

# COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT (CFM) & COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT (CBMF):

## *TWO GOVERNANCE MODELS*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Vietnam and worldwide, widespread forest degradation from illicit timber harvesting, forest land conversion and poor forest management practices, is leading to increased carbon emissions, which threatens the environment, communities, and livelihoods. Despite national increases in overall tree coverage, Vietnam's natural forests are reducing in area and worsening in quality.

From 2020-2025, the USAID Sustainable Forest Management Project (the Project) is linking communities, local authorities, the national government, and the private sector to jointly address the drivers of forest conversion and degradation in targeted areas. The Project aims to avoid carbon emissions from natural forest conversion and degradation; increase carbon sequestration through better management of plantation forests; and improve the quality, diversity, and productivity of natural production forests— all to protect Vietnam's threatened forest resources.

### **THE CHALLENGE**

The Government of Vietnam has allocated about four million hectares (ha) of forests (or 27% of national forests) to residential communities and households. However, these communities and individuals often lack adequate capacity or incentives to apply sustainable forest management practices to manage, use and protect the land. The forest allocation/forest land allocation (FA/FLA) process to households and communities started in the 1990s, but only since 2017 has Vietnam's Forestry Law legally recognized communities as one of the seven types of legal forest owners. Yet, this process of allocating land to communities was not paired with proper technical capacity building programs nor with the provision of support policies, such as community forest management (CFM) guidelines to enable them to properly exercise their official role as 'forest owners.' Most community-managed forests do not receive any Payments for Environmental Services (PFES), or management fees, and worse, much of the forest land allocated to communities and households is degraded and fragmented forests, offering little apparent value to its owners.

Without enabling policies nor the technical capacity to implement forest management practices, households and community-managed forests remain poorly managed and at risk for continued deforestation and degradation.

### **TWO APPROACHES TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT**

Since 2021, the Project conducted baseline assessments and consultations on CFM with government counterparts at the central and provincial levels. As a result, the Project identified two models for boosting community participation and tenure of forest protection and management:

1. **Community Forest Management (CFM):** Communities directly manage their allocated forests and/or forest land, with technical support from the Project to form management institutions, develop management plans, and to develop high-potential value chains from non-timber forest products.
2. **Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM):** Communities protect and enjoy benefits from forests under “forest protection contracts,” —aided by Protection Forest Management Boards (PFMBs), which are eligible for PFES payments. The Project also identified another type of community-based forest management model through which forests allocated to individual households are collectively managed and protected by the communities to jointly enjoy benefits from forests, including PFES. The Project facilitates improved forest patrolling, the development of forest protection plans, and training on improved management/use of PFES revenue.

Through targeted capacity strengthening of CFM/CBFM groups and households, the Project will achieve the following targets:

- Strengthen the capacity of **60 communities** (including ethnic minority communities) to better manage and protect about **50,000 ha** of allocated forests by developing and implementing sustainable forest management plans, and/or improving forest patrolling activities.
- Enhance the technical and institutional capacity of **110 CBFM communities** to improve forest protection and management of about **80,000 ha** of forests in Vietnam.

At the national level, the Project developed and piloted a CFM manual to help institutionalize improved forest management approaches for target communities that currently lack the capacity to do so. The Project also collaborated with government partners and local authorities to establish the CFM network with 101 members representing community members from target communities under CFM/CBFM models, state forest owners, Forest Protection Departments at the national and provincial levels, Central Project Management Unit and Provincial Project Management Units, universities, research institutes, and NGOs. The CFM network’s key objective is to promote connectivity, share, and engage in dialogue on community forestry, thereby making policy contributions to improve and expand community forestry nationwide. The network shares experiences allocating forest land to communities, and in establishing and implementing CFM models in the project provinces and other provinces across the country.



*Communities take an active role in forest protection and management through CFM/CBFM. Photos: Sustainable Forest Management Project*

## **EARLY RESULTS**

In September 2022, The Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) officially endorsed the Project’s CFM manual for pilot application in seven provinces, which will guide the development of seven Sustainable Forest Management Plans for target communities in CFM sites.

The Project has already supported 14 CFM communities to develop and implement Sustainable Forest Management Plans; 89 CBFM communities to develop and strengthen forest protection patrolling; and conducted two CFM network meetings at the provincial level. The Project jointly organized three national dialogues on co-management, provided advice on a government decree to improve the implementation of the 2017 Forestry Law, and contributed to the drafted amendment to the Vietnam's Land Law revision offering policy recommendations on FA/FLA communities to advance CFM in the country.

### **Project builds capacity of community forest patrol group in Cong Chap village, Son La province.**

Cong Chap village in Vietnam's Son La province contains 178 households, mainly of H'Mong ethnic people. The area is rich in forest resources (including precious timber species, such as *Burretiodendron hsienmu*, orchids, amomum, and *Ampelocalamus sonlaensis sp.nov.*) with high risks of illegal exploitation and shifting cultivation. Despite the forest's high value and high potential, the community's coordination and engagement to patrol and protect forest resources was inadequate.

The Project helped strengthen the community's forest patrol and protection group in Cong Chap village with 13 members, all H'mong people. As a result, the community will better protect 398 ha of forest allocated to them as well as another 205 ha of forest temporarily managed by the Commune People's Committee, together with the Women's Union, Youth Union, and Veterans Association. The Project also helped them cooperate with households who have forest protection contracts to better manage more than 1,169 ha of forest. In total, more than 1,700 ha of forests are now better protected in this community due to the Project's targeted support.

## **SO WHAT?**

With improved capacity to protect, patrol, and manage their allocated forest land, target communities implemented measures from their SFM Plans and Forest Protection and Management Plans, which contributed to the improved management of about 79,700 ha of forests from CFM and CBFM models, combined. With the skills, plans, and policy framework in place to support them, communities will be better able to fully exercise their roles as forest owners to more effectively protect and manage Vietnam's forests, which helped reduced 2.8 million metric tons of CO2 emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.