LEARNING NOTES

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Lessons Learned from Crafting the Technical Guidelines on the Forest-based Income Generation Models in Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

The project "Strengthening Community-based Forestry in Vietnam (CFM2)" was implemented in nine provinces showcasing community forestry sites, namely, Dien Bien, Son La, Lang Son, Cao Bang, Yen Bai, Nghe An, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, and Dak Nong. It was an offshoot of the project entitled, "Pilot Community-based Forest Management Program (CFM1)," which generated initial information on the potential of developing forest-based income livelihoods in community forestry sites.

CFM2 focused on the development of forest-based income generation model (FIGM) communities. This involved the identification and assessment of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) that can be utilized and processed for market purposes. Specifically, the study looked into how CFM2 serves as platform for (1) improving local livelihoods since most of the forest communities are poor and highly dependent on degraded forest cover, and (2) fostering local participation in forest protection and development.

The case analysis was conducted through a combination of primary and secondary data review and analysis. Information on the biophysical and socio-economic conditions were evaluated to reveal the impacts of FIGM communities in terms of the following:

- **Economics-** household income rate, product price, market demand, consumption form;

- **Environment-** survival rate, forest quality (forest cover, running water resources of the households, forest status, real state of the area), biodiversity (increase, no change, or decrease), land and water protection (good, no change, or not good); and

- **Communities-** capacity of the participants of the model, household economic issue, awareness of the local people on forest protection and development, participation of the local people in forest protection and development, employment opportunity, and community connectivity.

The institutions or organizations involved in the implementation of FIGM were also evaluated to assess performance across all project components, i.e., planning, organizing and directing, and monitoring and evaluation. It focused on determining the institutional capacity and needs to further improve the implementation of FIGM communities.

All findings were synthesized to develop and propose potential FIGM modalities. It involved the identification of alternative income sources particularly NTFPs. This will lessen the pressure and local dependency on wood harvesting, thus fostering forest protection and conservation.

KEY FINDINGS

Developing the Manual on FIGM (A Manual on Development of Several Forest-Based Income Generation Models)

A compilation of the outputs of the case study was developed to serve as guideline for planning and implementation of specific FIGM.

This manual has the following components:

1. **Research on consumption market of FIGM products capturing the following information:**
   - list of potential species (NTFPs) that can be developed under FIGM modality,
   - production and transportation cost,
   - price and potential demand of the product,
   - specific site/area for production

2. **Promotion and training on FIGM as a community-based livelihood opportunity providing two training sets:**
   - **Set 1-** FIGM site planning and development, which includes site selection, plant selection, planting techniques, and management and care of transplanted trees

   - **Set 2-** FIGM site maintenance and protection, which includes water, weeds, and fertilizer management, pest prevention, livestock management, and collection and preservation of NTFPs

3. **Management and monitoring of FIGMs highlighting the participatory groups from the local community and local government**

4. **Production, utilization, and market potentials of five NTFP species were identified**
   These species with income-generating potentials were *Canarium tramdenum* Dai & Yakovi (Cao Bang Province), *Morinda officinalis* Stow (Lang Sơn Province), *Xanthophyllum vitellium*-Forest Lemon trees (Lang Son Province), *Calamustetra dactylus* Hance (Yen Bai Province), and *Michelia mediocris* Dandy (Son La Province).

Strengthened tenure rights through FIGM

The study also highlighted the local communities' interest for the government to recognize their tenure rights over community forests sites that they are managing. This was captured in the on-going improvement of the Vietnam Forest Development and Protection Law, which was completed in 2016.

Connecting farms to market

The ability of the farmers to realize sufficient income from their FIGMs will be largely dependent on their ability to bring their produce to the market. This study identified some strategies on how FIGMs can be connected to the market to ensure that the demand for quality and quantity of farm produce will be met.

Harmonizing traditional and scientific knowledge

Combining the traditional forestry practices (planting, tending, land selection, etc.) with new and effective silvicultural techniques was underscored as essential to the success of FIGMs.

Careful selection of appropriate model

FIGM offers several modalities, hence, model selection should amply consider the site contexts. For example, Rattan Model is being recommended in the upland communities of Nam Chan village, Lam Thuong Commune, and Luc Yen district where topography is commonly rugged. This model will reduce the pressure of timber cutting, thus promoting soil stability and forest cover protection.

WAY FORWARD

- The communities, with support from the relevant government agencies and NGOs/private organizations, can expand the coverage of the technical guidelines to include other potential NTFP species to develop more local income sources. Furthermore, they can use the FIGM manual as a helpful guide for the selection and adoption of the appropriate and profitable forest-based enterprise models.

- Government, NGOs/private organizations, and the local communities can utilize the appropriate and effective media to disseminate FIGM guidelines. Other local governments and communities can learn from this and select or use the model that would best work for them.

- Cross-country case studies on similar FIGM approaches can also be conducted to further promote community-based forest conservation approach through lesson sharing among the participating countries and institutions.

Key Messages

- **Strengthening tenurial rights for long-term forest conservation.** Recognizing local access and management rights will promote a sense of ownership and responsibility over the forest resources among the Forest-based Income Generation Model (FIGM) communities. This will enhance their commitment to pursue forest conservation in partnership with the government.

- **Empowerment.** The conduct of livelihood trainings and institutionalization of FIGM, both as a community-based organization and a project, will help improve local capacities to effectively govern forest resources.

- **Linking farms to markets.** For farmers to realize sufficient income from FIGM, they have to be able to bring their produce to markets. Improved income can serve as incentive to farmers for them to use the forest and its products sustainably.