Short-Term Consultancy Support to Ha Giang Province
by a Forestry Sector Development Consultant

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December 1999

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1. Background

DARD has worked out a three-year plan for input by international and national short-term consultants within the Technical Assistance provided by Sida. It includes consultancy support to the Agricultural Extension, Animal Health and Forest Protection components of HPM, as well as general consultancy support to the forestry sector in the province through DARD.

Within this plan, a Forestry Sector Development Consultant has been recruited. The consultant will make several visits to Ha Giang (4 months in total) during 1999 - 2000 to ensure continuity in the technical assistance. See the Terms of Reference in Annex 1 that was worked out before the consultant's first visit. The consultant made a First Visit in March - April and left a Report dated April 1999.

The consultant made a Second Visit in October - December 1999 using the following work plan suggested in the First Visit Report:

1. Generally follow up the discussions and recommendations from the First Visit.
2. Assist HPM in setting up a monitoring system for the Forest Protection Component.
3. Continue to assist FDB in defining its role, particularly in relation to the two programmes MRDP and HPM.
4. Visit the four Provincial Forest Enterprises and give recommendations on their possible future
development.
5. Participate in a joint workshop with HPM/MRDP on their first year experiences on forest contracting/joint 
forest management.
6. Assist the working team of the Ha Giang Forest Products Study to draw conclusions from the study and 
make recommendations.
7. Assist DARD generally in the development of forest strategies and policies for the province.

Due to various reasons, the consultant was not able to carry out all these activities, but concentrated on the 
following issues:

Ha Giang Forest Products Study. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for HPM. HPM's Forest Contracting 
activities Monitoring of the HPM Forest Protection Component Provincial Forest Enterprises Plan for the Third 
Visit (in April - May 2000). The report of the visit is presented below.

2. Forest Products Study

With reference to the report from the consultant's First Visit (April 1999), it was suggested that a Ha Giang 
Forest Products Study (HGFPS) should be carried out in order to find out how the villagers use the forest 
(collecting timber and non-timber forest products) and market the products, and based on the findings give 
recommendations on ways to promote sustainable management and harvesting of the forest.

On this visit, the consultant helped HPM to further plan and prepare for this study, working together with Mr. Bo 
Lager, Associated Expert at HPM, and a specially appointed Project Team with representatives of DARD, 
MRDP, HPM and FPB. A Draft Project Document (November 1999) was worked out and is attached as Annex 
2.

Overall Objective of the Study

Protection and management of forest, forest land and biodiversity in Ha Giang Province through promotion of 
ecologically sustainable and economically viable harvesting and use of timber and non-timber forest products.

Purpose of the Study

1. Collect, compile and present information and data on the current situation of harvesting, using, processing 
and marketing/trading timber and non-timber forest products from forest land in Ha Giang Province, with focus 
on the households.

2. For a number of identified, important forest products make analyses of the economy (cost/benefit) and 
market chains (production - harvesting/collection - processing - transport - distribution - final user) in order to 
find interesting development options and weak points. The Chinese market should be given special attention.

3. Based on (1) and (2) draw conclusions and make recommendations on possible policy changes, research, 
market studies, pilot projects/activities (on promotion of production, processing, marketing etc.) and training.

Main Activities/Outputs

- Design and organization of the study
- Household surveys (in 3 villages in each of 10 districts)
- Survey of other parties collecting forest products
- Survey of market places
- Analyses of export of forest products
- Cost/benefit analyses
- Market chain analyses
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Final workshop
- Study report

The study should be carried out in cooperation with the Non-Timber Forest Product Research Centre 
(NTFPRC) in Hanoi.
It is important to get a true picture of the villagers' collection of products from the forest. However, this may not be easy as the villagers may not be willing to give the full information about their collection as some of it may be illegal, i.e. against the government regulations. They may also have other reasons for not giving full information.

In the early planning of the study, it was suggested that DARD staff at district level should carry out structured interviews in households to find out their collection of forest products. Later, HPM suggested that Forest Protection staff should do the interviews. However, based on the above conclusion, it is now suggested that neither DARD nor Forest Protection should be directly involved in the interviews as these organizations are there to monitor the law enforcement of the villagers relation to the forest. The villagers may simply not give the true picture in front of this government staff.

**Recommendations:**

- Considering the problems of bringing out the full information on the use of the forest, it is suggested that the Non-Timber Forest Products Research Centre (NTFPRC) should be contracted to carry out the whole Forest Products Study. NTFPRC is a "neutral" organization in relation to the villagers, and they have professional staff with knowledge on forest products, methods for participatory data collection, and experiences of similar studies in other provinces in Northern Vietnam. NTFPRC should cooperate with HPM/FPB and DARD when carrying out the study, particularly regarding timber and other wood products, wood processing and marketing of wood products.
- HPM should be the host organization for the study. HPM/FPB should facilitate NTFPRC's work in the province (without participating in the household surveys), and HPM should arrange the final workshop.
- It is suggested that the whole study should be financed from the Sida/MRDP technical assistance funds to HPM.
- HPM and NTFPRC should together make a final revision of the Project Document soonest possible. The study should be carried out during the first half of 2000.

3. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

In the report from the consultant's First Visit (April 1999), it was also recommended that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be carried out for the whole HPM project. In this visit, the consultant worked out a proposal for Terms of Reference and budget for such an assessment. See Annex 3.

Considering the size of the HPM project, it is suggested that the EIA should be carried out as a Regional Environmental Assessment (REA) as per the definition in the World Bank environmental assessment system. 'Region' in this aspect is Ha Giang Province.

The REA should include a general assessment of the environmental situation in the province, identification of possible direct and indirect environmental impacts (positive and negative) of the different HPM components, as well as the possible cumulative impacts of HPM and other similar, on-going projects and activities in the province. It should also identify possible socio-economic effects of HPM which later may lead to environmental impacts. The assessment should pay special attention to the high ethnic diversity in the province.

The assessment should be carried out by a Team consisting of an EIA Expert/Team Leader, a Socio-Economist/Anthropologist, a representative of DOSTE in Ha Giang and an interpreter. The work should be done in the first quarter of 2000. It is suggested that the assessment should be financed by Sida/MRDP technical assistance funds to HPM. HPM has already approved the Terms of Reference and forwarded it to Hanoi for approval and financing.

4. Forest Contracting

The consultant made a visit to five districts (Hoang Su Phi, Xin Man, Quan Ba, Yen Minh and Meo Vac) to follow up HPM's Forest Contracting activities. He was accompanied by HPM/FPB staff and Ms. Sheelagh O'Reilly, the new Natural Resources Adviser of MRDP.

MRDP is developing and testing models for Community Forest Management/Joint Forest Management (JFM) in pilot villages in Yen Bai and Ha Giang provinces, and HPM and MRDP are cooperating and exchanging
experiences in this field. MRDP’s pilot village in Ha Giang Province is Nam Ty in Hoang Su Phi District.

HPM/FPB designed and started using a model for Forest Contracting in mid 1998. The model is described in the report from my First Visit (April 1999). Up to now (December 1999), they have contracted 12,279 ha of protection forest to 72 villages. See the table below.

**HPM Forest Contracting in 1998-1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Communes</th>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
<th>No. of Contracts</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Average Contract, (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quan Ba</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi Xuyen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dong Van</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xin Man</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.345</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoang Su Phi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.650</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen Minh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.296</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bac Quang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.739</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meo Vac</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.279</strong></td>
<td><strong>132</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When selecting villages and areas to be contracted, HPM/FPB has used the following criteria:

- Critical and less critical protection forest area (not the very critical ones);
- Area with forest (not bare land);
- Area not allocated to households (red book);
- Forest that can be regenerated (naturally or through plantation);
- Forest with nearby villagers with interest and capacity to protect and manage the forest;
- These nearby villages are poor;
- Forest and villages that are not included in any other forestry project.

With these criteria, the area available and suitable for contracting in Ha Giang Province is rather limited. In Meo Vac District, for example, only 420 ha meet the criteria, and HPM has already contracted 370 ha of them to three villages. This should be compared with the 15,000 ha of forest and bare land that recently have been allocated with red book for protection and management by individual households in the district. The villagers' first priority is certainly to protect and develop this, their own, nearby forest land before putting efforts into the remote, less accessible state forest land. For such efforts they need to be given special motivation and incentives.

It is understood that the contracted villagers will gradually be allowed to harvest some timber and non-timber forest products from the critical and less critical protection forests, as a compensation for their long-term protection commitment.

Regarding the poverty of the contracted villages, they are of the following wealth categories according to the Government wealth classification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wealth Category</th>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is generally one contract per village. The Head of the village signs the contract on behalf of all the village households. An exception is Vi Xuyen District, where contracts are made with groups of households, and the
contracts are signed by Heads of the groups.

It is up to the villagers to organize the protection of the forest. Some villages divide the contract area into sub-areas and give the protection and management of the sub-area to a group of households (those who live nearby). Some villages keep the whole area for protection by all the village households. Some villages organize regular patrolling of the forest by household groups on a rotational basis, while other villagers seem to have quite little organized protection activities.

HPM has paid protection fee (50,000 VND/ha/year) for the first six months of the contract period. It is up to the village/group of household to decide how to use the money. Generally it was distributed equally between all the village households. Some villages plan to use some of the money for specific common use later on.

According to the contract, HPM shall supply seedlings to the contracted villages for enrichment planting. In 1998 HPM provided 200,100 seedlings to the villages, while in 1999 only 52,200. The reason was said to be late allocation of funds for this activity.

Summary Conclusions:

- Forest Contracting is a process whereby a village (or a group of village households) is given rights and responsibilities to protect and manage (including harvesting) a specific, nearby forest area which is owned by the State. It is a process that can not be rushed. The concept is also called Joint Forest Management (JFM) and is being introduced and tested in many Asian countries at the moment. HPM and MRDP are cooperating and exchanging experiences in the field of Forest Contracting JFM.

- A major part of the forest area (production and protection forests) in Ha Giang Province is already allocated to households (with red book) or being part of the Protected Area System (61,000 ha). Thus only a limited area of unallocated, less critical protection forest area is available and suitable for Forest Contracting. From this area, HPM has selected 12,300 ha, so far (1998-1999), and contracted it to 72 villages in 8 districts. Considering the short time (1.5 year), this is a very good achievement. The project target is to contract 20,000 ha by the end of year 2000.

- HPM's model for forest contracting is simple and straightforward. The design and preparation work is effectively carried out at commune level by FPB staff with limited involvement of the concerned villagers. Also the PRA is carried out at commune level (one PRA per commune). The PRA is very general and not directly linked to the specific village forest area and the contracting process. Thus the villagers to be contracted are not much involved in the design and preparation process, and they may not fully understand their new role, rights and responsibilities and get "ownership" of the contract and the forest. Therefore there is a great risk that they will not be enough motivated and committed to continue protecting the contracted area when HPM in 5 years will stop paying protection fees.

- HPM has had a very good start of its Forest Contracting sub-programme and made good progress in terms of number of contracts and contracted areas. However, in order to secure the villagers’ long-term interest and commitment to protect the forest, the planning and contracting model should be further developed to better involve the villagers and clarify their rights and responsibilities. Also training, applied research and policy development are needed in this area.

Recommendations:

- The present general PRA at commune level should be replaced by a joint planning exercise at village level in which Forest Protection staff and village representatives (forming a Planning Team) together design and plan the forest contracting.

The planning exercise should consist of the following three Steps:

**Step 1: Forest Area Planning**

Village meetings and field work by the Planning Team:

- Introduction meeting to present and discuss the Forest Contracting concept. (The long-term vision should be to allocate the contracted area to the village).

- Identification of contracting area (drawing a map at scale 1:10,000).

- Delineation of compartments (considering forestry and village management aspects).
- Assessing the *forest condition and potential* of each compartment (using classification and description in line with the villagers' needs and management capacity).

- Formulating *management objectives* and drawing up a simple *forest management plan* for the next five-year (showing proposed activities, timing, costs etc. per compartment).

The step may be terminated by the two parties’ (Forest Protection and the villagers) signing a simple "Letter of Understanding" where the area, the intentions of the Forest Contracting, and what the villagers should do (in Step 2) before the two parties meet again in Step 3 are agreed upon.

**Step 2: Villagers' Reflections and Internal Discussions**

In a time-gap (for about a month) between Step 1 and Step 3, the villagers should be given time to reflect on and discuss the planning and agreements made in Step 1. They should also work out proposals for:

- **Village organization** for the protection and management of the contracted area (Forest Protection/Management Committee, delineation of management units (within the contracting area), formation of household groups (for each management unit), select Heads of groups etc.).

- **Pillage regulations** for the protection and management related to the contract. They may also come up with proposals for amendments of the plans made in Step 1.

**Step 3: Formulation and Signing of Forest Contract**

In this step, the two parties (the Planning Team) will meet again to formulate and sign the contract. The contract should be simple and clear, spelling out the rights and responsibilities of the two parties, the monitoring procedure etc. (like the present HPM forest contract format). However, references should be made in the contract to the following Annexes giving further details related to the specific village:

**Annex 1: Forest Management Plan** (five-year plan) and map.

**Annex 2: Village Organization** (committee members, list of households, household groups, heads of groups etc. with reference to a map).

**Annex 3: Tillage Regulations.**

**Annex 4: Harvesting Regulations** (regulations for harvesting of timber and non timber forest products per compartment).

The village and harvesting regulations should also include simple *environmental regulations* (e.g. on protection of red-listed species) to be developed in cooperation with DOSTE. The harvesting regulations could be very short and simple to start with, but should gradually be improved and developed along with gained experiences and knowledge (on e.g. sustained yield levels from different types of forest). The annexes should be dated and approved separately, and should be revised whenever needed in the course of the contracting period.

- HPM should arrange applied research on *harvesting models* (based on sustained yield) for timber and non-timber forest products from different relevant forest types and species, to be used as a base for the harvesting regulations. HPM should cooperate with a relevant forest research organization on this matter. HPM should consider to recruit a National Forest Management Adviser.
- HPM should arrange *training of contract villagers* on silviculture (nursery work, planting, tending, harvesting, study tours etc.). The Forest Products Study will hopefully give information and recommendations that could lead to other important training and promotion activities with the contract villagers.
- The started *cooperation between HPM and MRDP* in the field of Forest Contracting/Joint Forest Management should continue. They should share experiences and research results, and may jointly arrange workshops, training, applied research and study tours, MRDP could provide examples of JFM forest management plans and *village regulations*.

5. Other Issues
The consultant started working on some other issues, following the Work Plan suggested from the First Visit. The work on these issues will continue in the Third Visit.

5.1 Monitoring of HPM's Forest Protection Component

The consultant met with Mr. Tran Dinh Hop who is working out a monitoring system for HPM. Mr. Hop presented an extensive proposal for formats to be used for annual planning and monthly, quarterly and annual reporting of the Forest Protection Component. The proposal is a good attempt for starting testing a monitoring system.

However, as the consultant has recommended further development of the forest contracting system, it is suggested that the consultant should await looking further into the monitoring system and give recommendations in his Third Visit.

5.2 Provincial Forest Enterprises

The consultant started visiting the four Provincial Forest Enterprises in order to find out their current situation and future potential. A visit was made to Vi Xuyen Forest Enterprise. An attempt was also made to visit Bac Me Forest Enterprise, but it failed due to bad road and bad weather. The consultant will continue this task in his Third Visit.

6. Suggested Plan for Next Visit

It is suggested that the consultant should come back to Ha Giang for a Third visit on 24 April - 13 May, 2000 (three weeks).

Suggested tasks/activities in the Third Visit:

1. Follow up of recommendations (on e.g. Forest Contracting) made in the previous visits.
2. Assist in drawing conclusions from the Forest Products Study and make recommendations.
3. Visit the remaining three Provincial Forest Enterprises and give recommendations on their future possible roles.
4. Make recommendations on monitoring of the HPM Forest Protection Component.
5. Review the maps and data produced by FIPi's new forest inventory of Ha Giang Province and give recommendations.