Draft outline guidelines for the proposed approach to participatory forest management planning for community forest areas in Ha Giang province

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1. Introduction

These draft guidelines an amended version of those proposed by Bo Lager as a result of the field work undertaken in Bac Quant and Vi Xylem Districts of Ha Giang Province, Vietnam during May and June 2001. Full details of this work can be found in his MSc dissertation produced for the University of Wales, Bangor.\(^1\) This work was undertaken in conjunction with the Ha Giang project for the Development of Minorities (HPM) and the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme.

Why the need for Forest Management Planning Guidelines?

- Recent developments in forestry in Ha Giang have resulted in over 20,000 ha of protection forest being contracted to communities.

- Following the initial 5 year payments for protection (funded by HPM) the community groups have a number of rights concerning harvesting from these contracted sites. It is assumed that the products from the sites – NTFP’s and possibly timber – will result in higher income for the protection groups than the fixed payment system.

- The use of natural regeneration and protection approaches whilst satisfactory in some aspects can be supplemented by more active management which may give higher benefits both to farmers through a higher level of harvesting, but also result in better forest areas in the long term.

- From the communities perspective there are some specific reasons to work towards the Forest Management Plan. These would include:

  - The ability to secure the supply of important goods and services from the forest and to avoid over-exploitation and destructive harvesting of forest resources.
  - Assist in justifying for the Provincial authorities the communities’ commitment and ability to manage the protected forest areas through presentation of a long-term a management plan over the area.

\(^1\) Lager, B. (2001). *Forest Management Planning in Ha Giang Province of Vietnam.* Unpublished MSc dissertation within the School of Agricultural and Forest Sciences at the University of Wales, Bangor, UK.
To legalise the harvesting and management arrangements for the land so that any future disputes with respect to encroachment, harvesting rights, boundaries, ownership and benefit sharing are clearly documented and formally agreed by the higher authorities. This would include the commitment from higher levels to provide support to the long term management of the site.

What are the key ideas in the development of a Forest Management Planning Approach?

- There is a need to manage the protection forest areas of Ha Giang in a balanced way so that biodiversity conservation and watershed protection are provided for at the same time as important forest products are harvested by farmers.

- In the remoter upland areas of Vietnam there have been a number of strong traditions and experiences of management of forests by ethnic minorities which makes approaches to the long term management of forest by communities feasible in many areas.

- There is a need to develop innovative ways of managing forest in the remoter areas which allows the land to be used in a sustainable way to assist in poverty reduction and livelihood development. Active management of forest land can play a good role in livelihood stabilisation in areas where agricultural land is in short supply and of poor quality.

- Communes and villages can act as the main collaborative partner in developing effective forest management.

- The planning process must have a logical sequence and be undertaken in a fully participatory way within the communes and villages;

- Real benefits must be possible for the villagers so that they can see that the time and effort spent in making the management plans will be rewarded through effective harvesting rights for NTFP’s and timber (within the current law of the country).

- The process must be transparent between government officials and the villagers. Clear understanding of rights and responsibilities of all parties will form an important part of the planning process and the agreed final plan. Full documentation of the plan will be held at commune and village level as well as by the District and Provincial authorities.

- The Forest Management Plan will include both NTFP’s, bamboo and timber in line with the current GoV rules and regulations.
Outline process of the production of a Forest Management Plan.

The process of working with a community group to produce a formal Forest Management Plan will take place over a number of key stages. These stages are outlined here and the more detailed production of the management plan is given in the next section. The process is likely to vary from group to group. Some reasons for the variation are likely to be:

- Complexity of the forest site itself – number of possible management units;

- The need to look at a number of products including timber, NTFP’s and bamboo;

- The formal designation of the forest e.g. critical watershed forest, production forest etc.

- Complexity of the objectives from the community group – especially true if this involves a large group of different minorities or where there are commercial and subsistence objectives;

- Current capacity of District and commune staff;

- Current capacity and knowledge of forest management (formal and informal) by the members of the community;

- Resources available (money, time, training, maps etc.) to assist in the work.
Figure 1: Outline Process of Developing a Participatory Forest Management Plan for community Contract Sites in Ha Giang.

**STAGE 1**
To include the provision of the best local large scale map available.

**STAGE 2**
Undertake the development of a participatory forest management plan using the described method. Depending on the objectives this may involve detailed field work on the Forest Management Units.

**STAGE 3**
Formal approval of the plans for site – including agreed support activities.

**STAGE 4**
Plan implementation. Routine monitoring and evaluation.

**STAGE 5**
Regular participatory evaluation of plans and resetting of objectives and plan for Forest Management Units.
2. Detailed draft guidelines for production of a participatory forest management plan for community contracted forest

These guidelines give step by step guidance for the 5 stages of the process from idea through plan design, approval, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation and plan revision. However the following should be understood:

- It should be remembered at all stages that these are Guidelines and not a 'blueprint'.

- Local conditions will mean that amendments to the approach will be required.

- In addition the level of knowledge of the forest type and the detailed species biology is limited – especially in relation to NTFP’s and indigenous species – amongst both the local population and also Forest Protection and Forest Development staff.

- Harvesting rates for NTFP’s initially will need to be based on best estimates and local ideas, but through the routine monitoring and evaluation clearer ideas of the capacity of the forest for sustainable harvesting will become clearer.

| STAGE 1  |

1. Forest Protection Branch Ha Giang will identify sites where effective groups have been set up under the long term contracting approach. These groups should have a good organisation and be effectively protecting the forest under contract at present. There should also be interest in the commune and village in detailed forest land management – including the harvesting of timber and NTFP’s. Sites where poverty levels are high would be important as well as areas where capacity is higher.

2. Formal contracts would already have been implemented. This means that inventory work and maps – perhaps to
1:5000 or 1:10000 would have already been prepared by the Forest Protection Branch and authenticated by the Department of Land Administration.

3. Where possible aerial photographs and remote sensing imagery would also be available to help produce up to date maps of the sites.2

4. Where this is pilot level activity then full support to this work from the Province, District and Commune People's Committees will be sought before detailed planning at the village level commences.

STAGE 2
Undertake the development of a participatory forest management plan using the described method.

This stage involves a number of steps and is likely to require some important field based activities. Each STEP in this process is detailed on the following pages.

STEP 1: Introduce the work to the villagers

Main purpose of activity:

Meetings with commune and village leaders to describe the nature and purpose of the work and mutual exchange of ideas and information. This will be followed by a village meeting (in each village of the commune with land that will be included under a Forest Management Plan).

Issues to be discussed at the meeting will be:

- Description of Purpose and Objectives of the work
- What will be the Output and result of the whole work
- Planning and time schedule of work

2 If aerial photographs and remote sensed images are not available then this will not impede the work. It will however require more detailed field work in the early stages of the planning. The development of these approaches at national and provincial levels would be an effective management tool for both planning and for long term monitoring and evaluation.
• Participatory focus of the work

• Discussion who, how and when different people will take part in the work.

Who will be involved in the activity?

This will take the form of a village meeting to receive the information and comment. People who are likely to attend are:

• Commune staff and leaders

• Head of Village and Village Forest Management Group

• Male and Female representatives from each household in the village.

• District Forest Protection Staff involved in assisting in the Forest Management Plan preparation.

• Provincial Forest Protection staff – especially when there are any specifically important areas within the contract forest.

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

Provincial and District Forest Protection staff.

Timescale?

First activity to be undertaken under this stage of the process. It relies on the fact that there is a Village Forest Management Group under the Forest Contract and that this is functioning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased understanding amongst the Village Forest Management Group about the purpose and mechanisms associated with the development of the Forest Management Plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An indicative time schedule for the work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An agreement concerning the inputs from the Village Forest Management Group, commune staff and other staff during the process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**STEP 2: Contract Forest Area Stakeholder analysis**

**Main purpose of activity:**

There is a need, before starting this Forest Management Planning process to identify all the interest groups in the village and commune as well as more widely, in the area of land under discussions. This ensures that all stakeholders understand who the other stakeholders are and their main interest in the site. It also identifies any potential conflicts which will need to be managed during the Forest Management Planning process.

**Who will be involved in the activity?**

District and Commune Forest Protection staff in conjunction with the Village Forest Management Group, Head of Village and Commune leaders.

**Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?**

District Forest Protection staff.

**Timescale?**

Initial stage of the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of all stakeholders in the area and a description of their interest or stake in the forest contract area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP 3: Agreement on the Overall Forest Management Objectives for the contracted area.

Main purpose of activity:

Traditionally the forest has multiple use which means that many methods has to be used that combine wood- and non-wood production, watershed protection and wildlife. Given the GoV interest in forest management and the downstream consequences of poor forest management it is important that the major stakeholders agree a common set of overall objectives for the site before the detailed management plan is constructed. Where areas of the site are clearly not to be used e.g. for specific biodiversity conservation, this must be made transparent at this stage so that there is no confusion during the planning process.

A commune/village level workshop/training will be held to discuss the Objectives for the site and agree the overall Forest Management Objectives. If this cannot be done initially it must be completed, following further discussions, before the rest of the work is undertaken. Provincial strategies for forest management must include the possibility of harvesting of products from the protected area so that the community can benefit economically from their protection activities following the end of the 50,000 VND/ha/yr initial payments. Without this there is no incentive for the farmers to embark on a planning process and to protect the area in the long term.

Who will be involved in the activity?

This will take the form of a village meeting to agree the overall objectives. People who are likely to attend are:

- Commune staff and leaders
- Head of Village and Village Forest Management Group
- Male and Female representatives from each household in the village.
- District Forest Protection Staff involved in assisting in the Forest Management Plan preparation.
- Provincial Forest Protection staff – especially when there are any specifically important areas within the contract forest.

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

District Forest Protection staff.
**Timescale?**

At the start of the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A list of agreed Forest Management Objectives for the Forest area under long term contract. This list will be the outcome of work at village, commune, District and Provincial levels to combine all interests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 4: Identification of Local Forest Types**

**Main purpose of activity:**

- The initial purpose is to understand how the local community see the forest and the different types of tree/bamboo/plant combinations that might occur in the area to be covered by the Forest Management Plan.

- This will enable key local niches and habitats to be identified which may not have been possible during the inventory during the Forest Contracting process. For instance when does an area move from being timber/bamboo to bamboo/timber.

- The identification and mapping of these local sites would be based on large scale photocopies of current maps available from the Forest Protection Branch or from the Department of Land Administration. In some cases these maps are not very accurate and local information is much clearer. However the purpose of this exercise is not to produce maps of the quality produced by qualified surveyors but to produce working maps which can be identified with key areas on the ground.

- The forest type is a relatively broad description of the different forest areas within the contract site. These forest types may be the same as the Forest Management Units covered in the next step – especially when there are small niche areas e.g. an area of wet forest where medicinal plants are important. However, it is more likely that the same forest type may be broken down later into a number of FMU's.
Who will be involved in the activity?

- Commune Forest Protection Staff, Commune Extension staff and other commune leaders involved in forestry activities.
- Village Forest Management Group - including both men and women.
- District Forest Protection staff

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

District Forest Protection staff in conjunction with the Commune Forest Protection staff and the Village Forest Management Group

Timescale?

This will partly depend on the quality and scale of the maps available from Forest Protection or the Department of Land Administration. Based on experience this may take one day initially and then will be revisited many times during the subsequent steps – especially after the field work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large map with the area divided into forest types based on local knowledge. Map also contain key landscape features.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed criteria for the categorisation of the different forest types.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 5: Species Identification for management**

Main purpose of activity:

For the community forest plans it is not possible to focus management activities on every species. There are likely to be a number of important forest products – both timber and NTFP’s – which the community would wish to see prioritised.

Species ListCompilation

This activity is firstly to make a list of the key species, their uses, location and some assessment by local people as to their relative abundance and whether they are increasing or decreasing.
Table 1 indicates a type of structured form that could be used for this activity along with more open discussions concerning species and their importance.

**Species Prioritisation for management**

In addition to compiling the species list there is a need to assess the demand on the key species and the reasons for the demand. This activity will need to be undertaken with groups of men and women separately as the evidence suggests that knowledge of different species is gender specific. By working with both men and women it should be possible to produce a list of the key species within the community and the criteria for selection by the community (for subsistence, for business development, for house building etc.)

**Identification of any current local management and level of knowledge of the key species**

It is possible that some local knowledge already exists concerning key species and their management e.g. domestication for the forest gardens. In this case it should be possible to take the key species list and look at the characteristics of each species. So it should be possible to provide information on each species as follows:

- Does it grow in the light or does it require shade;
- Is it a fast growing or slow growing species;
- Does it colonise disturbed ground or does it require undisturbed forest;
- Does it require special soil conditions e.g. wet places;
- Does it respond well to cutting (coppice or pollard);
- It is possible to ‘domesticate’ from seeds or from cuttings or from wildings?
- v.v.

**Management Category**

From the above it should be possible to construct an outline assessment of the key species as to the type of management category that it falls into. This might be summarised as:

- Plant that is easy to manage and develop, for either subsistence or as a cash crop; Likely to be a strong candidate for domestication and expansion;
- Plant for which there is a strong demand but which is difficult (or no attempt has been made) to domesticate; requirement for a higher level of management – including some significant silvicultural interventions to maintain a flow of supply.
Plant with a strong demand but that requires very precise growing conditions e.g. wet land in a closed forest area, or that is very slow growing which means that strict harvesting rules may be required.

**Who will be involved in the activity?**

- Commune Forest Protection Staff
- Village Management Group - including both men and women
- District Forest Protection staff

**Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?**

Commune Forest Protection staff with District forest Protection staff. The later would be involved in particular if it was known that there were rare species in the area which would require specific management.

**Timescale?**

After the key mapping exercises but before the main field work. However this is likely to be an iterative process rather than a ‘one off’ event and will need to be reviews after the FMU identification and after the field work activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Species list and analysis and perception regarding the abundance of the most important forest products.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of priority species from both men and women and reasons for choice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorisation of the key plants for future indicative management.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation of local management knowledge for the key species.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 1:** Possible form for compiling species list for management planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commune</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Date completed</th>
<th>Name of Species (local and Kinh)</th>
<th>Abundance</th>
<th>Change in abundance over last 5 years? (more/less)</th>
<th>Currently Harvested</th>
<th>Harvested from where? ('Red book', protection, contract land)</th>
<th>Harvested by who</th>
<th>Price per unit if sold (e.g. 1000 VND/kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Outsiders</td>
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<td>Paper</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bamboo</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rattan &amp; others</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Fruits</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grasses</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Palms</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fodder</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medicinal Plants</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 6: Identification and Categorisation of the Forest Management Units (FMU)**

**Main purpose of activity:**

The main purpose of this exercise is to identify appropriate Forest Management Units (FMU) for the area. The concept of a FMU will need to be explained so that it is understood by the community. The criteria for dividing the forest land into different FMU will be decided by the community although account should be taken of any areas identified in the original inventory that have formal designations in terms of SUF, very critical protection forest etc.

The process of identifying the FMUs and deciding on the Management Objectives and the tools that can be used to meet these objectives will be undertaken in a step wise manner.
1. **Identification of the FMUs.**

This will be based on local knowledge and may not follow the standard compartment or block boundaries as used by the Forest Protection Branch inventory. Full account must be taken of the current GoV laws concerning:

- Protection of rivers and streams;
- Protection of rare animals or a habitat with rich biodiversity;
- High elevation mountaintops;
- Remote and inaccessible areas;
- Composition and/or density of timber species and bamboo species;
- Natural border (rivers etc.);
- Steep slopes;
- Areas with a high fire risk

2. **Linking of FMUs with the map.**

It is important that the FMUs and their boundaries and link forest type agreed are clearly identified on the Forest Land Map made in step number 4.

3. **Management Objective for each FMU**

For each identified management unit a management objective should be set. The types of objectives that can be set are shown in Table 2. These are indicative and it is possible that other local objectives will be set.

4. **Identification of Tools to meet Management objective for each FMU**

It is possible that a number of different tools might be used to reach the same objectives. The decision on which tools to use would include such issues as location of site, condition of site, labour available and demand. For instance two different FMUs might have a management objective to increase the timber available. One site may be situated near the village and be currently bare land and the tool used could be to plant with quick growing exotic trees to meet timber needs. However the second site may be some way from the village and already contain a number of young seedlings. Here the most appropriate tool may be to apply strict protection and let natural regeneration (with some thinning later) be the tool used to obtain timber trees in the longer term.
5. **Detailed Management Plan for each FMU**

The level of detail for this section will depend on the chosen management objectives and tools as well as the level of local knowledge. Plans for the FMU could include issues of:

- Harvesting quantities,
- Harvesting timing (e.g. limits to harvesting shoots to allow natural regeneration, ban on cutting during the fruiting season etc.)
- Thinning regimes,
- Number of seedlings required – e.g. for planting or for enrichment planting
- Monitoring of development of site towards agreed objectives
- Indication of need for a detailed inventory – especially in relation to timber harvesting. This may need specialised support unless methods for community inventory can be developed.
- Level of detail required concerning important timber trees – location on maps or marking?
- Time period for any closure
- V.v.

**Who will be involved in the activity?**

- Commune Forest Protection Staff
- Village Management Group - including both men and women although only key informants need to undertake the detailed field work. In some cases the field work may be separate for men and women depending on who uses individual sites.
- District Forest Protection staff

In addition to any field and mapping work a number of focused discussions will take place to work out the priorities for the FMU’s. Where the contract is divided amongst management groups all the different groups should be involved in this process.

**Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?**

Commune Forest Protection Staff in conjunction with the Village Forest Management Group and the District Forest Protection staff. Where a detailed inventory was undertaken during the Forest
Contracting process then this would be used as the formal guidance – especially in areas of critical watershed protection forest or Special Use Forest - for this work, but the informal knowledge into this exercise is important.

**Timescale?**

This may require several days field work – depending on the size of the area being included in the Forest Management Plan. Not all areas need visiting – especially if the likely management objective at this stage is to close it off e.g. important areas for watershed protection, for natural regeneration etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of the Forest Management Units on the main community Forest Map.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of appropriate management objectives for the individual FMU.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of the most appropriate management tools for achieving the identified objectives for the individual FMUs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed management plan for each FMU.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for the field survey, detailing the FMU's to be surveyed in more detail.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Possible Forest Management Objectives and Tools for individual FMUs under community forest management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Management Objectives</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>When/Where?</th>
<th>Forest Management Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest Resource Creation</td>
<td>Establish and maintaining existing plantation or create new resource as plantation or using natural regeneration</td>
<td>Degraded forests</td>
<td>Plantation establishment Tending operations Natural regeneration Assisted Natural Regeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Forest Resource Use for timber and NTFP (Mainly using protection with limited harvesting in situation of low exploitation)</td>
<td>Harvesting of existing forest products to meet local and commercial demands</td>
<td>When the forest condition allows sustainable harvesting. When there is demand for a certain product Where demand is low and the forest condition is already good.</td>
<td>Bamboo harvesting Thinning (Poles etc.) Selective logging NTFP harvesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Management of Natural Forest Resource (Apply silvicultural treatment to enhance growth of and reduce competition for remaining commercial stems)</td>
<td>Manipulating existing forest for yield improvement by leaving the forest to regenerate itself; Apply silvicultural treatments to induce regeneration of commercial species.</td>
<td>Areas of commercial or subsistence value that needs improvement. Areas of natural forest that are already regenerating but which could be further improved</td>
<td>NTFP management Enrichment planting Natural regeneration management Selective thinning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Management of Plantation Forest Resources</td>
<td>Management of forest plantation in an efficient manner for both short and long term benefits;</td>
<td>Where forest plantations have already been established within the Forest contract area.</td>
<td>Thinning; Weeding; Selective logging; Resin tapping etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Resource Protection</td>
<td>Protection against, illicit harvesting; grazing; fire; etc.</td>
<td>Sacred forests</td>
<td>Fire protection Grazing protection Illegal harvesting Reduction in encroachment by outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Resource Conservation (Zero management)</td>
<td>Biodiversity conservation; A point of reference for the future; A source of species diversity in general; and A refuge for seed-dispersing birds, bats, insects.</td>
<td>High value biodiversity areas Where soil erosion may be a significant issue.</td>
<td>Soil and water conservation Biodiversity ‘hot spot’ areas River/Stream protection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**STEP 7: Rules and Regulation Development**

**Main purpose of activity:**

- The village forest management group will operate under a number of local rules and regulations. These rules and regulations must be developed and agreed by the members of the group/community and also be added to the Forest Management Plan for formal approval by the higher levels.
- These rules and regulations will be based on local knowledge and interests, but must also conform to the current government policies and regulations.
- It is likely that the rules and regulations will build upon those already in place as part of the Forest Protection Contract but will need to be expanded to take account of the Forest Management Plan especially where this involves active management and harvesting.
- Issues to be covered by the rules and regulations include:
  - Group composition
  - How will the contract be managed and will it be subdivided into smaller groups;
  - Will protection work be organised on a voluntary basis or will individuals or households be paid to undertake the work;
  - Who the office bearers will be and how will they be selected;
  - Management of any funds associated with the forest including taxes, fines and contract payments;
  - Methods for addressing any conflicts between members of the group and outside groups;
  - Other issues as may be appropriate e.g. regulations concerning cattle grazing, fodder management, NTFP harvesting etc.

**Who will be involved in the activity?**

The initial rules and regulations will probably be drawn up by the Village Forest Management Group in cooperation with the Commune Forest Protection staff – and may be based on the current regulations.

However, there should be discussion with key users of the forest – including the women – to see if the rules and regulations are
appropriate. These rules and regulations will be submitted to the final village meeting for approval – unless this has already been done.

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

Commune Forest Protection Staff with the Chair of the Village Forest Management Group.

Timescale?

This will be undertaken during the planning process and will build on the rules already in place as part of the long term forest contract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules and regulations concerning the following issues:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Composition of the Village Forest Management Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Selection procedures for office bearers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identification of groups (if contract sub-divided) and group leaders;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identification of responsibilities of the VFMG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Levels of fines, taxes and procedures for harvesting products;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Procedures for managing the village Forest Fund including distribution of any funds to people contracted for specific activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mechanisms for dealing with conflicts including when to call in outside help</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 8: Field Survey**

Main purpose of activity:

Based on information collected during step 4, 5 and 6 a field survey is conducted. This survey will be carried out during several days together with different households/collectors to verify the mapping exercise and assessing the forest resource condition. The selection of FMU to be visited could be done randomly or by objectively selecting
the spot, in order to cover most forest types. The number of sites visited will depend on the size and diversity of the area. The field survey will focus its attention on the key species forming the most important forest products. For each of the sites selected the following information will be collected:

1. **General description of the harvesting site.**

   - Forest type and characteristics;
   - site history;
   - forest products harvested;
   - Area of the site;
   - Location and access;
   - Main species;
   - forest cover;
   - canopy density;
   - protection function

2. **How are these forest products currently being managed and harvested?**

   - Product characteristics;
   - Density/Population structure of forest products;
   - Silvicultural practices;
   - Current harvesting practice;
   - Frequency of harvesting;
   - Levels and frequency of production and quantities;
   - Harvested quantities from the site;
   - Household harvesting strategies.

3. **What are the main constraints for production/harvesting?**

   - "Illegal harvesting";
• Grazing/browsing pressure;
• Animal predation;
• Over harvesting/exploitation;
• Climatic stress (frost);
• Fire,
• pests;
• Labour shortages;
• Inaccessibility, e.g. walking distance from house to harvesting site; Regeneration,
• seed trees etc.

4. **How can management of the areas be improved?**

**Who will be involved in the activity?**

• Commune Forest Protection Staff
• Selected key informants – both men and women
• Selected key women informants for separate field surveys in areas of importance to women;
• If necessary District Forest Protection Staff.

**Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?**

Commune Forest Protection staff in coordination with the Village Forest Management Group.

**Timescale?**

To be undertaken after the major site identification has been undertaken. This may require a few days field work depending on the size and layout of the site as well as the required level of detail required e.g. all trees over a certain size, to allow management to be agreed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A understanding of the forest area and potential limitations to management.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed understanding of the current management practices – if any that are used within the forest site.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A description of the state of the forest which can assist with the identification of the FMU.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 9: Agreement on Methods for Routine Monitoring and Evaluation**

*(Note this is also linked to Stage 4 of the process)*

**Main purpose of activity:**

- Agreement on what are the key items that need monitoring and the best method – within the capacity of the village – to undertake this.

- Agreement on the level of monitoring to be undertaken by the Commune, District and Provincial staff.

- Agreement of key indicators for the items to be monitored and the procedures for action if the information obtained falls outside agreed ‘Limits of Acceptable Change’ (where these are set based on the best local knowledge and to take account of seasonal variation in for example Tram fruit harvesting).

- Detailed monitoring of the FMU’s – in terms of progress of regeneration, levels of harvesting, seedling recruitment etc.

- Identification of areas where the current lack of knowledge means that harvesting levels are set based on current knowledge e.g. if it is clear that the current rate of harvesting is decreasing the amount of fruit available then the agreed limit for harvesting must be lower than the current harvesting rate. If it is agreed that the current rate of harvesting is not affecting the availability then the current rate of harvesting could be set as the normal target.
• Agree a format and a ‘toolbox’ based on local management for the monitoring – e.g. harvesting records kept for tax purposes, regular ‘transect walks’ to review the state of forest; monitoring of key mother trees etc.

• Agree where more detailed forest inventories would be required e.g. areas of large trees which might be harvested in the future.

Who will be involved in the activity?

• Commune Forest Protection Staff, Commune Extension Workers.
• Head of Village and Village Forest Management Group including representatives from Women’s Union.

• District Forest Protection Staff involved in assisting in the Forest Management Plan preparation.

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

District Forest Protection staff in coordination with the Commune Forest Protection staff and Village Forest Management Group. This work will need to benefit from on-going development of monitoring strategies. The initial monitoring may be very basic but will be revised over time in the light of further detailed knowledge of the site and its use.

Timescale?

During the planning process a number of meetings may need to be held in relation to monitoring and evaluation of the site.

• Agreement on what are the key items that need monitoring and the best method – within the capacity of the village – to undertake this.

• Agreement on the level of monitoring to be undertaken by the Commune, District and Provincial staff.

• Agreement of key indicators for the items to be monitored and the procedures for action if the information obtained falls outside agreed ‘Limits of Acceptable Change’ (where these are set based on the best local knowledge and to take account of seasonal variation in for example Tram fruit harvesting).

• Detailed monitoring of the FMU’s – in terms of progress of regeneration, levels of harvesting, seedling recruitment etc.

• Identification of areas where the current lack of knowledge means that harvesting levels are set based on current knowledge e.g. if it
is clear that the current rate of harvesting is decreasing the amount of fruit available then the agreed limit for harvesting must be lower than the current harvesting rate. If it is agreed that the current rate of harvesting is not affecting the availability then the current rate of harvesting could be set as the normal target.

- Agree a format and a ‘toolbox’ based on local management for the monitoring – e.g. harvesting records kept for tax purposes, regular ‘transect walks’ to review the state of forest; monitoring of key mother trees etc.

- Agree where more detailed forest inventories would be required e.g. areas of large trees which might be harvested in the future.

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<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village level monitoring plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring plan for the main FMU’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on key indicators for harvesting, state of forest etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commune and District level monitoring plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on where Provincial level support for detailed inventory style monitoring would be required.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 10: Technical support needed to implement the management plan**

**Main purpose of activity:**

Identification of the support from the Forest Protection and other Extension Services to enable the village to implement the plan in an effective manner.

Identify any ‘key farmers’ for specific training who will then pass on this knowledge to the rest of the Forest Management Group.

- Identification of any activities which are beyond the community and require specialised inputs e.g. detailed inventory of rare species; propagation of important indigenous trees which do not respond to normal techniques for domestication;
• Identification of any sites for trials on ways of improving the management – using Farmer Field School approaches to community level silviculture based on local knowledge.
• Identification of key knowledge gaps which might need to be filled in over time both from village level observation and experimentation but also by specialised studies.
• Identification of key farmers to receive specialised training in forest management techniques who would then train other people in the group.

Who will be involved in the activity?

• Commune leaders including Women’s Union and Commune Forest Protection Staff, Commune Extension Workers.
• Head of Village and Village Forest Management Group including representatives from Women’s Union.
• District Forest Protection Staff involved in assisting in the Forest Management Plan preparation.

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

Commune Forest Protection Worker in coordination with the Chair of the Village Forest Management Group and the District Forest Protection staff.

Timescale?

The final drawing up of the agreed support will take place near the end of the planning activities although it is likely that it will be based on identified needs throughout the actual planning process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training needs requirement for Village Management Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training needs for ‘key farmers’ in technical skills e.g. nursery management, bamboo cultivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training needs requirement for the Commune Forest Protection Staff to assist them in their support to the village.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified list of technical and other support from Forest Protection and other relevant extension agencies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of any knowledge gaps to be filled during future work and implementation of the plan.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**STEP 11: Presentation and discussion of the result with the community**

**Main purpose of activity:**

At this point the draft plan results from the all the previous steps activities should be presented to the community and discussed by them. Following the discussion they will need to formally agree the following:

1. Final management map over the contracted area including the boundaries.
2. Agree the technical prescriptions for each of the Forest Management Units including those areas that might be closed to any form of harvesting for NTFP’s or timber;
3. Agree the rules and regulations that are necessary at village level to ensure the effective management of the site;
4. Agree the office bearers of the Village Forest Management Group;
5. Agree the procedures for handling any finances associated with the forest including protection fees, local taxes, fines. Agree payment system for any work undertaken in the forest beyond normal protection duties.
6. Agree the monitoring and evaluation tools for the Forest Management Plan.
7. Agree the protection duty rosters.
8. Agree the training plan including the nomination of any ‘key farmers’ who will receive special training.

This meeting is important as it formalises the agreed plan at village level and then facilitates its submission to the Commune People’s Committee for final approval before being submitted to the District for Approval (see Stage 3 for further details of this). Full records of who attends the meeting should be appended to the documentation for the record.

**Who will be involved in the activity?**

This will take place at a village meeting to whom the following are invited:

- Commune staff and leaders
- Head of Village and Village Forest Management Group
- Male and Female representatives from each household in the village.

- District Forest Protection Staff involved in assisting in the Forest Management Plan preparation.

**Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?**

Commune Forest Protection Worker in coordination with the Chair of the Village Forest Management Group and the District Forest Protection staff.

**Timescale?**

This should take place at the end of the exercise, but if there is any major disagreement at this stage then further work would need to be undertaken and then the revised plan would come back for approval by the village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
<th>ACTUAL OUTCOME</th>
<th>DATE FINALISED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final management map over the contracted area including the boundaries.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree the technical prescriptions for each of the Forest Management Units including those areas that might be closed to any form of harvesting for NTFP’s or timber;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree the rules and regulations that are necessary at village level to ensure the effective management of the site;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree the office bearers of the Village Forest Management Group;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree the procedures for handling any finances associated with the forest including protection fees, local taxes, fines. Agree payment system for any work undertaken in the forest beyond normal protection duties.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree the monitoring and evaluation tools for the Forest Management Plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree the protection duty rosters.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree the training plan including the nomination of any ‘key farmers’ who will receive special training.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
STAGE 3
Formal approval of the plans for site – including agreed support activities.

NOTE: The approval process shown here is a draft and would require suitable agreement by all the agencies concerned including the Provincial People’s Committee to issue any required Decisions to facilitate the implementation of this process. In addition Forest Protection Branch, Forest Development Branch, DARD – including Extension Centre, as well as the Department of Land Administration may all have some comments on this process. A suitable decentralised process is required to ensure effective implementation, although areas of special importance may require higher level approval.

- The approval process proposed here is highly decentralised and based on the GoV moves to decentralise planning and management in all activities to the lowest level to increase efficiency of implementation.

- Following the formal agreement of the Forest Management Plan at village level the plan is then submitted to the Commune People’s Committee for approval.

- Following approval of the plan at commune level it will be sent for approval to the District Forest Protection Branch for checking – to ensure that it does conform with the current regulations from the national and provincial authorities.

- If it is satisfactory (and given the involvement of District officials at various stages in the process at commune level there should be not major problems in this area) then the plan will be sent to the District Peoples Committee for approval.

- It should not be necessary for the Provincial authorities to approval the detailed plans for each site – unless there are any areas which are within Special Use Forest Areas or of particular importance for biodiversity or watershed protection. If this is the case, and it will have been identified during Step 2 of the planning process then the plan may need to be approved by the Forest Protection Branch, Forest Development Branch and the Provincial People’s Committee.

- Copies of the Forest Management Plan will be sent to the Forest Protection Branch and Forest Development Branch for information. This is of importance as Step 10 of the plan included issues of Technical support and in some cases the plan will require detailed technical assistance from qualified staff at Province level to assist with inventories etc. It will then be possible to add these request to the annual plan for the Provincial and District Forest Protection staff as well as Extension staff.
Following approval of the plan copies of the signed and dated Forest Management Plan will be kept at Province, District, Commune and Village levels. This is important for reference during the monitoring and evaluation stages and also to allow later amendments to the plan to be clearly identified as appendices to the plan.

**STAGE 4**

**Plan implementation and routine monitoring and evaluation**

**Implementation**

The implementation of the Forest Management Plan will commence following its formal approval. The regular implementation will be in line with the agreed strategies for each of the FMU’s and will be under the management of the Village Forest Management Group with support from the Commune Forest Protection staff and where suitable the Commune Extension staff.

**Routine Monitoring and Evaluation**

Step 9 in Stage 2 will have developed at least an initial monitoring plan. It is likely that in the early stages of implementing the plan that it is very low key. It needs to be within the present capacity of the VFMG to manage and may be based on very limited information. This routine monitoring of the management of the FMU’s – especially where active management is involved – is important to ensure that the procedures are having the desired effect. The development of the method for monitoring will be important especially where an increase in harvesting is proposed to support an increase in products for sale e.g. increasing cultivation of bamboo shoots, to ensure that the process of harvesting is not putting the regeneration of a species under threat. There will need in the development of these rules an increased understanding of how certain plants propagate themselves. For example does the tree produce a lot of seed in one year and then little during the following years? If so how does collection of this seed take place – especially if it is a commercially viable product? With long lived species it may not be obvious that the current level of harvesting is affecting the regeneration of the species until it is too late.
Linking of local knowledge for monitoring and formal monitoring techniques

This area is one where the Provincial Forest Protection Branch in conjunction with the Forest Development Branch could be developing techniques for routine monitoring. In some cases the monitoring could be based on national systems e.g. Remote Sensing data with FIPI which could give an overview of how well the approach is working. Also the valuable local knowledge within the professional forest service can assist in the development of simple systems for monitoring that can be linked through to more formal silvicultural systems. However these systems generally focus on timber species and the needs of monitoring NTFP production and species regeneration is less well developed. Current thinking on this works through 5 steps:

1. Initial planning
2. Forest inventory
3. Species selection
4. Yield studies
5. Definition of sustainable harvest.

The process covered within this Forest Planning Process covers steps 1 – 3 in detail and then uses local knowledge to identify yields and set limits on harvesting. However it is important that for one or two key species that some further technical work – through the use of permanent plots – is linked to the local knowledge and understanding of processes. In this way data collected in a scientific manner can be used to give some validation to local knowledge and to show if it is likely to be reliable in the long term. A basic strategy for the monitoring of NTFP resources is shown in Figure-1. This indicates the process that might be required – especially for valuable NTFPs that are harvested from slow growing species or those species with very specific habitats for effective growth e.g. closed forest areas.
Figure 1: Flow chart of basic strategy for exploiting non-timber tropical forest plant resources on a sustained-yield basis (taken from C.M. Peters, *The Ecology and management of non-timber forest resources*. World Bank Technical Paper No. 322).
STAGE 5
Formal participatory evaluation of plan and resetting of objectives for Forest Management Units.

Main purpose of activity:

- Stage 4 involves the link between regular implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the activities being undertaken within the forest contract site.

- However, over the long term the level of local knowledge, results from previous work will become apparent and it may be that the plan will need revision.

- Therefore it is proposed that a formal participatory evaluation of the Forest Management Plan and the individual plans for the FMU’s in undertaken in Years 2 and 5.

- The revision will be done with key informants from within the Village Forest Management Group and will be submitted to a full Village meeting for approval.

- If changes in year 2 are minor only these can be formally approved by the Commune People’s Committee and copies of the changes forward to the District authorities for information. However if major changes are made the revisions will need to be submitted to the District for formal approval.

- Following the evaluation at the end of year 5 the plan will be formally revised, regulations updated, FMU plans updated and perhaps objectives for certain sites changes (e.g. if a FMU had been closed for 5 years it may now be opened for a certain level of harvesting provided that the regeneration had been sufficient). The fully revised plan will be formally approved by a village meeting. This meeting is important as it formalises the agreed plan at village level and then facilitates its submission to the Commune People’s Committee for final approval before being submitted to the District for Approval (see Stage 3 for further details of this).

- Full records of who attends the meeting should be appended to the documentation for the record.
Who will be involved in the activity?

The activities for this stage will take place at a village meetings and with key informants from within the Village Forest Management Group:

- Commune staff and leaders
- Head of Village and Village Forest Management Group
- Male and Female representatives from each household in the village.
- District Forest Protection Staff involved in assisting in the Forest Management Plan preparation.
- Forest Protection Branch staff – if there have been any major changes in GoV policy regarding use of forests which would affect the use of the different FMUs e.g. changes in % of bamboo that can be harvested from an area during a single year.

Who will have the responsibility to coordinate the activities?

Commune Forest Protection staff in coordination with the Chair of the Village Forest Management Group and the District Forest Protection staff.

Timescale?

At the end of year 2 and year 5. The later would be a large undertaking and would set the plan for the next 5 years.
**EXPECTED OUTCOME** | **ACTUAL OUTCOME** | **DATE FINALISED**
---|---|---

**At the end of year 2**

Agreed revisions to the plan

**At the end of year 5**

Agreed amendments to the technical prescriptions for each of the Forest Management Units including those areas that might be closed to any form of harvesting for NTFP’s or timber;

Agreed amendments to the rules and regulations that are necessary at village level to ensure the effective management of the site

Agreed amendments to the office bearers of the Village Forest Management Group;

Agreed amendments to the procedures for handling any finances associated with the forest including protection fees, local taxes, fines. Agree payment system for any work undertaken in the forest beyond normal protection duties.

Agreed amendments to the monitoring and evaluation tools for the Forest Management Plan.

Agreed amendments to the protection duty rosters.

Revised training plan including the nomination of any ‘key farmers’ who will receive special training.