The Project on “Support for the REDD+ Readiness Preparation in Vietnam - Phase 2” (FCPF-2) was granted US$ 5 million by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank (WB) to continue REDD+ readiness preparation activities in six provinces in the North Central Coast region (NCC), namely Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien-Hue from November 2016 to December 2019. The Management Board for Forestry Projects (MBFP) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is the Project Owner.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Sustainable forest management and forest certification

The FCPF-2 project has been working with forest owners to achieve FSC certification. In 2018, sustainable forest management practices from these forest owners have been assessed by GFA, a certification company. Based on the assessment reports, FCPF-2 CPMU is providing support to these forest owners to address the Corrective Action Requests, as follow:
Lang Chanh PFMU, Thanh Hoa province: Eighteen out of twenty-two (18/22) non-compliances were addressed, including: i) Development and implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM) plan (7/7 non-compliances); ii) Monitoring of SFM plan implementation (7/7 non-compliances); iii) Training and capacity building in SFM (3/6 non-compliances, including awareness raising on seedling production, application of pesticides and recognition of high conservation value forests (HCVFs); and iv) Consultations with stakeholders, especially those directly impacted by the SFM plan (1/2 non-compliances, consultations with stakeholders with livelihoods directly impacted by the SFM plan).

The FCPF-2 CPMU will continue to support Lang Chanh PFMU to address the remaining non-compliances and finish by June 2019. After that, the PFMU will conduct internal assessments to fix any remaining issues and risks of non-compliances before the main audit is carried out in August 2019.

Huong Son Forest Company, Ha Tinh province: Four out of eight minor non-compliances and two out of three observations were addressed. Huong Son Forest Company already prepared a workplan to address their non-compliances after the audit in 2018. However, the completion of the remaining Corrective Action Requests depends on the decision of the People’s Committee of the province, and the company is expected to be allowed to apply silvicultural measures for landscape restoration in flowering and dying bamboo forests. The Company plans to complete addressing its non-compliances by August 2019, then proceed with internal assessment and preparation for the annual monitoring audit of GFA scheduled in October 2019.

Tay Kim Cooperative, Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province: FSC certification has been achieved. The FCPF-2 project, in collaboration with technical experts supported by FAO, provided support to Tay Kim Cooperative to address major non-compliances. Responses were accepted by GFA and FSC certification was issued starting from April 2019 until March 2024 provided that no new major non-compliances emerge that cannot be corrected.
The FCPF-2 project will continue to assist the Tay Kim Cooperative with addressing the remaining 14 minor non-compliances and 4 observations by July 2019. Further internal assessment will be conducted to address minor corrections as needed, prior to the annual monitoring audit of GFA scheduled in October 2019.

On the 14th of June 2019, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Ha Tinh province, in collaboration with the People’s Committee of Huong Son district and relevant stakeholders, organized the launching event for the FSC certification of Tay Kim Cooperative. Apart from sharing the lessons learnt from the forest certification of the Cooperative, the participating stakeholders also discussed the advantages and barriers as well as the opportunities and challenges of sustainable forest management, and the maintenance and expansion of forest certification in the district.

**Trainings on using tablet-based tool to monitor changes in forests and forest land**

Based on the Circular 33/2018/TT-BNNPTNT dated 16 November 2018 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on forest investigation, inventory and monitoring, and building on the positive results from past training campaigns in 2017 and 2018 on tablet application in forest and forest land monitoring, the FCPF-2 project continues to provide these trainings for forestry officers in the six North Central Region provinces in 2019.

Based on the forest cover maps produced by the National Forest Inventory and Statistics Program in the period of 2013-2016 in each province and the most updated forest changes, local forest rangers and forestry officers of forest owners will use tablets and FRMS mobile apps to update the forest areas and locations and report on changes like deforestation, forest degradation, afforestation, logging, encroachment on forest land, forest fires, etc.
In 2019, the FCPF-2 project plans to organize 17 trainings for about 384 forest rangers and forestry officers of forest owners in its six project provinces. Since the beginning of the year, 10 trainings have already been conducted for 117 participants, of which women account for about 28% and ethnic minority people account for nearly 3% in the provinces of Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Thua Thien - Hue. All participants were provided with tablets. Trainers of the pilot provinces were selected, trained and assisted by experts from the JICA Project on Sustainable Natural Resources Management (SNRM-JICA). The results of practicing surveys and changes monitoring by the trainees were evaluated by the trainers for lessons learnt on identifying coordinates of locations, taking photos, filling survey forms, and uploading data on the server of VNFOREST, etc.
According to the evaluation from PPMUs, most of the participants understood both theoretical and practical issues and effectively learnt to use tablets to update changes in forests and forest land. After trainings, forest officers can apply the knowledge in updating forest and forest land data and information in areas under their responsibility. However, despite the training, some challenges and constraints still remain, such as (i) the capacity to get GPS signals is limited in remote areas and during bad weathers; (ii) some older practitioners have more difficulties in acquiring knowledge and using tablets; and (iii) although most of the officers can use tablets to report changes in forests and forest land, very few of them can upload the results on VNFOREST server. Adequate responses will be formulated to these issues, with special emphasis on the third constraint to unlock the full capacity of the system to communicate from local to central level.

**Negotiation of the Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA) in the North Central Region for the period 2018-2025**

On the 10th of May 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development established the Technical Working Group for the negotiation of the North Central Region Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA) and sent an official letter to the World Bank to request kicking off the ERPA negotiation process.

The Technical Working Group shall be responsible for preparing and submitting to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development a proposed negotiation plan, organizing technical negotiation and reporting to the Ministry on the results of negotiation. Currently, the Technical Working Group is conducting pre-negotiations with the World Bank according to the roadmap. It is expected that the two Parties will sign the ERPA before the end of 2019. In the meantime, the ER-Program shall be approved by the Prime Minister.
The process of ERPA negotiation and finalization of the ER-PD for submission to the Prime Minister for endorsement is supported by the FCPF-2 project.

The ERPA shall become effective upon signature of both Parties, and could include a provision to begin the accounting period at the time of ER-PD approval by the Carbon Fund Participants, in February 2018 (still subject to negotiation). The respective obligations of each Party under the ERPA regarding the sale, transfer and payment for emission reductions (ERs) will only become effective upon final conditions to be fulfilled by Vietnam, and under negotiation process. Such conditions could include the submission of a Letter of Approval, the submission of a final Benefit Sharing Plan, an action plan towards final Reversal Management Mechanism, and demonstration of ability of Vietnam to transfer Title to ERs. At the moment, these documents are available in form of drafts and submitted to competent agencies for review and endorsement.