

FIELD VISIT GUIDE
TO
Viet Nam



Regional Field Workshop 2003

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CFM in Viet Nam

What is community management? In the Viet Nam context, ‘community’ is always an entity smaller than the commune, which is the smallest administrative structure of government. ‘Community’ refers to a group of households in a village, to the whole village in a commune, or to a clan of an ethnic group. The community is ‘managing’ when there is a process for building consensus among village members to follow agreed rules and regulations on forest use, maintenance and protection. Vietnamese practitioners further describe forest management driven by initiatives on the ground as *spontaneous management*.

Where are the areas? NWG-CFM identified 94% of the 2.35 million hectares of areas under CFM occurring in the northern parts of Viet Nam (northeast, northwest, north central) and the central highlands, which are areas with high ethnic populations. Allocated areas are found in forested, non-forested and bare lands. Forestlands allocated to households and individuals are not yet counted under the figure for CFM.

FOREST & PEOPLE STATISTICS	
Forest	
<i>(in million hectares)</i>	
Total land area:	33
Forestland:	19
Forested:	11
Area under CBFM:	2.35
People	
Population:	78M
Forest-dependent people:	27M
Communes involved in CBFM:	1,203

Policy and Implementation Environment

Viet Nam does not have a formal CFM policy yet. However, CFM has been recognized using implementation guidelines of various national policies, such as:

- Law on Forest Protection and Development (1991) banning exports of unprocessed logs
- Land Law (1993) giving communities rights to exchange, transfer, lease, mortgage and pass on land for inheritance
- Decree 327/CT (1992) on the role of the village for projects implemented in barren land
- Communist Party Resolutions on traditional customs and village level regulations (1993 & 1996)
- Decree 2/CP (1994) and Decree 163 / CP (1999) on forestland allocation and lease to individuals, households, and organizations for long-term purposes

- Decree 29 / CP (1998) and the ensuing Prime Minister Decision 24 (1998), MARD Circular 56 (1999), and FPD Instruction 52 (2001) on implementation of Democracy at Village Level.

Areas under CFM get acknowledgement from government through:

- (1) Local authorities (commune, district, province) providing 50-year land use rights based on decree 2/CP first issued in 1994 and updated in 1999. More than 50% of the total area under CFM has been acknowledged this way.
- (2) State organizations (forest enterprises, watershed boards, or protection units) sub-contracting their protection functions to villages in exchange for payment. Almost 40% of the total area under CFM has been acknowledged in this manner.
- (3) Different levels of government (commune, district, province) negotiating with ethnic communities prior to any intervention recognizing traditional use (burial grounds, water source, hunting area) and customary regulations in a forest area. Almost 10% of total CFM area has been acknowledged this way.

These forms of village management, however, are not yet included in national figures for forestland allocation. The Civil Law of 1995 says that only organizations with clear organizational structures, recognized or established by authorities, and in possession of assets can be allocated forestlands and enjoy benefits accruing to recognized management systems (such as households and registered organizations).

TERMS OF GOVERNANCE		
English	Vietnamese	Coverage
Hamlet	Cum	less than 30 households per hamlet
Village	Ban	30-60 households per village
Commune	Xa	8-15 villages per commune
District	Huyen	12-18 communes per district
Province	Tinh	8-16 districts per province
National government		62 provinces

LIMESTONE FOREST: Beyond Stunning Beauty

One landscape feature that stands out for visitors in Viet Nam is the majestic limestone outcrops abruptly jutting out of near planar surfaces. Various ethnic populations with rich cultures live at the foot of the limestone mountains.



This tower type of carbonate karst is widely found in the Indochina region, specifically in southern China and northern Viet Nam. Northeast Viet Nam accounts for 36% of the country's 1.15 million hectares of stone mountains, with limestone concentrated mostly in the provinces of Cao Bang and Lang Son. Some can be seen in other parts of northern Viet Nam, in the provinces of Lai Chau, Ha Giang and Quang Binh.

Conservationists and wildlife advocates value the limestone forest for the distinctive flora and fauna it holds. According to FIPI, 69 mammal species inhabit limestone outcrops in Viet Nam, five of which are endemic and 26 are rare species. The Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources recently recorded 14 new Orchidaceae species in Cao Bang, where the endangered musk deer and black gibbon can also be found.

In Ha Giang's Bat Dai Son Nature Reserve, FIPI recorded gymnosperms in a patch of mossy forest on the limestone mountaintop, one of which is new to Viet Nam's flora. Caves in limestone areas provide a habitat for bats with 37 species initially recorded in Quang Binh province.

But local people value limestone forests beyond their stunning beauty. Farmers see them as a source of water supply for paddies below. With karst environments having a complex water balance, the water-regulating capacity of the steep slopes of these mountains can make or break their season's harvest.

LIMESTONE FOREST IN NORTHEAST *(in hectare)*

Land area:	421,300
Total forested:	77,400
Without forest:	343,900

For households, they are a source of fuelwood, medicinal plants and housing materials.

Viet Nam's northeastern eco-region has the poorest forest cover on its mountain areas, with only 18% of limestone mountains forested. Other areas in the north average between 45%-65% vegetation cover on limestone mountains.

Today, limestone forests hold 396,200 hectares or 5% of the country's remaining natural forests.

National Institutions

MARD

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for the State management of agriculture, forestry, irrigation and rural development. It was created in 1995 through combining offices in these sectors. It has official headquarters in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Forest-related units under the ministry are the Forest Protection Department and the Forest Development Department.

FIPI

The Forest Inventory and Planning Institute is one of 25 institutes belonging to MARD. It is tasked to organize, implement and uniformly manage forest inventory and planning work aimed at supporting State forest management and strategies for forestry development. The Forest Resource and Environment Center (FREC) is a unit within FIPI actively supporting village forest management.

NWG-CFM

The National Working Group on Community Forest Management is comprised of policy makers and practitioners from different State organizations and national programs. State organizations participating in NWG meetings are MARD, FPD, FDD, and FIPI. Among the national programs active in the working group are FSSP, SGP-PTF, SFDP, ADB/FSP, MRDP, NTFP, PROFOR, FAO and SMRP. Its first meeting was held in Ha Noi in November 1998.

The NWG aims to explore policy and operational strategies to facilitate and strengthen community involvement in managing forest resources in the country. This is done by providing a forum for examining, monitoring, and accelerating the progress in this area. A MARD decision on 22 December 1999 recognized the establishment of the working group.

Teas and Trees of Life (Agroforestry System in Thái Nguyên)

Location: Phu Luong District, Thái Nguyên Province
Distance: 76 kms (from Hà Nội to province center)



Thái Nguyên is a province of rolling hills and valleys. Agriculture and forestry are main sources of income for the eight districts composing this northeastern province. Tea is an important cash crop in Thái Nguyên – a place also known as the Land of Tea.

Main ethnic groups managing resources in the province are the Tay, Nung, Dao, H'mong and San Chay. Resource use practices are closely tied to worship of ancestors, and influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism traditions.

There are 356,911 hectares of forested lands in Thái Nguyên managed by households and collectives. On the average, a household is allocated one to two hectares of forestland.

In Phu Luong district, agriculture and forestry provide combined benefits for the households. Mr. Hoang Van Quy and his wife Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuong have a one-hectare land near the highway in Phu Luong. They belong to ethnic San Chay.

The family's agroforestry land lies on a moderately sloping hill with a paddy below. Half of the sloping area is planted to acacia and eucalyptus trees and the remaining half to tea. The lowlying plain has modern rice varieties.

THÁI NGUYÊN	
People	
Population:	1.1 M
Forest	
<i>(in hectare)</i>	
Land area:	356,639
Natural forest:	99,796
Total forested:	139,421
* Protection:	139,421
* Watershed:	63,068
* Special use:	27,185
* Production:	49,168

Trees are planted mainly to ensure water supply to irrigate the plants. Occasional thinning of trees takes place to open planting space for cash crops grown in between stands. This type of selective felling is also done to augment family income by selling small quantities of logs. After 10 years, they have the option to cut all trees and replace them with new ones. Normally, however, selective felling is preferred.

The agroforestry hill falls under the production forest classification. Government provides incentives to those planting trees. Under the

production forest category, farmers shifting from annual to perennial crops and those establishing new plantations are tax exempted.

According to Mrs. Thuong, all forestlands in the village have been allocated to households.

The family started the agroforestry initiative in 1992. The forestry extension

center has been giving free seedlings provided that the Forest Protection Board (FPB) will be the buyer once timber is harvested. Those who source seedlings outside the center can sell to anybody. The FPB office is not far from the family house.

Recently, the family harvested and sold around 30 to 40 cubic meters of acacia and eucalyptus logs. Farmgate price of timber in the province is about VND250,000 (US\$16) per cubic meter. If brought to the highways, where hauling for traders is easier, the price could fetch to as high as VND400,000 (US\$26).

Tea is the main source of family income. Tea buds are dried and sold to factories where they will be processed further. The tea farm produces 500 kilograms a year which they sell for VND15,000 (US\$1) per kilogram. Selling price in Thái Nguyên is VND40,000 (US\$2.60) while in Hà Nội they sell as high as VND50,000 (US\$3.25).

Every end of winter (November-December), shrubs are cut. Slashed branches are dried and used as fuel for initial processing of tea buds in a manual rotating dryer. Planting is done again during springtime (January-May). They can harvest twice in a year (spring and summer). The family also sells fruits from some trees of *anona* and *longgan* planted around the traditional San Chay mud-walled house.

The rice area lying at the foot of the hill produces food for family consumption. The trees provide a critical role by ensuring continued water supply to the rice paddies.



Forest Medicines

(Traditional Medication Utilizing NTFPs)

Location: Nang Son District, Bac Kan Province
 Distance: 162 kms (from Hà Noi to province center)

Halfway from Bac Kan to Cao Bang is a hillside store where travelers stop for tea and rest. On its shelves, one will find jars of medicinal wines.

The concoction is composed of non-timber forest products soaked in native wine. There are tree barks, ginseng, snake, lizard or bird in a jar filled with corn or rice wine and stored for about three months. Some jars contain fruits of mac rac trees (*Delavaya toxocarpa*) from limestone farms in Cao Bang. Preserved bamboo shoots are also on sale.

Common in Oriental medication, ethnomedicine is believed to cure many types of illnesses and improve one's health. More than 200 species of herbs, shrubs and trees are utilized for traditional medication in Viet Nam. These forest products are chopped and sun-dried. Collection of non-timber forest products is allowed in all forest classifications throughout the country.

As tonic, ethnomedicine is believed to improve intelligence, memory, blood circulation, strength and fertility. As remedy, they are used to treat rheumatism, bone pain, back pain, intestinal disease, snake bite, broken bones, skin infections, kidney disease, tuberculosis and pre-and postpartum needs, including reducing bleeding.

The price of medicinal wine in the store differs based on contents. The snake mixture costs VND500,000 (US\$32.27) while those with barks and ginseng are sold at VND200,000 (US\$12.91). Average household income from traditional medicines is about VND2-3 million (US\$129-194) a year.



Viet Nam has high regard for traditional medication. Government has setup traditional medical hospitals in 46 out of its 62 provinces. It has more than 4,000 physicians all over the country employing ethnomedical techniques, including the use of forest-derived medicines.

According to the World Health Organization, 25% of the world's modern medicines is made from plants proven effective in traditional medication. It estimates the global market for herbal medicines at over US\$60 billion annually, and is growing steadily with today's increasing recognition on the importance of indigenous health care system.

BAC KAN	
People	
Population:	0.2M
Forest	
(in hectare)	
Land area:	479,554
Natural forest:	224,114
Total forested:	235,247
* Protection:	235,247
* Watershed:	108,404
* Special use:	24,662
* Production:	102,181

“Forest is gold if we protect it” (Signs on Forest Protection)

Location: Bac Kan Province
Distance: 162 kms (from Hà Nội to province center)



Signs with important messages on forest protection dot the lush scenery along the snaking highland road in Bac Kan province.

These signs started to be put up in Viet Nam around the 1960's when the General Department of Forestry was newly established under the State Council. Mountains in general are important to those taking care of Viet Nam's natural resources, as four fifths of the country's 33 million hectares is covered by hills, plateaus and mountains.

The signs could be direct, and simply a reminder to people:

*“Forest Protection is the Responsibility of All People
Activities damaging the forests are forbidden”*

Some could be more philosophical:

“Forest is gold if we protect it”

Other signs simply inform of the nature of forest management in the locality.

The Northeast is the second most forested eco-region in the country (closely following the Highlands) where 58% of its 2.4 million forested lands are classified as protection forests.

Cao Bang

Cao Bang is a mountainous province located in northern Viet Nam. Its forestland accounts for 64% of the province's total land area.

Over the years, different types of forest management have evolved in the province including State, collective and individual management.

Although the concept of community forest management is relatively new in the entire country, this has been in practice by ethnic communities largely comprising the province's population.

It also has the largest area of limestone mountains at 227,600 hectares, of which 6,800 hectares or 3% are forested.

Cao Bang is known as a province with considerable achievements in rehabilitating forests on limestone mountains.

Involvement of the Forest Resources and Environment Center (FREC) in Cao Bang started in 1997 when it conducted inventory on biodiversity and indigenous knowledge in Phuc Sen Commune.

In its six years of study, the environment center learned from the villagers in Phuc Sen how they helped regenerate forests on the surrounding limestone hills.

Lessons derived from the commune have been disseminated through FREC publication *Sustainable Development and Protection of Forests and Biodiversity in Viet Nam's Limestone Mountains*. It has both Vietnamese and English editions.

People	
Population:	2.27M

Forest (in hectare)	
Land area:	669,072
Natural forest:	199,673
Total forested:	208,586
* Protection:	208,586
* Watershed:	187,059
* Special use:	846
* Production:	20,681



AREA VISIT 1

Lung Ri Village, Tu Do Commune

Lung Ri is one of the 14 villages comprising the Tu Do commune. Its history of settlement is unknown, although old villagers say that Lung Ri and Lung Cac were the first areas of settlement.

Two ethnic groups live in Tu Do. The Nung people comprise 55% of the communal population and the Tay at 45%. Its economy is based on agriculture largely producing rice and maize. Fabric weaving and Mang tile (double tile) making also provide significant contribution to household incomes.

LUNG RI VILLAGE

Forest

(in hectare)

Land area:

Natural forest:

Total forested: 93

* Household: 107

* Community: 97

Agricultural land: 41

* Paddy fields 16

* Upland fields 25

Settlement area 7

Topography has two types: valleys and limestone mountains. The hydrological system is thin without any big waterways and barrage. Streams run out during dry season.

The difficult physical characteristics of Lung Ri coupled with its rich ethnic tradition shape the form of forest management in the village.

Forestlands are found largely on limestone mountains. They have been an important source of fuelwood, medicines and housing materials for the villagers. They play essential functions for traditional

ceremonies like wedding and burial.

Most households have their own forests to manage. The village also has a communal forest where protection and development are collective responsibilities of residents. Benefits from the communal forest are enjoyed equitably.

In 2001, villagers cut some Nghien (*Burretodendron tonkonensis*) trees to make electric posts for the village. Twisted and sick trees and creepers were sold as firewood to tile makers. The money was then used to buy electric wires and individual household meters.

The scarcity of water makes water-retention forests sacred for the people of Lung Ri. Forests for ancestors are also classified 'forbidden forests.' Village customary laws bear extremely serious penalties against violators of sacred or forbidden forests. Those who repeatedly disobey are punished,



the most severe degree of which is prohibition from participating in important village festivities.

Village regulations on forest management in Lung Ri include the following:

- Individuals are responsible for managing their household and communal forests
 - Gathering of NTFPs by Lung Ri residents are allowed without declaration if made within their own forests
 - Burning of forest is prohibited and carries a fine from VND50,000 to VND100,000 (US\$3-6.45)
- Families are allowed to gather firewood from sacred and community forests for funeral or wedding purposes. Fallen trees are sold where proceeds go to village fund.

AREA VISIT 2

Tinh Dong Village, Phuc Sen Commune

Phuc Sen is a highland commune populated mostly by the Nung An ethnic group living in 17 villages. Major source of income comes from agriculture, forestry, knitting and handicraft making. Phuc Sen is closer to the border of China than to Viet Nam’s capital of Hà Noi.

Through Land Use Right Certificates, all households have been allocated paddy land located in valleys and at the foot of limestone outcrops.

Rice is the primary crop on agricultural land, with maize and a variety of vegetables as secondary crops. Livestock production includes cattle, hog, chicken and duck raising.

TINH DONG VILLAGE

People

Population:	109
Households:	23

Forest

(in hectare)

Land area:	87.8
Forestland:	70.0
Village forest:	20.0
Agricultural land:	13.8
Other land	4.0

Like the rest of Phuc Sen, Tinh Dong village has three major forms of forest management:

1. Forest managed by community

Communal forest management is the main forest management form. Common forests are tended twice a year in January and July when every sends one to two members for the collective forest work. In return, each person who participated in communal tending can get 100-150 kilograms of firewood for household use (mainly brushers and liana as prescribed under village regulations).

PHUC SEN COMMUNE	
People	
Population:	2,027
<i>(mostly from the Nung An ethnic group)</i>	
Number of Villages:	17
Forest	
<i>(in hectare)</i>	
Land Area:	1,300
Forestland:	1,010
Areas under CFM:	
* Village-managed:	606
* Household-managed:	404

Every villager is responsible for the protection, nourishment and development of the common forest, which has the following uses:

- Timber extraction for house construction of families who are victims of calamities (fire, storm, etc)
- Firewood collection for village funerals or weddings
- Land reserve of the village

2. Forest managed by groups of households

This area also belongs to the common forest of the village. It is only allocated to groups of households for more convenient management. As fewer households are involved (10-12), management methods and benefit-sharing schemes are easier to formulate.

3. Forest managed by households

This is the area opened by households after clearing forests for upland fields for the first time, or lands allocated to households under the cooperative system. It is usually found in lower areas or within village forests. Households are responsible for afforestation and tending. Protection activities should follow village regulations. The household can get all kinds of products from the forest without paying tax or any form of contribution to the village.

Letting Grow Naturally

(Naturally Regenerating Forests)

Location: Dong Khe District, Cao Bang
Distance: 281 kms (from Hà Noi to province center)

Forest regeneration in Viet Nam is done in two ways: assisted and natural. Natural regeneration is carried out in areas where environment has the natural capacity to allow forest regrowth. It can be done in all classifications of forest throughout the country.

Identification of areas suited for natural and assisted regeneration is done by the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) following the science of silviculture, a management intervention designed to enhance the value or benefits from forests.

Technical persons from FIPI conduct surveys of the barren area to determine its slope, soil type, hydrology, rainfall, climate, existing species and surrounding forests where seeds could naturally be sourced and spread into the degraded land.

Areas identified as having potential for natural and assisted natural regeneration are recommended for incorporation into land use planning processes done by local authorities.

Government provides natural resource tax exemption for products from regenerated natural forests.

Northeast Viet Nam has 1.89 million hectares of natural forests, or 20% of the country's total 9.5 million natural forestlands.



Fruits of Limestone

(Agroforestry on Limestone Hills)

Location: Quan Thanh Village, Chi Lang Commune, Chi Lang District, Lang Son Province

Distance: 154 kms (from Hà Nội to province center)

Lang Son is a northeastern province surrounded by tall mountains. Mainly an agricultural area, it is home to the Viet (Kinh), Tay, Nung, Dao, Mong, San Chay and Ngai people.

For travellers, a pass through Lang Son is a treat to a spectacle of towering carbonate karst.

For households in the province, however, limestone hills are more than just an enchanting sight. They serve as important sources of livelihood and water for paddies below.

In Chi Lang district, 74-year-old Mrs. Nguyen Thi Minh Hai manages a one-hectare farm on the lower portion of the limestone hill, some 250 meters away from her house.

She has been farming in the area for over 30 years and started planting *anona* on the limestone hills in the early 1990s.

Today, her farm is planted with 500 *anona* trees. She has annual average net income from *anona* yields of around VND12 million (US\$775). Fruits are sold to merchants coming over from other provinces during harvest time.

She also has a fruit stall in front of her house along the Lang Son highway where tourists and travellers can buy freshly-picked *anona*.



LANG SON

People

Population: 0.72 M

Forest

(in hectare)

Land area: 818,725

Natural forest: 184,017

Total forested: 243,331

* Protection: 243,331

* Watershed: 118,689

* Special use: 22,177

* Production: 102,465

Local Institutions

DARD

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is under the jurisdiction of the Province People's Committee and coordinates with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. DARD is responsible for all issues related to management and development of forest resources. It also administers a number of State Forest Enterprises often established on a district basis. Some DARD offices have rural development sections at the district level, with agriculture and forestry as combined units. In some districts, they are not merged.

Provincial PC

There are two agencies in charge of forestry under the Provincial People's Committee: the DARD and the Forest Protection Sub-Department. While these agencies have a parent body in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) in Hanoi, they mainly take orders from the provincial leadership. Accountability to MARD is on the implementation of technical directives it issues.

FPSD

The Forest Protection Sub-Department is responsible for guarding the forests and ensuring that all agencies managing forests do so in accordance with the Law on Forest Protection and Development and related decisions and guidelines. FPSD as provincial sub-department coordinates with the central office based in Ha Noi. It has district offices with staff members numbering between 8 to 10. FPSD assigns personnel to visit villages to gather and disseminate information. The Forest Protection Branch has inspection as one of its activities.

FDSD

The Forestry Development Sub-Department is established in localities with significant areas classified as production forests. Where it is present, the FDSD comes under DARD and assists in technical issues related to forest exploitation for commercial purposes.

District PC

District People's Committee officials hold office for four years like the provincial PC. The same structure at the provincial level is replicated at the district level, where there is a unit for agriculture and rural development that covers forests, as well as a forest protection station (occurring in all forest-rich districts). Recently, the District Peoples' Committee has been authorized to decide the management terms for 100 hectares of forest.

Commune PC

The smallest unit of the government administrative structure is the commune. Each commune, however, is informally subdivided into villages. Depending on where they are located in the country, communes are either called *lang*, *ban*, *thon*, *buon* or *ap*, etc. Larger villages are further subdivided into units often called *cum* or hamlets. Commune chiefs are elected by villagers to hold position for two years. The term of office is renewable.

Village Chiefs

According to Decree 29/CP / 1998, the village chief represents village communities before the Commune Peoples' Committee. Village chiefs, elected once every two years, are tasked to collaborate with economic organizations in guiding villagers to improve their productivity. Village meetings are venues where they formulate rules and regulations and express commitments to the set rules. These rules become the basis for one's behavior, social relations and production activities within the village. In village meetings, household heads organize to discuss and reach decisions on internal matters relating to production and infrastructure development. Villages can establish a conflict settling board, public security unit, production protection team, construction planning board, youth union, women's union, and others.

Equivalent Terms For Units of Governance

	CAMBODIA	INDONESIA	PHILIPPINES	THAILAND	VIET NAM
Hamlet (no legal status)	Phum – Thmei (20-50 hh)	Kampung (20-30 hh)		Klum Ban / Pok (20-30 hh)	Cum (20-30 hh)
Village	Phum (100+ hh)	Dusun (50+ hh)	Purok (20-50 hh)	Moo Ban (50+ hh)	Bàn / Lang (30-60 hh)
Commune (local government unit)	Khum (10-20 phum)	Desa (5-10 dusun)	Barangay (7-10 purok)	Tambon (8-15 moo ban)	Xa (8-15 bàn)
Sub-district		Kecamatan (10-15 desa)			
District	Srok	Kapupaten or Kota (10+ kecamatan)	Munisipyo (10+ barangay)	Amphoe (8-10 tambon)	Huyên (12-18 xa)
Provincial	Khaet	Propinsi (5-40 kabupaten)	Probinsiya (10+ munisipyo)	Chang Wat (8-20 amphoe)	Tinh (8-16 Huyên)
National Government	Kingdom of Cambodia (23 provinces)	Pemerintah Pusat Indonesia (32 provinces)	Republic of the Philippines (79 provinces)	Royal Thai Government (76 provinces)	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (62 provinces)
Population	10 million	207 million	81 million	61 million	78 million

hh - household

ASIA FOREST NETWORK
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