and management, while FFI played a facilitation role. The monitoring plan envisaged the following stages: Legalisation of the pilot → Commitment → Capacity building → Field deployment → Final evaluation. As part of the project (see Diagram 3 in the Annex), the testing of the monitoring tool was smoothly carried out according to the work plan (see Table 1 and Diagram 2)



**Table 1: The work plan – Pilot/testing scheme**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>FFI's role as a facilitator in the process</b>	<b>Involvement of local partners</b>
18-22/11/2019	Approval of the pilot scheme	Kontum City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organised a meeting to introduce monitoring framework and pilot monitoring plan</li> <li>- Wrote a letter to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) for official approval of the pilot implementation</li> </ul>	DARD, FPD, FPDF, SubFPD, KFW10
25/11 – 03/12/2019	Kick-off workshop	Kontum city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepared handouts, PowerPoint presentations, etc.</li> <li>- Co-organised the workshop</li> </ul>	DARD, FPD, FPDF, SubFPD, DPC, Thach Nham PFMB, Kon Plong Ltd co, Hieu CPC
06-10/1/2020	Training on monitoring templates	Kon Plong town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepared relevant legal documents, handouts, PowerPoint presentations</li> </ul>	FPD, FPDF, SubFPD, Thach Nham PFMB, Kon Plong Ltd Co, Hieu CPC
13-18/1/2020	Training on forest patrol with GPS application	Hieu commune	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepared handouts, PowerPoint presentations, etc.</li> <li>- Co-organised and delivered the training</li> </ul>	Community Rangers of three KFW10 project villages KFW10 officers
17/1 – 30/4/2020	Field deployment	Hieu commune	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supervised forest patrols by community forest rangers (one patrol per village per month)</li> </ul>	Community forest rangers
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Site checking/scoping by FFI; FFI supported forest patrol staff (state) who led forest patrols and data collection and storage (one</li> </ul>	Forest rangers of Thach Nham PFMB and Mang La SFE SubFPD

			patrol per village per month)	
13– 17/4/2020	Final evaluation & local workshop	Hieu commune	- Conducted focus group discussion (one per village) - Conducted interviews	Commune Forest Management Boards FPDF, SubFPD, Thach Nham PFMB, Mang La SFE, Hieu CPC, Kon Plong Ltd Co

### 6. Approval and legalisation of the pilot test

The Kon Tum DARD granted FFI permission<sup>2</sup> to conduct the planned activities not long after FFI sent the request. The Kon Tum DARD assigned Kon Tum FPD in collaboration with FFI to manage/coordinate the pilot scheme. FFI then started an initial meeting with participation of DARD, FPD, SubFPD, FPDF and the KFW10 project. The aim here was to introduce the monitoring framework and the monitoring plan to key actors. Right after, FFI submitted a letter to DARD for its permission specifically for the testing (field implementation) of the tool. The DARD’s legal text (letter) helped secured local forest actors’ full participation. FPD, for example, was co-chairing the kick-off workshop and co-managed the piloting activities.

#### Kick-off workshop

The workshop brought together 13 participants representing DARD, FPD, FPDF, SubDARD, Thach Nham PFMB, Kon Plong Forestry Ltd Company and Hieu CPC. FFI provided basic understanding of not only ‘monitoring concept/protocols’ but also of REDD+, PFES and VPA/FLEGT. There was a high-level agreement on data collection protocols and the monitoring plan. For example, data collection is recognised as a mandatory task for the project communities and the state forest organisations under PFES payment and KFW10 fund. Thus, no payment for local forest actors involved in the pilot/testing was required from FFI (namely from the EFI grant/pilot demonstration budget).

### 7. Training for the pilot (test)

A one-day technical event trained 12 participants from state forest organisations on the use of data collection templates. Further, FFI delivered trainings on forest patrol and improvements by

<sup>2</sup> According to Kon Tum DARD’s legal text issued on Nov 22, 2019, Kon Tum FPD is mandated, in collaboration with FFI, to implement the proposed monitoring system as per FFI’s text No. 69 dated Nov 20, 2019.

GPS application to key community forest rangers (13/Dak Lom village, 11/Vi Chring villages and 8/Dak Lieu village). It took six days to ensure all participants had sufficient GPS practice. Several guidelines were compiled and provided to the participants:

- Simple guidelines on the specification of violations
- Simple guidelines on the use of GPS and tape measure for the measurement
- Simple guidelines on sheet recording during patrols
- Simple guidelines on indicative species to be recorded
- Simple guidelines on needed equipment: GPS, tape measure, notebook and forest patrol sheets

## **8. Field deployment**

FFI field staff supervised the forest patrols by community forest rangers monthly, three times for the field pilot over three months, for all three villages. For each village, a patrol team of five members was assigned to carry out a patrol batch. At the end of the training, the 45 community forest rangers had acquired skills to carry out forest patrols due to the supervision and the technical guidance. With the SubFPD, FFI also conducted field checks of data collection by Thach Nham PFMB, Mang La SFE and Kon Plong Forestry Ltd Company. All the collected data/information served as input for the compilation of midterm review and final evaluation reports.

## **9. Recommendations and follow-up activities**

- The guidance prepared and provided was vital to forest actors to ensure consistency, and that various data sources and attributes were collected as required. Additional training and new guidelines for the revised/app-based (mobile) tool is needed.
- Depending on whether the final tool is an Excel or Google-based database, relevant training should be developed and delivered to state forest owners and SubFPD.
- The final iteration of the tool needs to meet multiple needs, in terms of capacity and mandate of forest owners and SubFPD, and of the schemes themselves (namely REDD+, PFES, VPA data requirements). They can be both a mobile app and Web-based, but should still be compatible with Excel and printable.

## Annex 1: Photos taken from the field review



Photo 1: Kick-off workshop was held for the monitoring pilot scheme



Photo 2: GPS training in Dak Lom village



Photo 3: Forest patrol in Vi Chring village

**Biểu 1: Phiếu tuần tra rừng (Áp dụng cho REDD+, FLEGT & PFES)**  
(Dành cho các chủ rừng, UBND xã và Kiểm lâm địa bàn)

**I. Thông tin chung**  
 Dữ liệu của thôn/xã: Vi Chring Ngày/tháng/năm tuần tra: 6/7/2020  
 Tổ tuần tra báo cáo: Thủy 2 Báo cáo cho: Lâm Trường Mạnh

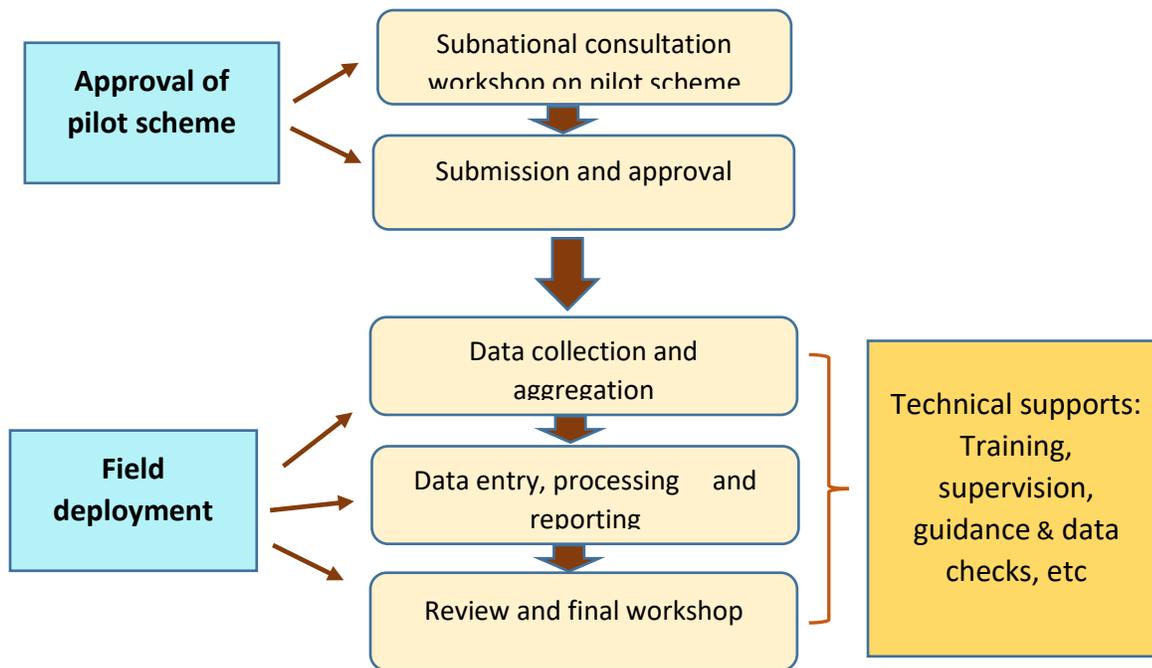
Danh sách nhóm/tổ tuần tra  
 1 A Da 6  
 2 A Đức 7  
 3 A Lợi 8  
 4 A Mỹ 9  
 5 D.T. Sơn 10

**II. Số liệu** Kết quả tuần tra rừng

Giờ	Tọa độ địa lý GPS	Quan sát và ghi chép hiện trường về	Báo cáo UBND xã hay Kiểm lâm địa bàn (có/không)	Chứng cứ Ảnh (
8h		1) Các vụ vi phạm: (có/không báo cáo cho UBND xã huyện?) 2) Gỗ khai thác: Tên loài cây, đường kính gốc, khối lượng gỗ (đo đếm thước dây) 3) Diện tích rừng mất: (Đo đếm bằng GPS) 4) Sự xuất hiện/dấu vết động vật hoang dã & hoạt động gây hại môi trường sống động vật hoang dã		
X: Y:		Không phát hiện gì	X <sup>0</sup>	K <sup>0</sup>
X: Y:		Không phát hiện gì	X <sup>0</sup>	K <sup>0</sup>
X: Y:		Vẽ tại nhà Văn Hóa	K <sup>0</sup>	F <sup>0</sup>

Photo 4: A forest patrol sheet by Mang La SFE

## Annex 2: The project's monitoring workflow



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February 2021