DEPARTMENT OF PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

Address: A3 Building, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
No. 02, Ngoc Ha, Ba Dinh, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Tel: +84 24 38 48 99 51

THE STATUS OF SPECIAL-USE AND PROTECTION FORESTS IN VIET NAM IN 2019

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Viet Namese Content Supervisor:
Doan Hoai Nam
Director, Department of Protected Area Management, Viet Nam Administration of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

English Content Supervisor:
Anja Barth
Chief Technical Advisor,
Project “Programme on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Forest Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Viet Nam”, GIZ

Author:
Le Thien Duc
Le Anh Hung
Tran Le Tra

Translator:
Bui Nguyen Anh

Viet Namese Editors:
Doan Hoai Nam
Tran Nho Dat
Nguyen Manh Hiep

English Editors:
Daniel Burns
Dinh Ngoc Han
Nguyen Thi Ha

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Nguyen Manh Hiep
Le Duc Khanh
Tran Le Tra

Designed by:
Mercury Creative JSC

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ABBREVIATIONS

BM	Boundary Milestone
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CCD	Centre for Nature Conservation and Development
EbA	Ecosystem-based Approach
FMB	Forest Management Board
FPMU	Forest Protection Management Unit
FPS	Forest Protection Station
FES	Forest Environmental Services
FFI	Fauna and Flora Conservation International
GIZ	German Development Cooperation Organisation
IUCN	International Organisation for Conservation of Nature
LPA	Landscape Protection Area
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
METT	Forest Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
NP	National Park
NR	Nature Reserve
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
ORS	Online Reporting System
PA	Protected Area
PF	Protection Forest
PFMB	Protection Forest Management Board
PFES	Payment for Forest Environmental Services
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
SAGE	Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SHCA	Species and Habitat Conservation Area
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
SUF	Special-Use Forest
SUFMB	Special-Use Forest Management Board
VNFOREST	Viet Nam Administration of Forestry
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: Le Duc Khanh

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

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Cat Tien National Park
Photo: Le Duc Khanh

Preface

The system of Special-Use Forests (SUFs) and Protection Forests (PFs) covers a total area of 6.8 million ha, accounting for about 46.6% of the country's forested area. The system is distributed across almost all provinces and cities from north to south. Out of the country's 63 provinces, 54 have a total area of over 2.16 million ha of SUFs under the management of 167 SUFMBs while 59 have a total area of over 4.16 million ha of PFs under the management of 216 FMBs.

The system of SUFs and PFs represents important ecosystems on land, sea, and wetlands, most of which are natural forests that play an increasingly important role in the maintenance and development of the natural system. SUFs and PFs contribute to socio-economic development, environmental protection in response to climate change, as well as to security and defence. Therefore, the management, protection and sustainable development of SUF and PF systems in Viet Nam is of great significance. However, pressure on SUFs and PFs is increasing due to socio-economic development while the level of investment in SUFs and PFs remains limited. Mechanisms to motivate stakeholders to participate in protection, development and investment, particularly for the private sector and communities living near forests, are still incomplete.

This report, the second in a series of annual reports on the status of SUFs and PFs in Viet Nam, is published by the Department of SUF and PF Management in collaboration with the German Development Cooperation Organisation (GIZ). Like the 2017-2018 report, in addition to providing important data, this report continues the discussions on recommendations and appropriate policies on the management, protection and development of SUFs and PFs in Viet Nam. Policies under discussion include those on investment in SUFs and PFs, buffer-zone development policies, mechanisms for participation and benefit sharing with local communities, self-financing mechanisms, and forest management and protection forces.

In addition to protecting and conserving the biodiversity values and ecosystem services of SUFs and PFs, in future it will be necessary to promote research activities on the development of forest products, forest speciality foods, and services to generate incomes for forest protection and to create a foundation for the development and maintenance of socio-economic development for local communities.

Dr. Doan Hoai Nam
Director of
Department of Protected Area Management

Lam Binh Protection Forest
Photo: Nguyen Manh Hiep

PART 1

OVERVIEW OF VIET NAM'S SPECIAL-USE FORESTS AND PROTECTION FORESTS IN 2019

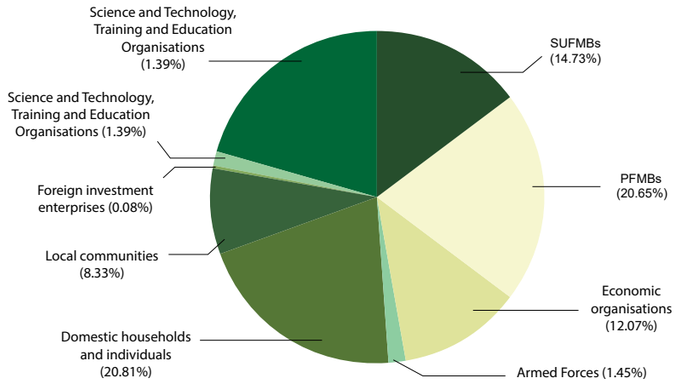
"SUFs and PFs have a very important role because they comprise areas of the highest biodiversity and are conservation areas for rare fauna and flora. They also include watershed areas, which are regulating "valves" for each climate sub-region, as well as areas accommodating tourism development, research, and learning. This is the core, the centre of sustainable development."

Former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Cuong

SUFs	PFs
The total area of SUFs is 2.16 million ha	The total area of PFs is 4.64 million ha
54/63 provinces and cities contain SUFs	59/63 provinces and cities contain PFs
Dak Lak province has the largest area of SUFs with 227,818 ha, accounting for nearly 10% of the country's total forested area	Nghe An province has the largest area of PFs with 291,071 ha, accounting for 6.3% of the country's total forested area
Bac Lieu province has the smallest area of SUFs with 248.8 ha	Bac Ninh province has the smallest area of PFs with 530 ha
There are 167 Special-Use Forest Management Boards (SUFMBs)	There are 216 Protected Forest Management Boards (PFMBs)

Box 1: Information on Viet Nam's SUFs and PFs in 2019
(Source: VNFOREST, 2019)

Figure 1: Forest area by type of forest owner



(Source: MARD, 2020)

Table 1: Forest area by type of forest owner

Forest owner	Area (ha)	Rate (%)
Special-use FMBs	2,152,460	14.73
Protection FMBs	3,016,541	20.65
Economic organisations	1,763,961	12.07
Armed Forces	211,808	1.45
Domestic households and individuals	3,039,597	20.81
Local communities	1,216,982	8.33
Foreign investment enterprises	11,277	0.08
Science and Technology, Training and Education Organisations	202,903	1.39
Commune People's Committees	2.993,692	20.49
Total	**14,609,220**	**100.00**

(Source: MARD, 2020)

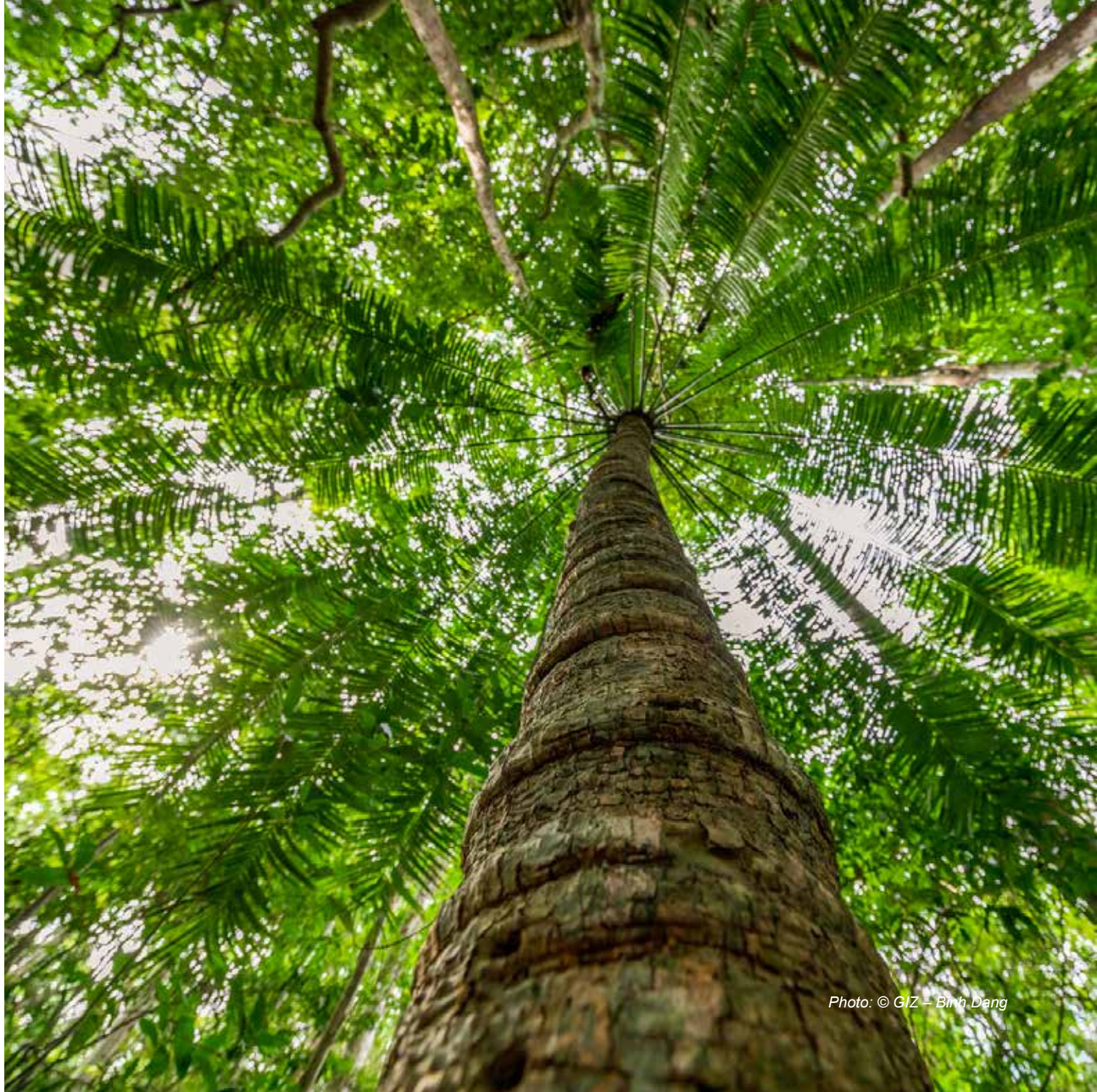


Photo: © GIZ – Binh Dang

1.1. SPECIAL-USE FOREST AND PROTECTION FOREST MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS THAT TOOK EFFECT FROM 1 JANUARY 2019

The Law on Forestry, which took effect on 1 January 2019, is considered a new chapter for the forestry sector. The Law covers all activities of the sector ranging from forest management, protection and development to forest product processing, forest product markets, as well as forestry sector structure. Government Decree 156/2018/ND-CP dated 16 November 2018 detailing the implementation of a number of articles of the Law on Forestry (hereinafter referred to as Decree 156) is also considered a regulatory innovation with one Decree covering almost all the issues related to the sector.

After the issuance of the Law on Forestry in 2018, by-law documents were developed and approved in 2018-2019, most of which came into effect in 2019.

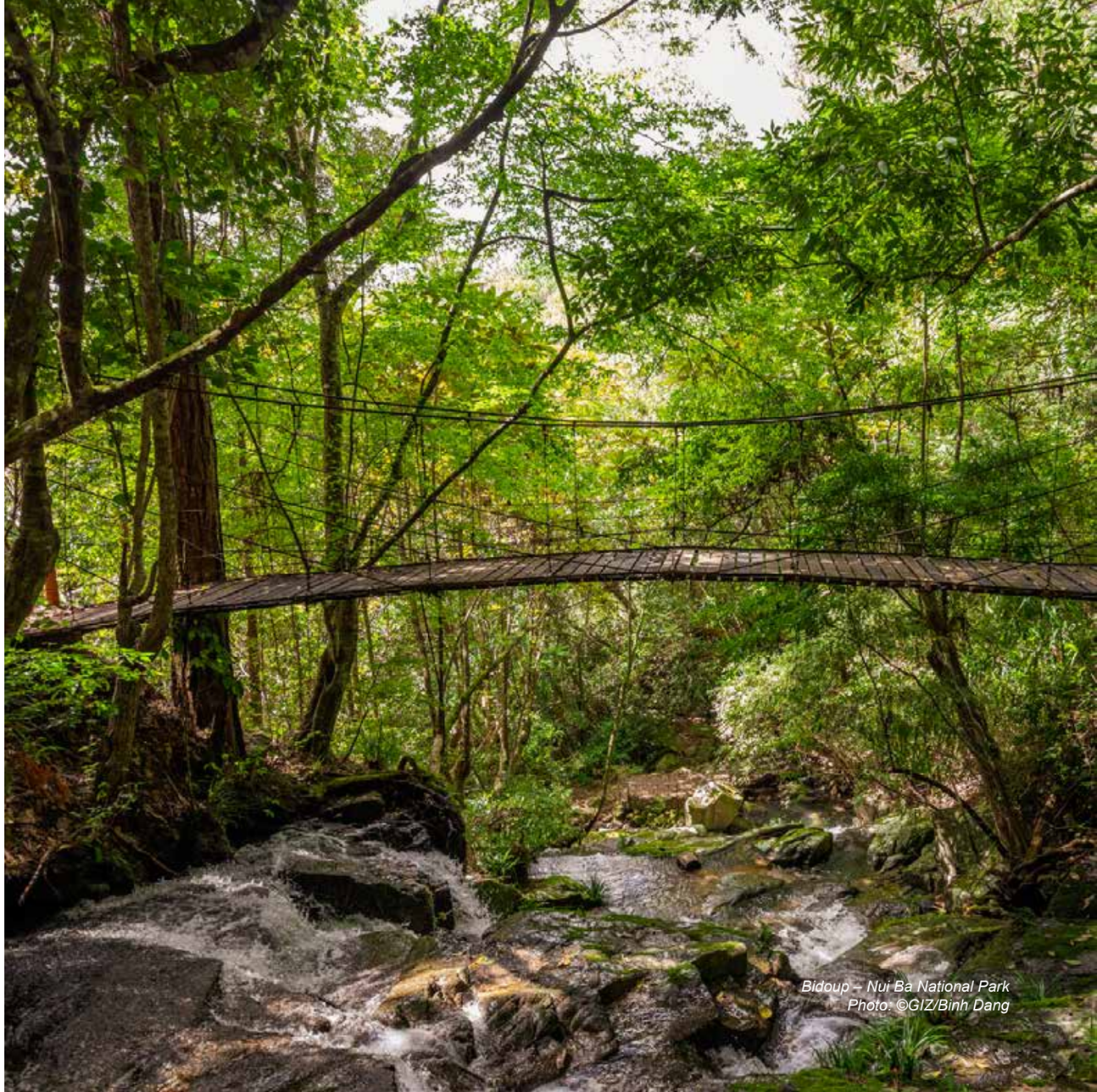
Table 2: Policies on the management, protection and development of SUFs and PFs issued in 2018-2019

Document number	Document content	Date of issuance	Effective date
Decree 156/2018/ND- CP	Decree detailing the implementation of a number of articles of the Law on Forestry	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Decree 01/2019/ND-CP	Decree on State's and the forest owner's forest protection force	1 January 2019	15 February 2019
Decree 06/2019/ND-CP	Decree on the management of endangered, precious and rare species of fauna and flora, and on the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES	22 January 2019	10 March 2019
Decree 35/2019/ND-CP	Decree on sanctioning of administrative violations in the forestry sector	25 April 2019	10 June 2019
Circular 27/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular on the management and traceability of forest products	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Circular 28/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular on sustainable forest management	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Circular 29/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular on silvicultural measures	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Circular 30/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular prescribing the list of main forest plant species; recognition of varieties and variety sources; management of key forestry plant varieties	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Circular 31/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular on forest boundary identification	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Circular 32/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular on methods of forest valuation; forest price frameworks for SUFs, PFs and production forests under the ownership of the entire people	16 November 2018	1 January 2019
Circular 33/2018/TT-BN-NPTNT	Circular on survey, inventory and monitoring of forest changes	16 November 2018	1 January 2019

1.2. NEW POINTS IN THE REGULATIONS ON SPECIAL-USE FOREST AND PROTECTION FOREST MANAGEMENT UNDER THE 2017 LAW ON FORESTRY

KEY CONTENTS OF THE 2017 LAW ON FORESTRY

- Forestry is an economic - technical sector along the value chain of forest products.
- Regulations on forest ownership:
    - *The State is the representative forest owner of forests under the ownership of the entire people.*
    - *Organisations, households, individuals and communities owning planted production forests, including: forests invested by organisations, households, individuals and communities; forests that are transferred, donated or inherited from other forest owners in accordance with laws.*
- Regulation on processing and trading of forest products.
- Management and protection of forest area and quality.
- Regulation on changing the use of forests to other purposes.
- Shifting from exploiting WOOD to FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES.
- Renewing organisation and management of the forestry sector.
- Forest owners can decide to organise, link or lease the forest environment in



Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Table 3: New provisions on the classification of SUFs and PFs in the Law on Forestry

SUF AND PF CLASSIFICATION		
	SUFs	**PFs**
2004 FOREST PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT LAW	• NPs • Nature conservation areas, including nature reserves, species and habitat conservation areas • Landscape protection zones, including forests with relic, historical, cultural and scenic heritage • Scientific research and experimentation forests	• Watershed PFs • Wind and flying sand shielding PFs • Wave breaking and sea encroachment PFs • Environment PFs
THE 2017 LAW ON FORESTRY	• NPs • Nature reserves • Species and habitat conservation areas • Landscape protection areas, including historical, cultural, and scenic heritage; sacred forest; urban environmental PFs, industrial parks, export processing zones, economic zones, high-tech zones • Forests for scientific research and experimentation; national botanical gardens; national seedling forests	• Water source PFs of the community • Border PFs

Box 2: Regulation on SUF and PF management organisations according to the Law on Forestry

SUF AND PF MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS	
SUF	**PF**
• Establishing SUF Management Boards (SUFMB) for NPs (NP); nature reserves (NR), species and habitat conservation areas (SHCA), and landscape protection areas (LPA) that have an area of 3,000 ha or more. • In case there is one or more NR, SHCA or LPA in the province with less than 3,000 ha each, only one SUFMB should be established in this area.	• Establishing PFMBs for watershed PFs, border PFs with a concentrated area of 5,000 ha or more, or wind shielding and sand shielding PFs; wave breaking and sea encroachment PFs with an area of 3,000 ha or more. • PFs not covered above are assigned to economic organisations, households, individuals, communities, and armed forces for management.

Dong Nai River – Cat Tien National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

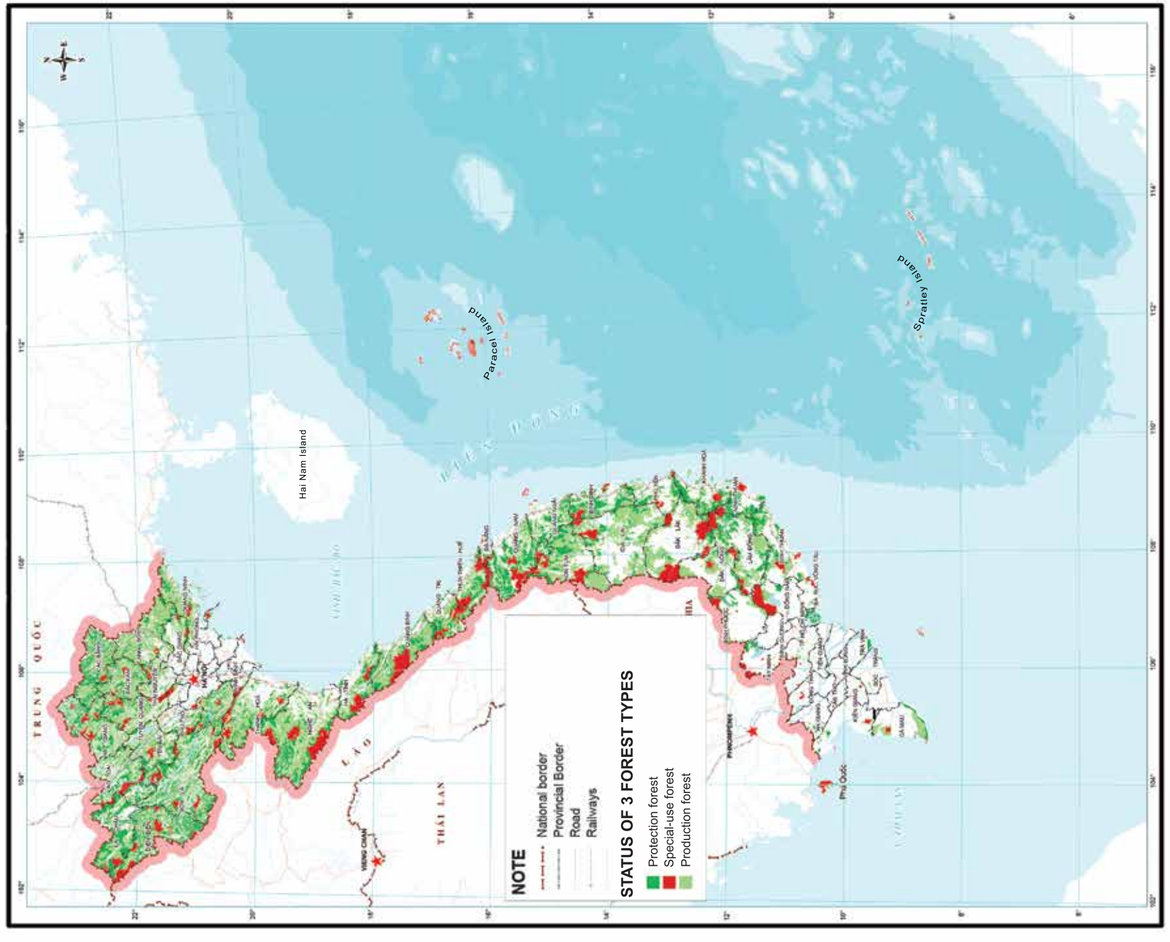
Table 4: New provisions on sustainable forest management planning in the Law on Forestry

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS		
	THE FOREST PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT LAW IN 2004	**THE 2017 LAW ON FORESTRY**
Name	• Forest Protection and Development Planning • Forest Protection and Development Plan	• National Forestry Planning (The Planning Law) • Sustainable Forest Management Plans
Contents of the Forest Protection and Development Plan	• Analysing and evaluating the implementation of the previous Forest Protection and Development Plan • Determining the demand for different types of forest and forestry products and services • Determining solutions, programmes and projects to implement the forest protection and development plan • Implementing the five-year forest protection and development plan on a yearly basis	• Assessing natural, socio-economic, national defence and security conditions; the status of the forest ecosystem, biodiversity, plant genetic resources, historical - cultural relics, landscape • Determining the goal, scope of management and protection; • Determining the area of degraded forests to be restored and preserved • Identifying activities of forest management, protection, conservation, development and use • Solutions and implementation organisation
Responsibility for formulation of plans and schemes for forest protection and development	• The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) shall organise implementation of forest protection and development planning nationwide.	• Forest owners shall develop and implement sustainable forest management plans. • Forest owners who are households, individuals, communities or households shall be encouraged to cooperate in developing and implementing sustainable forest management plans.
	• Provincial and municipal people's committees shall make local plans for forest protection and development. • District, town, and provincial city people's committees shall make local plans for forest protection and development. • Commune, ward and town people's committees shall make local plans for forest protection and development under the guidance of the immediate upper-level people's committees.	

FORESTRY, AGRICULTURE, AND FISHERIES PRODUCTION IN PFS

NEW PROVISIONS IN THE 2017 LAW ON FORESTRY

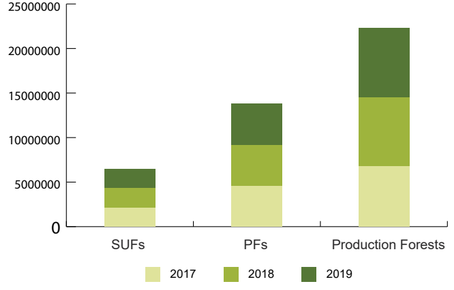
- Allowing inter-cropping between agricultural crops and non-timber forest products (NTFPs); livestock and aquaculture production under the forest canopy without affecting the protection capacity of forests.
- Allowing the use of non-forest land for agricultural and fisheries production without affecting the protection capacity of forests.
- Forestry, agricultural and fisheries production in PFs shall comply with the Forest Management Regulation and other relevant laws.



1.3. THE STATUS OF FORESTS IN VIET NAM IN 2019

The area of SUFs and PFs increased slightly from 2017 to 2019. In 2018 and 2019, the area of SUFs increased by 20,337 ha and 6,483 ha compared to the previous year, respectively. The area of FPs increased by 79.32 ha in 2018 and 58,079 ha in 2019.

The status of forests in Viet Nam in 2017-2019



Year	Forest area nationwide (ha)		
	SUFs	PFs	Production FRs
2017	2,141,324	4,567,106	6,765,936
2018	2,155,178	4,588,059	7,748,058
2019	2,161,661	4,646,138	7,801,421

Figure 2, Table 5: Changes in the area of three types of forest in Viet Nam in 2017-2019

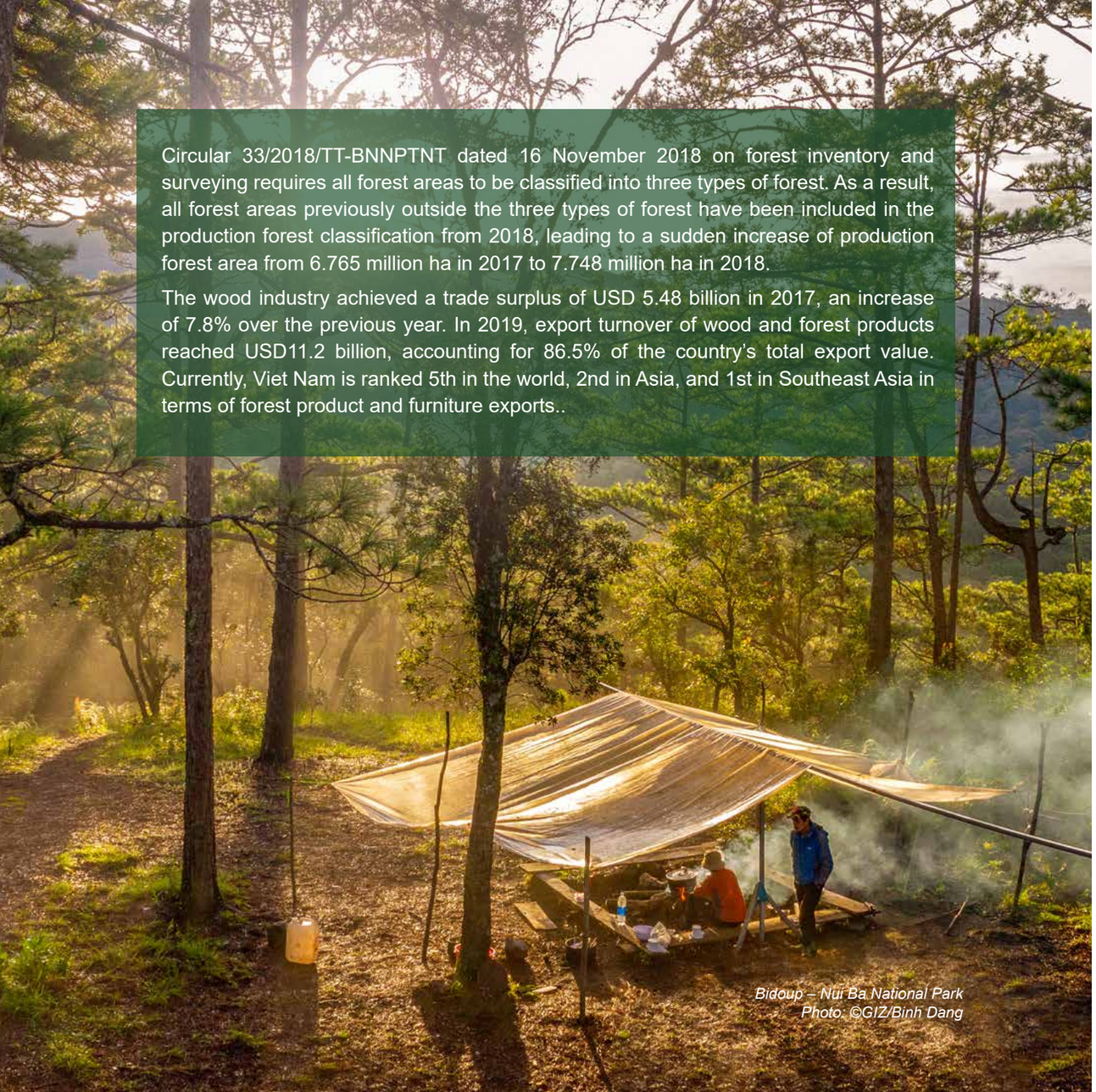
(Source: VNFOREST, 2018, 2019, 2020)

IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPORTANT TARGETS OF THE TARGETING PROGRAMME ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT FOR 2016-2020

Table 6: Implementation results of the Target Programme on Sustainable Forestry Development in 2016-2018 and 2019

(Source: VNFOREST, 2018)

Objectives and targets to 2020	Results in 2016-2018	Results in 2019
The Target Programme on Sustainable Forestry Development for the 2016-2020 period according to the Prime Minister's Decision 886/QD-TTg dated 16 June 2017		
Forest coverage will reach 42%	2017: 41.45%; 2018: 41.65%	41.89 %
Forestry production value will increase by 5.5-6.0%/ year on average	An average increase of 5.73%/year in 2016-2018	An increase of 5.5%
The export value of wooden furniture and forest products will increase from USD 8.0 to 8.5 billion	2018: USD 9.38 billion	USD 11.2 billion, an increase of 19.2% compared to 2018, exceeding the planned target of 6.6% (USD 10.5 billion)
15% of degraded forest ecosystems will be restored and preserved, especially the SUF system	According to the results of the review and adjustment of three forest types, the total area of non-forest land to be turned into SUFs nationwide is 169,884 ha. To restore 15% of this degraded forest ecosystem, 25,500 ha of forests must be restored by 2020. In 2016-2018, 35,273 ha were restored (31,060 ha of natural forests and 4,213 ha of planted forests).	
An increase of about 100,000 ha of SUFs	The total SUF area increased by 79,283 ha in 2016-2018	SUF area increased by 16,441 ha
The damaged forest area and the number of violations will decrease by 30-35% compared to 2011-2015	The damaged forest area decreased from 2,648 ha/ year in 2011-2015 to 2,428 ha/year in 2016-2018, equivalent to a decrease of 8.0%. The number of violations of the laws on forest protection and development decreased from 27,265 cases/year in 2011-2015 to 17,665 cases/year in 2016-2018, equivalent to a reduction of 35%.	The damaged forest area: 2,575 ha. The number of violations of the laws on forest protection and development: 10,731 cases.
Afforestation: 1,025,000 ha; including 75,000 ha of PFs and SUFs, and 200,000 ha of large timber intensively planted forests	SUF afforestation reached 47,400 ha, an average of 15,800 ha/year, reaching 63.2% of the Programme's target.	In 2019, SUF and PF afforestation reached 11,800 ha. The total area of new SUF afforestation in 2016-2019 reached 59 ha.
Forest zoning for natural regeneration: 360,000 ha/ year	Forest zoning for regeneration: an average of 345,000 ha/year, achieving 96% of the annual target of the Programme.	Forest zoning for regeneration reached 185,700 ha in 2019.



Circular 33/2018/TT-BNNPTNT dated 16 November 2018 on forest inventory and surveying requires all forest areas to be classified into three types of forest. As a result, all forest areas previously outside the three types of forest have been included in the production forest classification from 2018, leading to a sudden increase of production forest area from 6.765 million ha in 2017 to 7.748 million ha in 2018.

The wood industry achieved a trade surplus of USD 5.48 billion in 2017, an increase of 7.8% over the previous year. In 2019, export turnover of wood and forest products reached USD11.2 billion, accounting for 86.5% of the country's total export value. Currently, Viet Nam is ranked 5th in the world, 2nd in Asia, and 1st in Southeast Asia in terms of forest product and furniture exports..

Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Table 7: Area of three types of forest in Viet Nam in 2019 by ecological region

Ecological region	Forest area (ha)		
	Special-use	Protection	Production
Nationwide	2,161,661	4,646,138	7,801,421
Northwest	170,291	802,098	785,039
Northeast	339,567	1,164,328	2,421,330
Red River Delta	36,027	28,963	17,785
North-Central	613,453	872,229	1,631,240
South-Central coastal area	281,867	1,005,143	1,149,679
Central Highlands	479,254	545,567	1,535,134
Southeast	175,424	144,051	161,417
Southwest	65,778	83,759	99,798

(Source: VNFOREST, 2020)

Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

PART 2

THE STATUS OF SPECIAL-USE FORESTS AND PROTECTION FORESTS IN VIET NAM IN 2019

2.1. OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL-USE FORESTS AND PROTECTION FORESTS IN VIET NAM IN 2019

As of 2019, the whole country contained over 14.6 million ha of forests, of which, SUFs and PFs accounted for a total area of over 6.8 million ha (SUFs: 2,161,661 ha; PFs: 4,646,138 ha).

Figure 3: Area of SUFs and PFs in 2017-2019 by forest origin

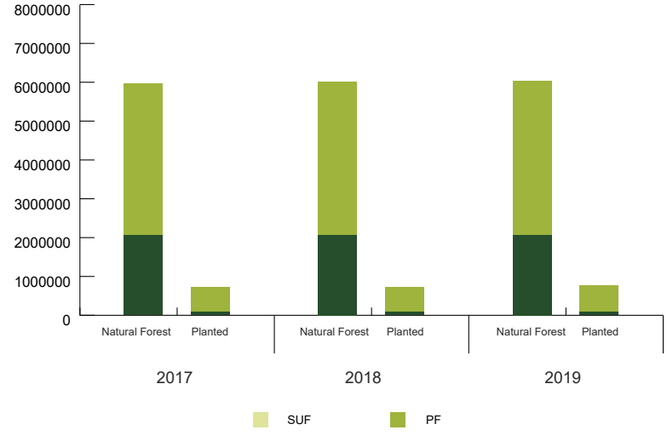


Table 8: Area of SUFs and PFs in 2019 by forest origin

Year	Type of forest	Forest area (ha)	
		SUF	PF
2017	Natural forest	2,057,932	3,913,584
	Planted forest	83,392	653,522
2018	Natural forest	2,071,628	3,931,584
	Planted forest	83,550	656,475
2019	Natural forest	2,075,091	3,953,408
	Planted forest	86,570	692,730

(Source: VNFOREST, 2018, 2019, 2020)

ESTABLISHMENT OF SUFMBS AND PFMBS

As of 2019, 167 SUFMBs and 231 PFMBs have been established nationwide. They manage around 46.7% of the country's forested area and represent most of the important terrestrial, marine, and wetland ecosystems. They manage mainly primary forests and are home to endangered plant and animal species.

HUMAN RESOUCES OF SUFMBS AND PFMBS:

There are 8,916 officers, employees and staff working at FMBs, 3,221 at SUFMBs and 5,695 at PFMBs.

In terms of qualifications, 39.7% of officers, employees and staff are graduates and post-graduates, 27.8% were educated to college and junior college level, and 32.4% are technical or manual workers. In addition, a number of staff work under seasonal contracts.

The ratio of officers that have studied political theory to advanced, intermediate and basic levels is 4.1%, 20.6% and 12.5%, respectively.

Monitoring biodiversity in Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Table 9: Qualifications of officers, employees, and staff at SUFMBs

Qualifications	SUFMBs	PFMBs
Professional		
Graduate and post-graduate level	2.036	2,716
College and junior college level	828	1,654
Technical and manual workers	357	1,325
Political theory		
Advanced	145	712
Intermediate	416	1,128
Basic	780	1,840
Other	1,880	2,015

(Source: SUF and PF Management Department, 2020)

Facilities for forest management, protection, development and biodiversity conservation

- **FMB offices and working locations:** FMBs have an average office area of 21.6 m2/person. Due to the lack of budget for repairs, many offices have deteriorated. SUFMBs have a total office area of 111,212 m2, an average of 31.7 m2/person and PFMBs have a total office area a 64,916 m2, an average of 11.5 m2/person.
- **Forest protection stations (FPSs):** There are 1,441 FPSs nationwide, with an average of 3,598 ha/station. There are 517 SUF FPSs, an average of 4,689 ha/station with a construction area of 110 m2/station. There are 924 PF FPSs, with an average of 6,424 ha/station and a construction area of 85.4 m2/station. Fifty-eight percent of FPSs are in good condition (mainly SUF FPSs), 32% are in moderate condition, and 10% are seriously degraded.
- **Boundary milestones (BMs):** FMBs have installed 22,291 BMs with 233 ha/BM on average. There are 7,011 SUF BMs, with 346 ha/BM on average and 15,280 PF BMs, with 3,884 ha/BM on average. However, the number of BMs is still limited. Only 53% are still in good condition, mainly in SUFs. The remaining 47% have been degraded or are no longer usable due to a change from PF to production forest or change of purpose.
- **Forest Fire Watch Stations:** FMBs have built 667 forest fire watch stations at an average of 7,775 ha/station. There are 389 stations in SUFs with an average of 6,232 ha SUF/station and 278 stations in PFs with an average of 21,350 ha/station. Many stations are old and some are now lower than the forest canopy and can no longer be used to detect forest fires. These stations haven't been sufficiently equipped with compasses, binoculars, area maps, radios or signal equipment, such as coloured flags, signal cannons, coloured balloons and alarms. One hundred and sixty-seven stations (25%) are in good condition, 367 (55%) are in moderate condition, and 133 (20%) have been seriously degraded and are in need of upgrading and repairs.
- **Fire-blocking runways:** There are 3,934 km of fire-blocking runways nationwide (white and blue runways) at an average of 5.7 ha/01 meter of fire-blocking runway. SUFs have 444 km (5,444 ha/01 km) and PFs have 3,490 km (1,692 ha/01 km).
- **Technical equipment:** FMBs, especially SUFMBs, are provided with forest management, protection, development, and forest fire prevention equipment. However, there is not enough and the quality is low. There is little equipment for scientific research and biodiversity conservation purposes; such equipment can only be found in large national parks, which are capable of mobilising support from national and international research and conservation organisations.

Developing nursery garden in Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

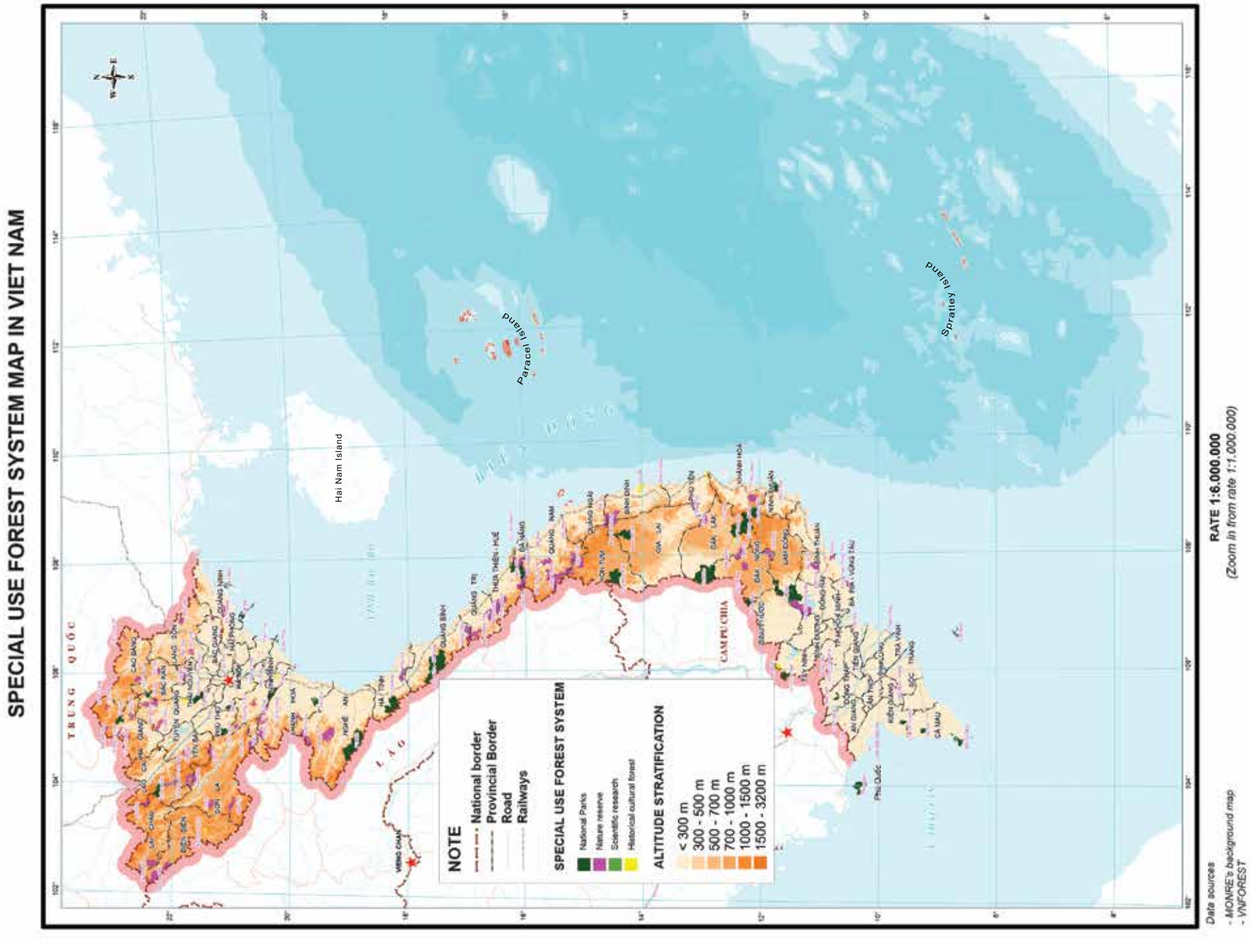
Scientific research: This is still a limitation of the SUF and PF management system, and mainly due to insufficient funds and equipment. In addition, there are few opportunities to cooperate with research institutions or conservation and development organisations.

- **Kinh phí nghiên cứu khoa học tại các BQL RĐD:** Tổng kinh phí 725.660 triệu đồng, trong đó: NSNN cấp 625.398,9 triệu đồng (86,2%); các dự án quốc tế hỗ trợ 100.261,2 triệu đồng (13,8%).
- **Kinh phí nghiên cứu khoa học tại các BQL RPH:** Tổng kinh phí 2.260 triệu đồng, trong đó: NSNN cấp 1.760 triệu đồng (77,9%); Các dự án quốc tế hỗ trợ 500 triệu đồng (22,1%).

Doing scientific research in Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Human resource development:

- The number of employees that participated in training programmes of more than one year in Viet Nam and overseas in 2014-2019 was 947, of which 742 were from SUFMBs and 205 from PFMBs. The number of employees that participated in training programmes of less than one year was 2,264, of which 2,083 came from SUFMBs and 181 from PFMBs.
- **Implementation of the "National Capacity Development Plan for the Protected Area Management System to 2025, with a Vision to 2030" (Decision 626/QD-TTg dated 10 May 2017)**
  - On 10 May 2017, the Prime Minister issued Decision 626/QD-TTg on the N**ational Capacity Development Plan for the Protected Area Management System to 2025, with a Vision to 2030** to encourage SUFMBs and PFMBs to apply advanced technologies to forest management and protection.
  - With the support of GIZ and the state budget, since 2018 the Department of SUF and PF Management (the focal point) has been organising management capacity building courses annually under the job title 'Standardised training curriculum for officers and civil servants managing PAs' (according to Decision 2601/QD-BNN-TCCB dated 4 November 2013). In addition, the Department of SUF and PF Management collaborated with the University of Forestry to develop a textbook *on Application of GIS/Remote Sensing Technologies and Training Materials for Management and Monitoring of Eco-tourism in SUFs and PFs.* The training programme includes modules on the application of SMART tools and the piloting of the online reporting system.
  - Several international conservation organisations in the country, such as WWF, FFI, Save Vietnam's Wildlife, GreenViet, and CCD, etc., are also actively supporting FMBs to enhance their capacity to patrol and monitor forest biodiversity. However, their number is still limited. The number of officers with opportunities to participate in training programmes within the framework of the **National Capacity Development Plan for Protected Area Management System to 2025, with a Vision to 2030** is only around 40 to 80 per year.



2.2. THE STATUS OF SPECIAL-USE FORESTS IN 2019

SUF area in 2019

The 2017 Law on Forestry and Government Decree 156/2018 dated 16 November 2018 guiding the implementation of a number of articles of the Law on Forestry stipulates that SUFs include 7 types or categories: (1) National parks; (2) Nature reserves; (3) Species and habitat conservation areas; (4) Landscape protection areas; (5) Scientific research and experimental forest; (6) Botanical gardens; and (7) National seedling forest.

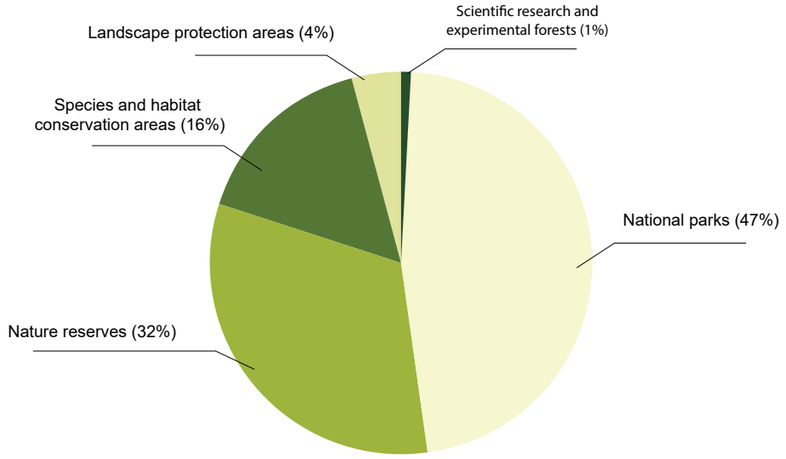
The total area of SUFs in 2019 was 2,373,640 ha, including 2,161,661 ha of forest land and 211,979 ha of land planned for forest development. The details regarding the management area for each type of SUF in 2019 is as follows:

Table 10: SUF area in 2019

No	SUF type	Number	Total area of land, SUFs (ha)	Forest land (ha)			Land planned for forest development (ha)
				Total	Natural forest	Planted forest	
Total area of SUFs			**2,373,640**	**2,161,661**	**2,075,091**	**86,570,00**	**211,979**
1	National parks	33	1,104,075	1,016,135	980,381	35,755	87,940
2	Nature reserves	57	758,594	690,512	670,953	19,559	68,082
3	Species and habitat conservation areas	12	385,722	354,975	348,223	6,752	30,747
4	Landscape protection areas	53	101,459	80,460	59,474	20,985	21,000
5	Scientific research and experimental forests	9	23,790	19,579	16,060	3,519	4,211

(Source: Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Figure 4: Percentage of SUF area in 2019



(Source: Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

In addition, according to the Law on Forestry, the SUF system has 3 additional categories: national botanical gardens, national seedling forest and sacred forest. However, these are new categories, so statistics in terms of quantity and area are not yet available.

Consolidating the system of PAs in 2018-2020

The Strategy on Management of SUFs, Marine PAs, and Inland Water Conservation Areas to 2020, with a Vision to 2030, approved by the Prime Minister in Decision 218/QD-TTg dated 7 February 2014 has the following target: "By 2020, the area of SUFs, marine PAs and inland water conservation areas will be increased to 9% of Viet Nam's land territory and 0.24% of Viet Nam's marine area". Thus, SUF is still being prioritised for establishment or expansion.

The system of PAs was approved by the Prime Minister in Decision 1976/QD-TTg dated 30 October 2014, with the objective of developing SUF area to 2,400,000 ha by 2020, including: 34 NPs, 58 nature reserves, 14 species and habitat conservation areas, and 61 landscape protection areas and scientific research and experimental forests under the management of nine scientific units. Specifically, the Decision included a plan for the transition of 146 forests; the upgrade of three nature reserves to NPs; a plan for the establishment of 27 new zones (one NP, four nature reserves, six species and habitat conservation areas, and 16 landscape protection areas). The results of implementation to 2019 are as follows:

- In 2016: 12 new SUFs were established and one scientific research and experimental forest was expanded with a total area of 25,441 ha.
- In 2017: two new SUFs were established with a total area of 34,784 ha.
- In 2018: one new SUF was established and two nature reserves were converted
- into NPs, with a total area of 19,058 ha.
- In 2019: one new nature reserve was established with an area of 964.14 ha.
- In 2020, seven new SUFs were established with a total area of 32,082.49 ha.

As of 2020, the total area of newly established SUFs is 116,144.52 ha. The total additional area of SUFs by 2020 is expected to reach 153,456 ha, achieving 153% of the target assigned by the Prime Minister.

Table 11: Implementation progress of SUF planning to 2019

Total SUF area (ha)			Compared to the plan (ha)
Năm 2014	Năm 2019	Plan	
2,265,753,88	2,373,640	2,462,652,33	89,012,33

(Source: Do Anh Tuan, 2020)

SUF development

- New planted forests in 2014-2019 reached 7,800.1 ha, of which NPs accounted for 4,877 ha; nature reserves: 2,553 ha; species and habitat conservation areas: 26.1 ha; and landscape protection areas: 344 ha.
- The total SUF area zoned for natural regeneration in 2014-2019 was 42,245 ha (7,040.8 ha per year on average), of which NPs accounted for 33,354.1 ha; nature reserves: 8,153.3 ha; species and habitat conservation areas: 128.6 ha; and landscape protection areas: 609.0 ha.

Investment in forest restoration and development: the total investment for SUF development in 2014-2019 was VND 200,260.3 million, of which 38.8% came from the central budget, 1.4% from PFES, and 59.8% from funding for alternative afforestation and international projects. Investment in zoning for natural regeneration without additional plantation was worth VND 13,135.5 million (6.4%) and new forest plantation on barren land was worth VND 189,124.9 million (93.4%).

Investment in infrastructure and equipment: The total investment for infrastructure and equipment for SUF management, protection, development, and conservation was VND 523,441.6 million, of which investment in infrastructure was VND 494,174.4 million (94.4%), including infrastructure for forest management and protection (VND 425,897.7 million) and fire prevention and fighting equipment (VND 68,276.6 million). Investment in equipment was 29,267.2 million VND (5.6%), including forest protection and management equipment (VND 27,092.9 million) and fire prevention and fighting equipment (VND 2,174.3 million). By capital source, VND 456,903.1 million (87.3%) was from the state budget and VND 66,538.5 million (12.7%) from other capital sources.

2.3. NEW CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL-USE FOREST

National botanical gardens, national seedling forests and sacred forests are new types of SUF specified in the 2017 Law on Forestry. Since they have just been included in the list of SUFs, statistics on these categories are not yet available. In 2019, the Department of SUF and PF Management, in collaboration with GIZ and PanNature, carried out a number of survey and research activities to develop specific regulations on criteria for identification of these forest types and management mechanisms, which were then submitted to competent authorities for policy making purposes.

Sacred forests have to meet such criteria as having environmental landscapes and uniquely beautiful nature, and an association with the beliefs, customs and practices of forest-dependent communities.

Scientific research and experimental forests need to include ecosystems that meet the requirements for scientific research and experimentation of science and technology organisations and training and vocational education institutions with research functions in forestry science experimentation. They must have an area suitable to the objectives and requirements of scientific research, experiment, technology development, and long-term training on forestry.

National botanical gardens are forest areas for storing and collecting plant species from Viet Nam and the world for research, sightseeing and educational purposes, with 500 or more timber species and a minimum area of 50 ha.

National seedling forests are forests of transformed and planted varieties of trees on the list of major forestry plant varieties, and must meet national standards for seedling forests, with an area of at least 30 ha.

Extracted from Article 6 (Criteria for SUF), Decree 156/2018/ND-CP dated 16 November 2018 (on the implementation of a number of articles of the Law on Forestry)

Botanical gardens:

Botanical gardens have a long history. The first botanical garden was established at the University of Pisa, Italy in 1543. Today, the world has about 1,775 botanical gardens in 148 countries. Besides, many countries also plan to establish botanical gardens for conservation, training, scientific research and eco-tourism purposes.

The activities of botanical gardens usually include: collecting plants; developing and taking care of landscapes; research; conservation; education and public relations; and travel and business.

Botanical gardens were developed quite early on in Viet Nam, from the late 19th century with the Hanoi Botanical Gardens established in 1890 and Saigon Zoo and Botanical Gardens in 1864. There are insufficient statistics on botanical gardens in Viet Nam, but based on the survey of a number of botanical gardens in ecological regions across the country, they include the following botanical gardens under different forms of management:

- Botanical gardens in the NR and NP system: These are the most important. They are fairly large, with a diverse collection of tree species, often located in the administration area of the NR, with collecting and planting activities on barren forest land or regenerated forest areas. Regardless of location, botanical gardens have been classified as part of SUFs with investment from the state budget. For example, Cuc Phuong Botanical Garden and National Park; Bidoup-Nui Ba Botanical Garden and National Park; Pu Mat Botanical Garden and National Park; Binh Chau - Phuoc Buu Botanical Garden and Nature Reserve; Cat Tien Botanical Garden and National Park; and Yen Tu National Forest;
- Botanical gardens belonging to training and research units: these botanical gardens were established within training and research units for the main initial purpose of research and training; the task of conserving genetic resources is a minor purpose. These botanical gardens receive investment from line agencies. Their area can fluctuate, but is generally relatively large. The collected species are mainly native trees, but the area may be larger than the unit's ecological area. For example, the Botanical Gardens of the Forestry University; the Agro-Forestry Practice and Experimentation Centre of the Northeast College of Ago-forestry; and Phu An Bamboo Garden in Binh Duong province.
- Botanical gardens are managed by provincial and city authorities. With investment from provincial governments, these gardens are generally not very large. The main purpose is to display the collection with diverse selected species from many regions, but in fact the viable species are those of the typical ecological region where the botanical garden is located. The number of rare and precious species is low because conservation is not the main purpose. Some examples include the Saigon Botanical Gardens, Hanoi Botanical Gardens, and Cu Chi Botanical Gardens.
- Botanical Gardens belonging to individuals, communities, social organizations. These gardens have limited resources, so their area is usually small. Plant species are usually collected by group of species in line with the owner's interest. The main purpose is for personal interest, not for conservation. The number of imported and foreign species is high with great attention to breeding and propagation.

Than Sa - Phuong Hoang Nature Reserve
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Sacred forests:

Sacred forests have a relatively special role. On the one hand, they are "associated with the beliefs, customs and practices of forest-dependent communities" (Article 6, Decree 156/2018/ND-CP). In this respect, sacred forests are classified as SUFs. On the other hand, many sacred forests also have such functions as "protecting water sources of the local community" and "providing water for daily life and production of the local community; associated with good customs, practices and traditions of the community, being protected and used by the community" (Article 7, Decree 156/2018/ND-CP). In this respect, sacred forests are classified as PFs. The most important feature of these two categories of forest is that they are both associated with the traditions, customs and practices of the communities that depend on them.

Some localities, especially the northern mountainous provinces and the Central Highlands, have quite a large number of sacred forests. In many places, each community or several communities share a sacred forest. For example, there are 53 sacred forests managed by 50 villages in 15 communes in Muong Khuong district (Lao Cai province).

Table 12: Sacred forests in Muong Khuong district - Lao Cai province

Commune	Quantity	Area (ha)
Ta Thang commune	3	2.67
Ban Lau commune	7	3.82
Lung Khau commune	4	4.83
La Pan Tan commune	1	0.94
Nam Chay commune	2	43.89
Pha Long commune	2	3.93
Muong Khuong town	2	1.86
Din Chin commune	4	5.54
Ta Gia Khau commune	5	7.58
Thanh Binh commune	3	3.95
Ta Ong Cho commune	6	12.51
Tung Chung Pho	2	13.41
Ban Xen commune	3	2.69
Lung Vai commune	6	4.21
Nam Lu commune	3	2.16

Sacred forests are typically from 2 to 5 ha, and a community's water source PF has an average area of 30 to 50 ha in the north (Nha, 2020). In addition to an area of 1,156,714 ha of forest managed by local communities, as of 2019, about 247,000 ha of forest and forestry land have also been managed by the community. These forests are small, scattered, and mostly sacred forests, ghost forests, and water source forests. These forests are either within the forest area managed by the Commune People's Committee or by forestry companies, PFMBs or SUFMBs (Nguyen, 2020).

Currently, conventional forests are managed and used in three ways (Nguyen, 2020):

- Conventional forests are assigned to communities for management. Currently, 524,477 ha of forests have been assigned to and managed by 10,000 communities.
- Forests have traditionally been managed and used by communities but have not yet been assigned to communities.
- Forests are managed by FMBs and forestry companies, but in fact, communities have traditionally been using them for everyday purposes.

In general, sacred forests and water source protection forests for local communities are effectively managed and protected (Doan, 2018).

However, challenges for conventional forests: 1) Change of culture, beliefs and faith of the community due to the import of culture, beliefs, religion, and farming practices; 2) Communities do not have the capacity or resources to adjust their management methods and cannot harmonise cultural values and beliefs; 3) There is limited awareness of the importance of conventional forests; and 4) State policy has not respected or recognised the customary law of ethnic minorities and local communities (Hoang, 2020).

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: Tran Le Tra

The management structure of sacred forests comes under three forms: fully managed by the community, managed by FMBs but used by the community, and co-managed by FMBs and community representatives.

Regarding governance, besides the State's governance system, the local community still maintains a traditional governance role decided by reputable people in the community, such as village elders, a council of village elders, or shamans/sorcerers.

However, the decision-making process related to forest exploitation and use is very transparent and open with the full participation of representatives of households and members of the community (Hoang & Dang, 2018). Currently, the Law on Forestry allows the allocation of conventional forest to communities for their management, but the Land Law does not allow this for sacred forests or water source PFs. This is an inconsistency between the Land Law and the Law on Forestry, leading to overlapping procedures for issuing land-use right certificates and conventional forest allocation decisions, which slows down the process of conventional forest allocation to the community.

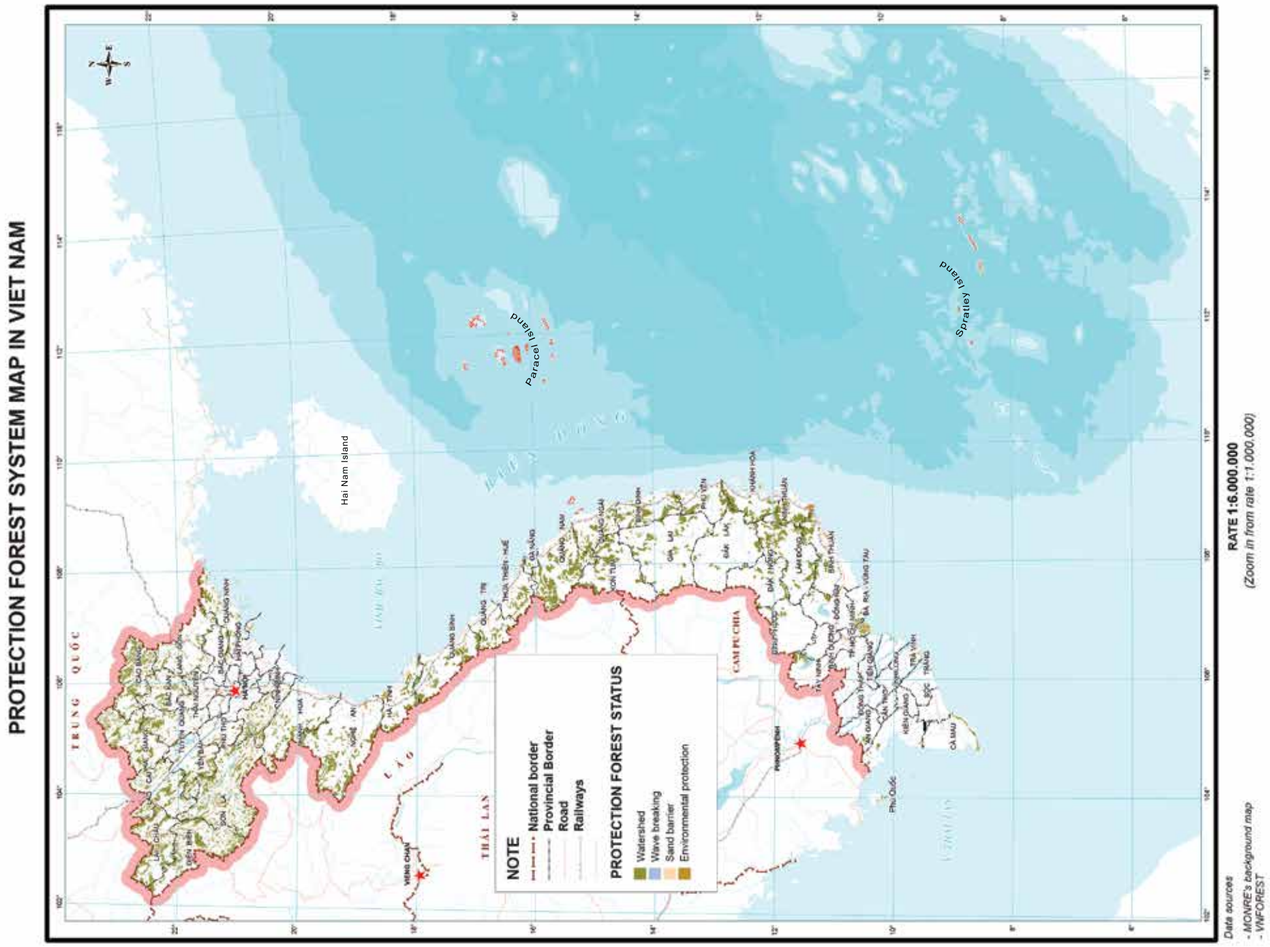
2.4. INTERNATIONAL TITLES

Many of Viet Nam's SUFs have made great efforts to develop their system and management capacity according to international standards and have received numerous international titles: there are 9 Biosphere Reserve Areas, 8 Ramsar Wetland Areas, 5 ASEAN Heritage Sites and 2 World Natural Heritage Sites.

Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

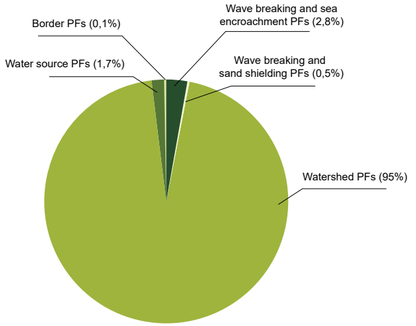
Viet Nam approached the IUCN Green List at the end of 2017, and in September 2020 Van Long Natural Reserve officially became the first PA in Viet Nam and Southeast Asia to be included in the Green List. Currently, Cat Tien NP, Con Dao NP, Pu Mat NP and Cuc Phuong NP are applying to participate in the process.

Van Long Nature Reserve
Photo: Tran Le Tra



2.5. THE CURRENT STATUS OF PROTECTION FORESTS IN 2019

Figure 5: Area of different types of PF in 2019



(Source: Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Table 13: PFs classified by forest type in 2019

No.	PF type	Total forest area (ha)		
		Total forest area	Natural forests	Planted forests
Total area of PFs		**4,646,138**	**3,953,408**	**692,730**
1	Watershed PFs	4,412,490	3,863,827	548,663
2	Water source PFs	77,692	33,268	44,424
3	Border PFs	4,611	4.517	94
4	Wind shielding and sand shielding protection forests	22,718	5,023	17,695
5	Wave breaking and sea encroachment protection forests	128,626	46,773	81,853

(Source: VNFOREST, 2020)

Viet Nam currently has about 4.64 million ha of PFs, including 3.95 million ha of natural forests and 0.69 million ha of planted forests according to MARD's Decision 1423/QD-BNN-TCLN dated 15 April 2020 announcing the status of national forests in 2019. Classified by type of PF, the area of watershed PFs includes 3.86 million ha of natural forests and 0.54 million ha of planted forests; the area of wind shielding and sand shielding protection forests is 22,718 ha, including 5,023 ha of natural forests and 17,695 ha of planted forests; the area of wave breaking and sea encroachment protection forests is 128,626 ha, including 22,810 ha of natural forests and 43,540 ha of planted forests; the area of environmental PFs is 101,792 ha, including 46,773 ha of natural forests and 81,853 ha of planted forests; the area of water source PFs is 77,692 ha, including 33,268 ha of natural forests and 44,424 ha of planted forests; and the area of border PFs is 4,611 ha with 4,517 ha of natural forests and 94 ha of planted forests.

In general, the total area of natural forests in PFs has gradually decreased from 4.3 million ha in 2010 to 3.86 million ha in 2019, and the area of planted forests has increased slightly from 0.61 million ha in 2010 to 0.69 million ha 2019. While the area of timber forests has seen little change and the area of bamboo forests has decreased slightly, areas of mixed forests, mangrove forests and rocky forests have increased thanks to natural regeneration zoning measures and planted mangrove forests.

Up to now, there is limited data on PF quality, reflected through the forest status announcement after the 2016 forest inventory was completed by VNFOREST. This data shows that the area of rich and medium natural PFs is over 1 million ha, accounting for 29.8% of natural PFs. Thus, it can be seen that the quality of natural forests has not met protection requirements; therefore, the forestry sector and the whole of society must make a greater investment in forests so they can be maintained and developed to meet protection requirements.

Decentralisation of management to PFMBs:

As of 2019, the whole country had 216 PFMBs assigned to manage 2,747,695 ha of forest land concentrated in key areas, including the Northwest, Northeast, Central and Central Highland regions [1]

[1] *In 2020, there were 231 PFMBs nationwide, of which five were under provincial people's committees, 153 were under DARDs, 55 were under DPCs, and 18 were under Sub-FPDs (VNFOREST, 2019). In addition, communities, households, armed forces and other actors managed over 330,000 ha of forests (VNFOREST, 2017).*

Among 216 PFMBs nationwide in 2019, the number of PFMBs under DARDs was 135, accounting for 62.2%; 65 were under district people's committees, accounting for 30.4%; 11 were under forest protection departments, accounting for 5.1%; and five were directly under provincial people's committees. Thus, the PFMB organisational structure is not consistent across the country.

Table 14: Decentralisation of PF management by ecological region

No.	Ecological region	Total	Decentralisation of PF management			
			PPC	DPC	DARD	Sub-FPD
1	Northwest	13	-	7	6	-
2	Northeast	32	-	9	12	11
3	Red River Delta	8	-	6	2	-
4	North-Central	40	-	8	32	-
5	South-Central Coastal Area	42	-	13	29	-
6	Central Highlands	48	5	12	31	-
7	Southeast	13	-	4	9	-
8	Southwest	20	-	6	14	-
	Total	**216**	**5**	**65**	**135**	**11**

(Source: Survey results, collected from localities in 2019; the Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Most northern and central provinces have not established coastal PFMBs. This is explained by the fact that the area of estuary mangrove forests is either small, fragmented or they have been included in established SUFs (Xuan Thuy NP, Tien Hai Nature Reserve, Thai Thuy Nature Reserve, etc.). One of the rare coastal PFMBs that was established is the Planted Mangrove MB of Kim Son district, Ninh Binh province, but they are managing quite a small area of forest (214.8 ha). Similar to SUFMBs, the direct management level of PFMBs varies from province to province. This affects forest protection and development activities, especially in case the direct management level delegate the management of a MB to another subordinated level.

Coordination between ministries, agencies, and central and local levels in developing the legal environment, in guiding and integrating the implementation of forest protection and development investment policies, and in organising the implementation of the self-financing mechanism in PFMBs is not yet synchronised and is significantly limited. The coordination between agencies and units in ministries, and among departments and agencies in localities is also ineffective. Each agency and unit has been assigned with functions and tasks, but implementation of a specific policy requires the coordination of many agencies and units under several ministries and agencies at central and local levels. To effectively manage this system, it is necessary to have a unified coordination mechanism among agencies and units.

Organisational structure of PFMBs:

The basic model of PFMB organisational structure includes a Management Board (including: one Head and one or two Deputies) and functional departments of the PFMB, including a General Affairs - Administration Division, a Forestry Technical Division, and a Forest Protection and Management Division.

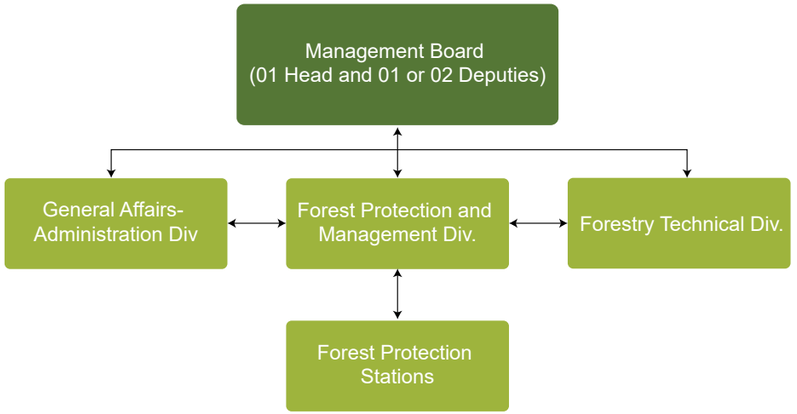


Chart 1: Organisational structure of PFMBs

Technical capacity of PFMBs

Among the total number of officers and employees working in PFMBs nationwide, the number with undergraduate and graduate level qualifications is 2,716, accounting for 47.7%. There are 1,654 employees with college or intermediate level qualifications, accounting for 29.0%, and 1,325 are technical staff and manual workers, accounting for 23.3% – these employees are low-skilled and a number of them work under seasonal contracts.

Table 15: Current status of staff qualifications at PFMBs

No.	Ecological region	FMBs (ha)	Staff qualifications at PFMBs			
			Total	Undergraduate and graduate level	College and junior college level	Technical staff
1	Northwest	13	251	145	82	24
2	Northeast	32	412	306	77	29
3	Red River Delta	8	127	82	6	39
4	North-Central	40	1,349	660	339	350
5	South-Central Coastal Area	42	1,292	487	416	389
6	Central Highlands	48	1,225	610	481	134
7	Southeast	13	600	233	161	206
8	Southwest	20	439	193	92	154
	Total	**216**	**5,695**	**2,716**	**1,654**	**1,325**

(Source: Do Anh Tuan, 2020)

- The capacity of staff is mixed and there are limitations and weaknesses. Many officers lack professionalism and expertise in forest conservation and development. Training reforms at PFMBs have been conducted at a slow pace. The policy of attracting talent is slowly being converted into appropriate mechanisms and policies; however, it is difficult to attract young intellectuals and highly qualified staff.
- The personnel policy is still inconsistent. Salaries, housing and emulation and reward policies have not created motivation for staff to be fully committed to their work. In PFMBs, forestry activities mainly focus on forest protection and management and forest law enforcement. Scientific research, animal and plant rescue, and activities for the identification and classification of biodiversity value are still limited. Therefore, in the coming time, there is an urgent need to strengthen capacity in biodiversity surveying and monitoring as well as in the use of high-tech forest protection tools.

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Facilities for PF protection and development

- Current status of PFMB offices

Table 16: Number of PFMBs by ecological region

No.	Ecological region	Year of establishment	Area (m2)	Total no. of FMBs	Current status of PFMB offices		
					Good	Moderate	Bad
1	Northwest	1998-2107	4,547	13	5	8	2
2	Northeast	1998-2017	6,626	32	3	27	2
3	Red River Delta	1993-2002	748	8	1	6	1
4	North-Central	1992-2017	17,731	40	9	25	8
5	South-Central Coastal Area	1989-2017	15,878	42	2	37	12
6	Central Highlands	1985-2016	12,635	48	11	34	4
7	Southeast	1986-2017	7,969	13	4	6	4
8	Southwest	1998-2107	7,841	20	5	13	2
Nationwide			**73,975**	**216**	**40**	**156**	**35**

(Source: The Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Current status of facilities for forest protection activities

Table 17: Current status of forest protection stations by ecological region

No.	Ecological region	Year of establishment	Number of stations	Area (m2)	Status of stations		
					Good	Moderate	Bad
1	Northwest	2000-2017	22	1,755	2	17	3
2	Northeast	1998-2016	61	5,025	9	46	6
3	Red River Delta	2010-2015	12	940	6	2	4
4	North-Central	1999-2018	195	14,225	30	147	18
5	South-Central Coastal Area	1989-2019	185	25,051	33	141	11
6	Central Highlands	1993-2017	167	9,786	46	106	15
7	Southeast	1986-2017	79	5,649	21	45	13
8	Southwest	1990-2018	66	5,088	5	40	21
Nationwide			**787**	**67,520**	**152**	**544**	**91**

(Source: The Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Table 18: Status of PF boundary milestones (BMs) by ecological region

Ecological region	Year of establishment	Number of PFMBs	Total no. of BMs	Current status of PF BMs		
				Good	Moderate	Bad
Northwest	-	13	-	-	-	-
Northeast	2011-2018	32	1,421	492	929	-
Red River Delta	2018	8	500	500	-	-
North-Central	2004-2017	40	2.713	20	2,365	328
South-Central Coastal Area	2010-2017	42	4.377	2,723	1,654	-
Central Highlands	2008-2017	48	1,566	218	1,348	-
Southeast	1999-2017	13	972	-	972	-
Southwest	2008-2014	20	2,400	-	2,285	115
Total	1999-2018	**216**	**13,949**	**3,953**	**9,553**	**445**

(Source: The Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Table 19: Number and status of forest fire watch stations

Ecological region	Number of PFMBs	Number of forest fire watch stations	Condition		
			Good	Moderate	Bad
Northwest	13	-	-	-	-
Northeast	32	4	-	2	2
Red River Delta	8	1	-	-	1
North-Central	40	151	82	54	15
South-Central Coastal Area	42	33	7	23	3
Central Highlands	48	49	19	26	4
Southeast	13	20	-	20	-
Southwest	20	10	6	-	4
Nationwide	**216**	**268**	**114**	**125**	**29**

(Source: The Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Table 20: Current status of fire-resistant runways

1	Northwest	13	82	1,645
2	Northeast	32	29	1,340
3	Red River Delta	8	1	-
4	North-Central	40	403	10,125
5	South-Central Coastal Area	42	468	1,949
6	Central Highlands	48	445	9,701
7	Southeast	13	706	5,628
8	Southwest	20	22	303
	Nationwide	**216**	**2,156**	**30,690**

(Source: The Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

Table 21: Number of PFMB's plant nurseries by ecological region

No.	Ecological region	No. of PFMBs	No. of nursery	Area (ha)	Budget (Mil VND)
1	Northwest	13	11	14,6	12,147
2	Northeast	32	10	3,6	3,804
3	Red River Delta	8	-	-	-
4	North-Central	40	30	16.2	5,063
5	South-Central Coastal Area	42	21	16.6	1,885
6	Central Highlands	48	5	0.8	3,099
7	Southeast	13	5	5.0	14,840
8	Southwest	20	2	5.2	4,284
	Nationwide	**216**	**84**	**62,0**	**45,122**

(Source: The Department of SUF and PF Management, 2020)

PF protection

- Violations regarding forest protection, development and management of forest products has decreased in both quantity and the degree of damage. The number of violations in 2018 and in the first 6 months of 2019 reached 2,264 cases (including criminal sanctions in 155 cases and administrative sanctions in 2,109 cases), in which illegal logging accounted for 39.3%; encroachment on protected land 25.5%; illegal deforestation 14.7%; violation of regulations on forest protection 7.8%; poaching in PFs 3.8%; illegal transportation of forest products 3.7%; causing PF fires 3.8%; and illegal storage of forest products 0.7%.
- Forest fire fighting and prevention continues to be addressed and is implemented under the principle of “four on-site”, which has increased investment from social resources and reduced damage compared to 2006-2010. The number of forest fires decreased from 571 cases/year in 2006-2010 to 384 cases/year in 2011-2016. The area of forest damaged decreased from 5,546 ha/year in 2006-2010 to 2,948 ha/year in 2011-2018.

PF development

- The total area of PFs planted in 2014-2019 was 49,681.7 ha, classified by ecological region as follows: Northeast 29.9%; Northwest 19.2%; North-Central 16.1%; South-Central Coastal Area 18.1%; Southwest 6.9%; Central Highlands 3.8%; Southeast 3.3%; and the Red River Delta 2.8%.
- The total PF area zoned for natural regeneration in 2014-2017 was 311,319 ha. The Northeast accounted for 39.7%; Southwest 20.2%; South-Central Coastal Area 20%; North-Central 9.8%; the Red River Delta 5.8%; Central Highlands 3.7%; Southeast 0.6%; and the Southwest 0.2%.
- Zoning to promote natural regeneration with additional plantations was mainly conducted in the PF system. The total area is 4,187.4 ha concentrated in the following provinces: Ha Tinh province 1,062.5 ha; Quang Tri province 200 ha; Quang Ngai province 1,472.9 ha; Ninh Thuan province 460 ha; and Binh Thuan province 460 ha.
- Forest enrichment was conducted mainly in the PF system. The total area is 3,012.8 ha, concentrated in the following provinces: Thanh Hoa province 774.6 ha; Quang Binh province 211.7 ha; Ha Tinh province 30 ha; Dong Nai province 647.2 ha; and Bac Lieu province 68.4 ha.

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

PART 3

IMPORTANT ISSUES IN SPECIAL-USE FOREST AND PROTECTION FOREST PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN 2019

3.1. SPECIAL-USE FORESTS AND PRODUCTION FORESTS IN THE VIET NAM FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021-2030, WITH A VISION TO 2050

Sustainable development is an inevitable trend and a mandatory requirement for all sectors. The forestry sector is a specific economic and technical sector related to natural resources, such as land and forests. Therefore, it is necessary to achieve economic, social and environmental sustainable development in this sector.

The Viet Nam Forestry Development Strategy for 2021-2030, with a Vision to 2050, the Sustainable Forestry Development Programme for the 2021-2025 Period, and the Sustainable Forestry Development Programme for 2026-2030 will determine the development direction for Viet Nam's forestry sector in the coming decades – as a sector with high economic value, contributing to the development of the country by preserving, conserving, sustainably developing and using biodiversity and forest ecosystems. Therefore, SUFs and PFs are set to play an extremely important role in realising this goal.

For SUFs and PFs to perform this role effectively, the Forestry Sector Development Strategy should emphasise the management, protection, development and sustainable use of biodiversity and forest ecology systems:

- The Forestry Sector Development Strategy 2021-2030 should focus on providing clear, specific and consistent policy direction for the three categories of forests.
- Maintaining and developing the existing SUFs and PFs on the basis of the objectives and targets set out in previous strategies.
- Fulfilling Viet Nam's commitments to the international community as well as environmental commitments in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.
- Promoting revenue generating opportunities for SUFs and PFs: fee-based forest ecosystem services, a carbon market, eco-tourism, and biodiversity benefit sharing, etc.
- Continuing to strengthen forest management: strengthening information, monitoring and reporting systems; and strengthening the application of remote sensing technology and techniques based on information technology.
- Conserving biodiversity and ensuring the provision of forest ecosystem services are strongly promoted and included in planning processes at all levels.

- Protecting forests, conserving nature and biodiversity to effectively contribute to watershed protection forests, coastal and urban protection forests, disaster mitigation, erosion control, water conservation, habitat protection and generating revenue from environmental services.
- Increasing forest coverage to 42-43% by 2010 and to 47% by 2020. By 2010, planting 0.25 million ha of PFs and SUFs.
- Minimising violations of forest resources.
- Limiting shifting cultivation.
- Developing and strengthening the PF system with a total area of 5.68 million ha and the SUF system with a total area of 2.16 million ha.

Extracted from Viet Nam Forestry Development Strategy 2006-2020 (Decision 18/2007/QD-TTg)

- Building capacity for forest owners: strengthening technical and management capacity to enable forest owners to apply more appropriate silvicultural management models and forest certification; and transferring knowledge from research institutions and universities for practical application.
- Forest and forestry land-use planning: reviewing and adjusting the national SUF and PF system towards improving biodiversity value, meeting national and international standards and requirements on watershed protection, erosion control, wave breaking, sea encroachment prevention, wind and flying sand shielding, environmental protection of urban areas, industrial zones, and borders and islands in the context of climate change.
- Implementing the Action Plan for the conservation of endangered, threatened, precious and rare species; continuing to review and supplement the Project on Conservation, Exploitation and Development of Forest Genetic Resources; developing and rationally using biodiversity values and forest genetic resources under three main groups: (1) Precious and endangered forest tree species; (2) Indigenous forest tree species with high economic value for afforestation; and (3) Endangered and rare NTFPs with economic value.

- Regarding SUFs:
  - Restoring the forest landscape and enhancing connectivity among ecosystems.
  - Strengthening the legal framework for investment and exploitation of new financial resources.
  - Resolving social issues and sharing benefits in ecotourism investment and development.
  - Ensuring community participation, gender equality in SUF management and equitable benefit sharing.
  - Issuing sector development policies to further improve the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation.
- Regarding PFs:
  - Applying proven ecosystem-based approach (EbA) solutions for natural forest and planted forest recovery.
  - Focusing on coastal PF development.
  - Developing PFES and provincial forest development funds to create a financial mechanism and dynamism for restoring degraded PFs.
  - Increasing the application of knowledge and using high quality indigenous tree varieties.
  - Ensuring benefit sharing, gender equality and community participation in restored forests.

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

3.2. SPECIAL-USE FOREST AND PROTECTION FOREST INVESTMENT

Decree 119/2016/ND-CP dated 23 August 2016 of the Government on a number of policies on management, protection and sustainable development of coastal forests in response to climate change.

Decree 75/2015/ND-CP dated 9 September 2015 of the Government on mechanisms and policies for forest protection and development associated with the policy of rapid and sustainable poverty reduction and support to ethnic minorities in the 2015-2020 period.

Resolution 30a/2008/NQ-CP dated 27 December 2008 of the Government on the Programme to Support Rapid and Sustainable Poverty Reduction for 61 poor districts.

Decision 38/2016/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister promulgating a number of policies on forest protection and development; investment in supporting infrastructure, assigning public service tasks to agricultural and forestry companies.

Decision 24/2012/QD-TTg dated 1 June 2012 of the Prime Minister on policies for investment and development of SUFs in the 2011-2020 period.

Decree 168/2016/ND-CP dated 27 December 1996 of the Government stipulating the contracting of forests, gardens and water surface areas under the Management Board of SUFs, PFs and one-member state-owned forestry agricultural limited liability companies.

Policies on investment in the management and protection of SUFs, PFs, and the development of buffer zones

In general, SUFs have much higher financial resources to invest in infrastructure and equipment than PFs. The main reason is that in recent years, there have been quite a lot of investment policies and support for SUFs (such as Decree 117/2010/ND-CP, Decision 24/2012/QD-TTg, and Decision 2370/ QD-BNN- KL, etc.), but not many similar policies for PFs.

- Investment in infrastructure and equipment for SUFs and PFs in the 2014-2019 period:

Table 22: Investment in SUF and PF management and protection in 2014 - 2019

Investment	SUFs		PFs	
	Investment amount (million VND)	Ratio to total investment (%)	Investment amount (million VND)	Ratio to total investment (%)
Total investment in SUFs and PFs	**VND 676,539.6 million**			
Total investment by forest type	523,441.6	100%	153,098	100%
State budget	456,903.1	87.3%	106,386.3	69.5%
Other sources	66,538.5	12.7%	46,711.7	30.5%
Budget for infrastructure	**494,174.4**	94.4%	117,768.3	76.9%
Forest management and protection	425,897.7		111,055.12	
Facilities for forest fire prevention and fighting	68,276.6		6,713.18	
Budget for equipment	**29,267.2**	5.6%	35,329.7	5.6%
Forest management and protection	27.092,9		32,884.041	
Equipment for forest fire prevention and fighting	2,174.3		2,445.6493	

(Source: Do Anh Tuan, 2020)

- **Investment in SUF and PF protection and development in 2014-2019:** The financial resources for contracted protection of SUFs and PFs is relatively even on average. However, the financial resources for PF restoration and development are higher than for SUFs because PFs are often degraded and there is more barren land to be restored and developed than there is in SUFs.
    - **SUFs:** Investment in contracted forest protection in 2014-2019 was VND 1,294,488.6 million (the level of support for contracted forest protection depends on each locality, but usually is not less than VND 300,000/ha/year), of which the money paid to households accounts for 56.4%, communities 32.3%, armed forces 4.7%, and others 6.6%. The state budget for contracted forest protection accounts for 69%, revenue from PFES for 30.2%, and other sources 0.7%.
    - **PFs:** Investment in contracted forest protection in 2017 was VND 764,758.7 million, of which the money paid to households accounted for 56%, communities 21.1%, groups of households 19.9%, and the armed forces 5.4%. The state budget for contracted forest protection accounted for 39.22%, the remainder from PFES.
- **Investment in restoration and development of SUFs and PFs**
    - **SUFs:** The financial resources for SUF restoration and development in the 2014-2019 period was VND 200,260.3 million, of which, the central budget accounted for 38.8%, PFES 1.4%, and funding for afforestation and international support projects 59.8%.
    - **PFs:** The financial resources for PF restoration and development in 2017 was VND 242,665.5 million, of which, the central budget accounted for 72%, PFES 5%, and funding for afforestation and international support projects 23%.
- **Revenue from PFES:** In 2019, the revenue from PFES nationwide reached more than VND 2,800 billion to pay for the management and protection of 6.3 million ha of forests, accounting for 43% of the country's total forest area.

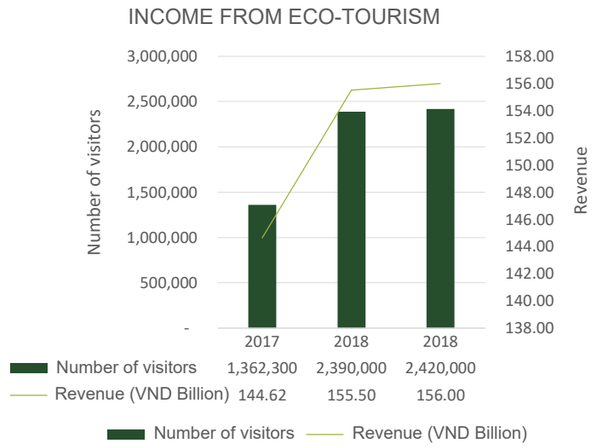


Figure 23: Number of visitors and revenue from ecotourism in SUFs in 2017-2019

(Source: Department of SUFs and PFs Management, 2019; 2020)

- **Income from ecotourism, leisure and entertainment services**

According to reports by SUFMBs and PFMBs, 61 SUFs currently provide ecotourism, leisure and entertainment services in 26/33 NPs and 35/122 nature reserves and landscape protection areas. 37 FMBs provide services themselves, 11 FMBs collaborate with partners and 13 FMBs lease areas of forest environment. In particular, Phong Nha Ke Bang NP and Ba Vi NP perform all 3 forms of the eco-tourism services mentioned above. However, 231 PFMBs have not yet organised ecotourism activities.

In 2018, SUFs welcomed 2.39 million visitors, an increase of 43% compared to 2017 with a revenue of VND 155.5 billion, an increase of 7% compared to 2017.

As of 28 November 2019, SUFs had welcomed 2,420 million visitors, with a revenue of VND 156 billion. It is estimated that the total revenue from ecotourism activities in 2019 reached approximately VND 185 billion, an increase of 12% compared to 2018.

Regarding revenue structure, revenue from self-provision of services accounts for 67.4%; leasing areas of forest environment 5.1%; collaboration with partners 3.9%; and revenue from selling entrance tickets to visitors according to regulations accounts for 23.7%.

3.3. PAYMENT FOR FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES (PFES)

PFES is still the largest source of non-state budget revenue. As of 31 December 2019, the Central PFES Fund had disbursed VND 1,925.8 billion to the Provincial PFES Fund, which has advanced over VND 1,000 billion to forest owners.

As of 31 December 2019, the revenue collected nationwide had reached VND 2,801,033 billion, equivalent to 87.3% of the 2019 revenue collection plan, and 95% of the same period in 2018.

Table 24: Revenue from PFES in 2019

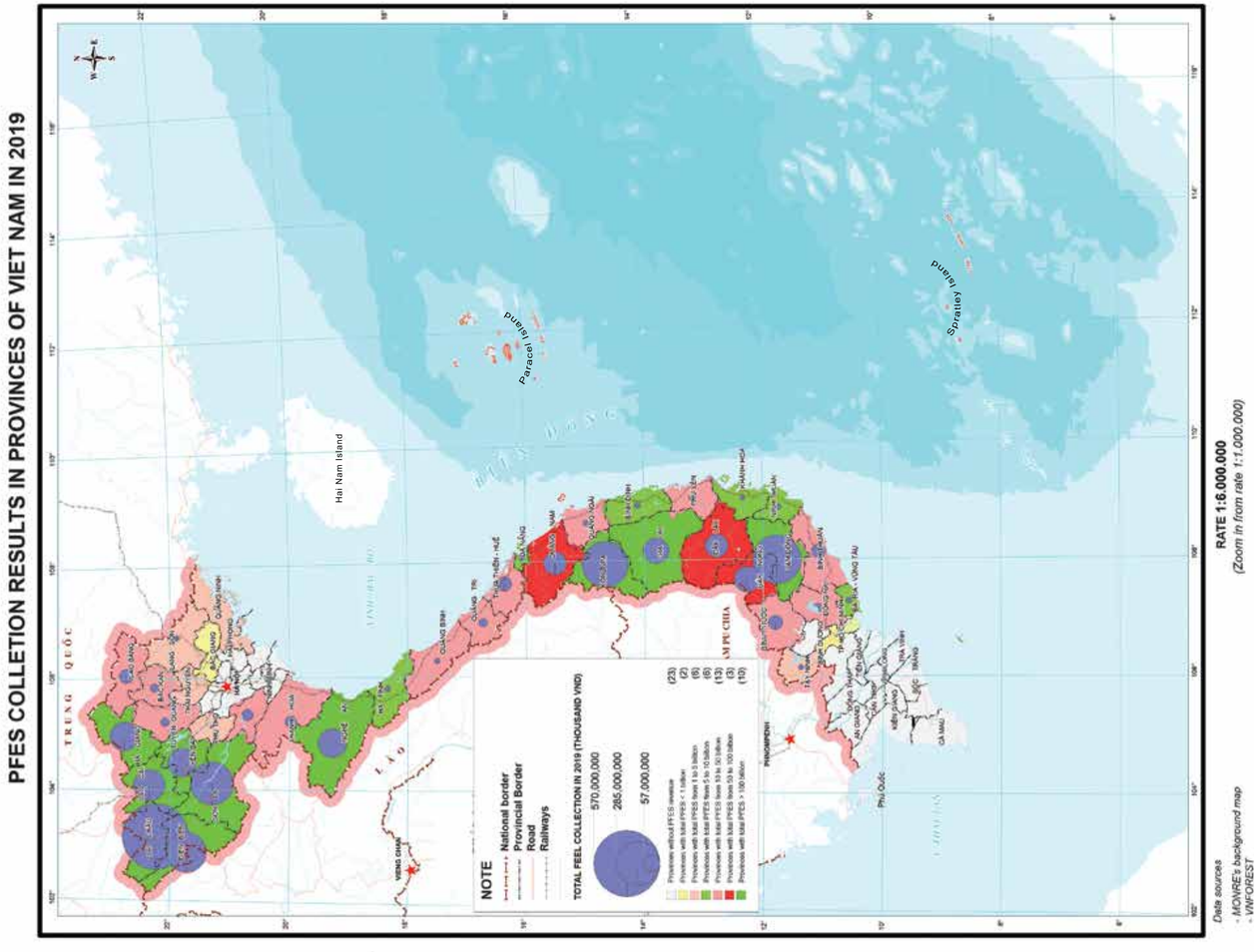
Level of collection	Revenue	Note
Central PFES Fund	VND 1,812 billion	79% of the 2019 plan, 88% compared to the same period in 2018
Provincial PFES Fund	VND 989 billion	104% of the 2019 plan, 107% compared to the same period in 2018
By type of service		
Hydro-power plants	VND 2,661 billion	95% of the country's total revenue
Clean water	VND 66,78 billion	2.3% of the country's total revenue
Tourism	VND 51 billion	1.82% of the country's total revenue
Industrial establishments	VND 3,66 billion	0.13% of the country's total revenue
Bank interest	VND 18,2 billion	0.6% of the country's total revenue

(Source: Forest Protection and Development Fund, 2020)

According to Decree 156/2018/ND-CP, there are now two new types of PFES: industrial production and aquaculture service facilities, which are widely deployed nationwide. For industrial production facilities using water directly from water sources, 25 provinces and cities have developed the current list of facilities subject to PFES and 214 contracts have been signed for a total value of VND 3.65 billion, increasing the total number of PFES entrustment contracts across the country to 871.

For aquaculture services that are subject to direct fee collection, so far three provinces have reviewed the list and signed contracts with 11 aquaculture production facilities.

Cat Tien National Park
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang



Support for forest protection from PFES in 2019

In 2019, the total forest area receiving management support through PFES was 6.3 million ha, accounting for 43% of the total national forest area, including 2.55 million ha owned by 34,562 individuals, households, communities, groups of households and other organisations.

Table 25: Area contracted for forest protection by type of forest owner in 2019

No.	Forest owner	Quantity	Management area (ha)	Contracted area for management and protection (ha)
1	PFMBs, SUFMBs	226	3,033,000	2,018,000
2	Forestry enterprises	81	655,124	180,998
3	Commune people's committees	865	716,192	292,887
4	Police agencies, armed forces, enterprises, management and research centres	248	139,800	65,989
5	Individuals, households, communities	138,051	295,989	295,989

(Source: Viet Nam Forest Protection and Development Fund, 2020)

3.4. IMPLEMENTATION OF SELF-FINANCING MECHANISMS AT SUFMBS AND PFMBS

Implementing state management tasks in the self-financing mechanisms

- **Planning of the network of economic and public service agencies:** According to reports from 129 SUFMBs and PFMBs, city and provincial people's committees have not yet approved planning for the network of economic and public service agencies in localities.
- **Promulgating the list of public services using the state budget**
  - MARD submitted Decision 254/QD-TTg dated 22 February 2017 to the Prime Minister issuing the list of public services using the state budget in other economic and public service sectors. Accordingly, in the forestry sector, there are five public service units using the state budget, including: (1) Forest protection and development; (2) Conservation, rescue and restoration of forest ecological systems and resources; (3) Forestry survey and planning; (4) Statistics and inventory in the forestry sector; and (5) Forestry museums and the preservation of samples. However, up to now, the implementation of assigned tasks still faces problems.
  - According to FMB reports, PPCs have not yet issued a list of public services using the state budget in localities, so PFMBs and SUFMBs are confused regarding implementation of the self-financing mechanism.
- **Issuance of economic and technical norms applicable to public services**
  - Up to now, economic and technical norms applicable to public services in the forestry sector have not been issued. However, in 2015 MARD issued Decision 2276/QD-BNN-TCCB dated 16 June 2015 on the implementation plan of Decree 16/2015/ND-CP.
  - In 2019, MARD and its subordinate agencies continued to issue official letters (217/BNN-TC dated 14 January 2019; 991/BNN-KHCN dated 18 February 2019; 647/TCLN-KHTC dated 5 May 2019) to urge the review and development of economic and technical norms, but there has been no progress so far.
  - Due to the delay in developing the list of public services and in issuing economic and technical norms, other contents on state management specified in Article 4 of Decree 141/2016/ND-CP have not been implemented. Specifically:

- *Regulations on quality criteria, standards, monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of public services; performance of other public service units.*
- *Regulations on the roadmap for calculating full prices and fees of public services for other economic and public service units.*
- *Regulations on inspecting, examining and sanctioning violations in the provision of public services in other economic and public service fields.*

Thus, after 3 years implementing Decree 141/2016/ND-CP, the tasks specified in Article 4 of the Decree have not been completed. Therefore, the contents specified in Article 9, 10, 11 of this Decree cannot be implemented.

Implementation of the self-financing mechanism at SFMBs and PFMBs

- **Developing and approving options of self-financing mechanisms and levels**

According to reports by 129 FMBs submitted to VNFOREST (September 2019), 110/129 FMBs have had their self-financing plan approved (85.27 %), including FMBs under MARD: 6/6 NPs (100%); and 104/123 SUFMBs and PFMBs under local state management agencies (84.55% of FMBs have submitted their reports). There are 19/123 FMBs (15.45 %) that have not yet had their self-financing plans approved.

- **Level of self-financingủ**
  - Data collected from 129 FMBs show that no FMB has been fully self-financed in both investment and recurrent expenditure (0%); 9/129 FMBs have been 100% self-financed in recurrent expenditure (6.97%); 30/129 FMBs have partially self-financed in recurrent expenditure (23.26%); and 90/129 FMBs' recurrent expenditure is covered by the state budget (69.77%).
  - Thus, only 9 FMBs have been 100% self-financed in recurrent expenditure, accounting for less than 7% of the total number of FMBs that have submitted reports. Among them are 5 NPs (Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Tien, Ta Dung, and Dak Nong); 2 NRs (Nam Nung Dak Nong and Suoi Mo Bac Giang); and 2 PFMBs (Muong Te in Lai Chau province and Xuan Loc in Dong Nai province). In particular, Muong Te PFMB receives its main revenue from PFES and Xuan Loc PFMB receives its main revenue from production, business and service activities.

- **Classification of FMB self-financing levels by forest category**
    - Of the 129 reports, 62 are from SUFMBs (29 NPs, 33 NRs) and 67 are from PFMBs.
    - Self-financing levels of SUFMBs: 7 SUFMBs have been 100% self-financed in recurrent expenditure (11.29%); 14 SUFMBs have been partially self-financed in recurrent expenditure (22.58%); and 41 SUFMBs' recurrent expenditure is covered by the state budget (66.13%).
    - Self-financing levels of PFMBs: 2 PFMBs have been 100% self-financed in recurrent expenditure (2.99%); 5 PFMBs have partially self-financed in recurrent expenditure (22.38%); and 50 PFMBs' recurrent expenditure is covered by the state budget (74.63%).

Implementation results of the self-financing mechanism at FMBs show that SUFMBs have a higher degree of self-financing in recurrent expenditure than PFMBs and the state budget has to cover more recurrent expenditure for PFMBs than SUFMBs. Up to 70% of PFMBs' and SUFMBs' recurrent expenditure is covered by the state budget. PFMBs and SUFMBs still face many difficulties in attracting non-state financial resources. The state budget is still the main source of investment in forest protection and development.

3.5. SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING

All SUFMBs and PFMBs have to develop sustainable forest management plans. This is stipulated in Article 27 of the 2017 Law on Forestry and Circular 28/2018/TT-BNNPTNT.
Forest owners develop the plans by themselves or hire consultants.
The contents of Sustainable Management Plans for SUFs include:

- Assessing the natural, socio-economic, national defence and security conditions, and the status of forest ecosystems, biodiversity, historical-cultural relics, and landscapes.
- Determining the objectives and scope of sustainable forest management in the implementation stage.
- Determining the forest area in degraded functional areas to be restored and reserved.
- Determining forest management, protection, conservation, development and use activities.
- Solutions to implement sustainable forest management plans.

Workshop on Forest Governance at Tram Tau PFMB
Photo: Tran Le Tra

The contents of sustainable management plans for PFs include:

- Assessing the natural, socio-economic, national defence and security conditions; and assessing the status of forest ecosystems, biodiversity, historical-cultural relics, and landscapes.
- Determining the objectives and scope of sustainable forest management in the implementation stage.

Determining forest protection functions according to the PF criteria specified in the Forest Management Regulation, in accordance with the allocated area.

- Determining forest management, protection, conservation, development and use plans.
- Developing solutions to implement sustainable forest management plans.

The maximum implementation time of a sustainable forest management plan is 10 years from the date of approval. In case the competent state agency adjusts the forest and forest land area that affects the use purpose, the forest owner must revise the sustainable forest management plan and submit it to the competent authority for approval according to Circular 28/2018/TT-BNNPTNT.

The process for developing sustainable forest management plans focuses on the participation of and consultation with stakeholders, which includes:

- Working with communities, local people and other stakeholders to identify forests of cultural, religious and recreational significance on maps and on site for documentation and incorporation into the forest management and protection plan.
- The management, protection and use of forests that have been identified as forests with cultural, religious and recreational significance should be done in consultation with local communities, local people and other stakeholders.
- Consulting with stakeholders to make the list and distribution maps to zone habitats on the maps and collect information about species to be protected in accordance with Viet Namese and international laws.
- Developing solutions to implement the sustainable forestry management plan in collaboration with stakeholders.

According to local reports, up to now, 128 FMBs have developed their sustainable forestry management plans. Specifically, as in the following table:

Blue Peacok at Cat Tien National Park
Photo: Nguyen Manh Hiep

Table 26: Update on the progress of SUFMBs' and PFMBs' sustainable forest management plans

Forest owner	Status of SFMP development		Total
	Completed	Under development	
SUFMBs	9	57	66
PFMBs	13	49	62
Total			**128**

(Source: VNFOREST, 2020)

3.6. MOBILISING THE PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS AND EQUAL BENEFIT SHARING

Ensuring stability, social security, livelihoods and development opportunities for communities in SUF and PF buffer zones has always been an important goal of the forestry sector. Over the past years, MARD has piloted a number of forest management and governance models with the participation of the community and appropriate benefit sharing, typically the contracting policy for forest protection (PFES), the co-management model, the sustainable NTFP harvesting model, models for inter-cropping with medicinal plants and high economic value plants under the forest canopy, and community participation in ecotourism.

Up to now, in addition to PFES policy, which has been implemented nationwide with quite positive results, other models still need further study and evaluation before they are converted into policies.

Important limitations often encountered in implementing models of co-management or benefit sharing associated with community responsibility include: low awareness of the parties, especially the low level of local people's responsibility and commitment to resource protection; inefficient cross-checking and monitoring among the involved parties; unfair benefit sharing plans among community members; and different positions of each party in the decision-making process.

Nature Reserve management model with community participation and benefit-sharing mechanism (co-management model)

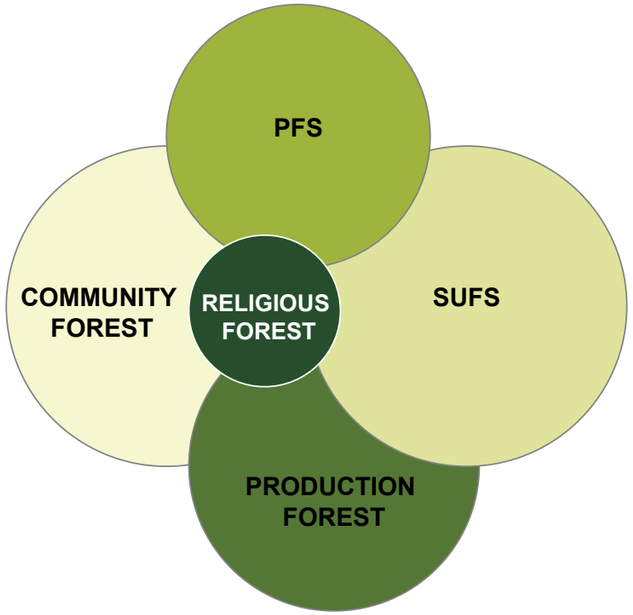
Implementing Decision 126/QD-TTg dated 2 February 2012 on piloting benefit sharing in management, protection and sustainable development of SUFs, MARD approved the Benefit Sharing Plan in Forest Management, Protection and Sustainable for Bach Ma NP (Decision 2394/QD-BNN-TCLN dated 2 October 2012), Xuan Thuy NP (Decision 1010/QD- BNN-TCLN dated 7 May 2013), and Hoang Lien NP (Decision 1979/QD-BNN-TCLN dated 27 August 2013).

The results of the pilot benefit sharing model in management, protection and sustainable development of SUFs are as follows:

- Livelihood models have shown initial positive results, contributing to raising people's incomes.
- Local people want to share benefits and they voluntarily participate in and are committed to implementing the co-management and benefit sharing model, but in reality they have not fulfilled their commitments on sustainable natural resource exploitation.
- Some measures in the benefit sharing plan are not specific enough for application in practice.

Therefore, there is no basis to replicate the co-management and benefit sharing model with the participation of local communities in 2018-2020.

Governance model for sacred forests and water source PFs:



Sacred forests are a relatively special type of forest. Although classified as SUF, sacred forests currently exist in all 3 types of forest: SUFs, PFs and production forests. Some sacred forests are completely managed by the local community, others are managed by FMBs with communities having the right of use. In some cases, the forest owner, which is a state organisation, and the community together establish a management board with representatives from both sides to jointly manage the sacred forest. However, in whatever form of management, community members always participate in protection and receive benefits of religious practices, NTFPs, timber for common community purposes (approved by the competent agency), and water sources.

Thanks to the religious factor and the water protection function, most sacred forests are managed very effectively. The most important limitation is the lack of consistency between the Law on Land (not allocating land to the community) and the Law on Forestry (allowing the allocation of land to the community). This leads to a situation where the community conducts the right to inspect, supervise and protect the sacred forest without full ownership rights. In some cases, violations regarding the management of sacred forests and community forests that are natural forests are handled according to village customary laws instead of state laws.

Planting medicinal plants under the forest canopy: This is an emerging model in recent years that is considered to bring good economic efficiency while contributing effectively to poverty reduction for ethnic minority communities in upland areas. At the same time it attaches community responsibility to forest protection. Many successful examples of planting medicinal plants and indigenous plants under the forest canopy have been promoted and replicated, such as the model for planting Viet Namese ginseng *(Panax Viet Namensis), Dang sam (Codonopsis spp.)*,*Sa nhan tim (Amomum longiligulare)*, and *Ba kich (Morinda officinalis)* in southern mountainous districts in Quang Nam province; the model for agro-forestry production with *Hong quan (Flacourtia jangomas)*, *Dinh lang (Polyscias fruticosa)*, red turmeric, *Ngai den (Kaempferia parviflora)*, etc., under the forest canopy in An Giang province; the model for growing *Ba kich (Morinda officinalis)* in Thai Nguyen province; and *Sa nhan tim (Amomum longiligulare)* in Kon Tum province and Lan *kim tuyen (Anoectochilus spp.)* in Cao Bang province. Farmers are supported in product chain development and market access for some of a number of the models mentioned above.

However, the selection of the right plant species for inter-cropping under the forest canopy at a suitable density, area and topography plays an important role in forest protection. The model for planting black cardamom in northern mountainous provinces brings high economic benefits, but also significant negative impacts on the forest ecosystem.

Black cardamom is an important crop for poverty reduction among ethnic minorities in northern mountainous provinces. According to the model's design, planting black cardamom in the forest will attach responsibility on local people for forest protection.

However, the development and expansion of black cardamom has left negative impacts on natural forests. Without urgent, timely and effective measures to protect forests, black cardamom can quickly degrade forests.

Cardamom is a shade-loving plant that can only live under the forest canopy where the soil is of high humidity, humus and also well-drained with low temperatures from 16-24°C. As a result, people have to clear the land and the areas required to tend and harvest cardamom, only leaving large trees for shade. This degrades forest vegetation and increases the level of topsoil erosion during heavy rains, thereby reducing diversity and rapidly degrading forest vegetation. In addition, cardamom is mainly grown under the canopy of natural forests, a large area in SUFs. In many places, farmers even harvest firewood to dry cardamom on-site, which affects the management and development of forest resources.

3.7. APPLICATION OF MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES IN FOREST MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

The Forest Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for SUFs and PFs

METT was originally developed to monitor the management effectiveness of protected forests supported by the World Bank (WB) and WWF. Later, this tool was widely used in many NPs and PAs to monitor the progress of countries and PAs in fulfilling their commitments to the Convention on Biodiversity and the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar).

METT is often used by FMBs to quickly self-assess, record and report on the management effectiveness of a particular NP or PA. Therefore, METT also has certain limitations; it cannot be used to perform an independent assessment or to evaluate all the different management aspects of a NP or PA. However, a number of FMBs in Viet Nam, especially those with the support of forest management and protection projects and REDD+, have been applying this tool to evaluate management effectiveness and combine the results with information obtained from other methods to develop development plans.

Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity (SAGE) for SUFs and PFs

Similar to METT, the SAGE tool focuses on a quick assessment of the current state of governance, the level of stakeholder participation, and mechanisms to share power and benefits among stakeholders in a specific location. SAGE helps management boards and community stakeholders quickly assess the position of a NP or PA against 10 principles of good governance to ensure equity in conservation in accordance with IUCN guidelines and the Convention on Biodiversity. SAGE also helps stakeholders understand each other's wishes, strengths and limitations to make reasonable adjustments. When combined with the results of other tools (such as METT), SAGE assessment results help managers, local authorities, communities, businesses and other stakeholders to plan for forest management and protection. In Viet Nam, SAGE collects information to serve the process of developing sustainable forest management plans according to the requirements of the Law on Forestry and Circular 28/2018/TT-BNNPTNT on sustainable forest management, especially on buffer zone community consultation requirements. In 2018 and 2019, GIZ and the Department of SUF and PF Management supported Cat Tien NP and Tram Tau PF to conduct SAGE assessments to provide inputs for their sustainable forest management plans.

In the coming time, SAGE can support the assessment of good governance aspects of the IUCN Green List recognition process for a number of NPs, such as Cuc Phuong, Pu Mat, Con Dao, Cu Lao Cham, and Cat Tien...

Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART)

SMART is currently being used by global conservation organisations in close collaboration with PA management boards to monitor patrolling efforts and to tackle poaching and other violations of forest management and protection regulations.

The "Project on Strengthening Management Capacity of the PA System to 2025, with a Vision to 2030" (Decision 626/QD-TTg dated 10 May 2017 of the Prime Minister) has identified SMART as one of the two advanced technologies to be applied to NP and PA management throughout the country. The project requires "Training and Applying the Data Management and Patrol Reporting (SMART) tool to the whole system of PAs to improve the management of the patrol and biodiversity monitoring database of PAs; developing a system to monitor resource development and to evaluate management effectiveness of 30% (by 2020) and 50% (by 2025) of PAs in Viet Nam through the application of remote sensing technology in combination with SMART". Since 2013, The Department of SUF and PF Management (formerly the Department of Nature Conservation) under VNFOREST has made efforts to collaborate with GIZ, WWF, and the Association of NPs and Conservation Areas to organise numerous training courses on SMART and to seek support from national and international conservation organisations to apply SMART in NP/NR management. However, due to limited funding, not many NPs/NRs are using the SMART tool. NPs/NRs that have applied this tool include Pu Luong NR, Bai Tu Long NP, Bidoup-Nui Ba NP, Bu Gia Map, Nui Chua, Xuan Son, Cuc Phuong, Du Gia - Dong Van Rock Plateau NP, Xuan Lien, and Hoang Lien - Van Ban NR.

Conservation organisations, such as FFI, have supported the application of SMART in Mu Cang Chai (Yen Bai), Muong La (Son La), Khau Ca and Quan Ba (Ha Giang), and Cat Ba NP (Hai Phong); WWF has supported Yok Don NP, Bach Ma NP, Sao La PA in Quang Nam and Thua Thien - Hue; the USAID Green Annamite (Green Truong Son) project has applied SMART in Ngoc Linh, Quang Nam Elephant NR, Song Thanh, Phong Dien and Bac Hai Van NR (Thua Thien-Hue); and Save Viet Nam's Wildlife has supported patrols using SMART at Pu Mat NP...

Online Reporting System (ORS) for SUFs and PFs

Similar to SMART, the Online Reporting System (ORS) is one of the requirements in Decision 626/QD-TTg: “To develop the database system and online reporting process to support management of the PA system. To develop, issue and implement the online reporting process to support management of the PA system in Viet Nam before 2018; 50%, 70% and 100% of PAs will develop the database system and provide information to introduce PAs on the website by 2020, 2025 and 2030, respectively.

From 2017 to now, the Department of Nature Conservation, now the Department of SUF and PF Management, has used the state budget and GIZ’s technical and financial support to develop an online reporting system to organise training for more than 120 employees of SUFMBs and PFMBs on the use of the online reporting system. More than 50 FMBs have sent their annual reports to the Department of SUF and PF Management through this system.

Tram Tau Protection Forest
Photo: ©GIZ/Binh Dang

Lam Binh protection forest
Photo: Nguyen Manh Hiep

PART 4

DIRECTION AND PRIORITIES FOR SPECIAL-USE FOREST AND PROTECTION FOREST MANAGEMENT, PROTECTION, AND DEVELOPMENT IN 2020

4.1. MARD'S INSTRUCTIONS

The conclusions of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Cuong, at the National Conference on the Management of SUFs and PFs in 2019 according to the Notice of Conclusion 9799/TB-BNN-VP are as follows:

- Implementing the socialisation policy (a policy to engage the whole of society) to effectively attract and mobilise investment resources into the forestry sector in general and in forest protection, development and use for sustainable economic development in particular, in line with laws and regulations and without damaging the forest ecological system; protecting the environment; not trading off economic efficiency with environmental security and strictly controlling changes in forest use purposes in accordance with the Law on Forestry.
- Consolidating the existing national SUF system towards improving forest quality and biodiversity values, evaluating results of the implementation of the Prime Minister's Decision 1976/QD-TTg, dated 30 October 2014; developing projects to strengthen the capacity of the national SUF and PF system in 2021-2030 as the basis for integration into national and provincial plans in accordance with the Planning Law.
- Focusing on investment projects to develop, protect and restore the watershed PF system in northern mountainous areas, North-Central region, Central Highlands and the entire coastal PF area for sea wave and sand prevention. For mangrove PF areas where aquatic resources represent people's livelihoods, it is necessary to identify specific areas where local communities are allowed to exploit and develop aquaculture for economic development.
- The entire area of SUFs and PFs assigned to FMBs must be clearly defined on maps, and boundary milestones need to be set up on-site for forest management, monitoring, statistics, inventory and recording by plot and sub-forest. Conducting SUF and PF management and use according to the criteria of sustainable forest management in Viet Nam and the world.
- SUFMBs and PFMBs are gradually moving towards being self-financed through increasing revenue from PFES and the development of eco-tourism. By 2025, about 50% of SUFs and PFs will organise ecotourism, leisure and entertainment activities, annually attracting at least 15-20% of Viet Namese tourists.

- For potential SUFs and PFs, it is necessary to promote research and implement solutions to exploit the potential of the forests. They should also develop special forest products, medicinal plants under the forest canopy, production and business services, and generate revenue to protect forests and improve the living conditions of officers and employees.
- Localities need to prioritise allocating specialised human resources for FMBs to meet the requirements of protection and development of SUFs and PFs. Together with implementing the socialisation policy in investment, the State should prioritise investment in capacity building, infrastructure development, and apply advanced technologies on biodiversity management and monitoring for SUFMBs and PFMBs.

4.2. DEVELOPING AND GUIDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES FOR SPECIAL-USE FOREST AND PROTECTION FOREST MANAGEMENT, PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Most regulations and policies guiding the implementation of the 2017 Law on Forestry were developed and promulgated in 2018, and took effect in 2019. Some policies required further study and completion in 2019.

- Determining criteria for new types of SUFs and PFs according to the Law on Forestry, such as: sacred forest, national seedling forest, environmental PF, community water source PF, and national botanical gardens.
- Studying and developing the system of economic and technical norms to be applied to SUF and PF public services.
- Contributing to the development of the Viet Nam Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Forestry Sector in 2021-2030, with a Vision to 2050. It is necessary to unify the system of SUFs and PFs nationwide, classify PAs and decentralise the effective management of areas of high conservation value.
- Reviewing, adjusting, supplementing and completing the SUF and PF system plans to be integrated into the National Forestry Master Plan for 2021-2030, with a Vision to 2050.

- Reviewing and conducting policy studies to prepare for the development of forest ecosystem services. Improving financial resources for SUF and PF protection and development, implementing the self-financing mechanism and leasing the forest environment to provide eco-tourism, leisure and entertainment services in SUFs and PFs. This will take the following forms: self-organisation, cooperation with partners or leasing the forest environment for cultivation and planting of medicinal plants.
- Guiding SUFMBs and PFMBs to develop and submit their sustainable forest management plans for approval

4.3. STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT, PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Continuing to implement the Prime Minister's Decision 626/QD-TTg dated 10 May 2017 on the National Capacity Development Plan for Protected Area Management System to 2025, with a Vision to 2030 with the following important objectives:
  - Completing mechanisms and policies on organisational structure, human resources, and financial development to meet the requirements of natural resource management and sustainable development in PAs.
  - Improving management capacity and professional skills for staff working in PAs.
  - Providing facilities and equipment, and applying science and technology in PA management.
- Organising training courses and encouraging SUFMBs and PFMBs to mobilise resources to apply advanced technologies in forest management and protection and biodiversity monitoring such as SMART and the Online Reporting System.
- Guiding and improving capacity to implement a number of new and important activities such as: ecotourism and the monitoring and conservation of biodiversity, especially through projects in the Urgent Action Plan for Primate Conservation in Viet Nam to 2025, with a Vision to 2030, the Elephant and Tiger Conservation Plan, and new species conservation projects.

4.4. ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF FOREST MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

- Continuing to implement Directive 13-CT/TW of the Party Central Committee's Secretariat on Strengthening the Party's Leadership in Forest Management, Protection and Development; Resolution 71/NQ-CP dated 8 August 2017 of the Government promulgating the action plan to implement Directive 13-CT/TW; Directive 1685/CT-TTg of the Prime Minister on strengthening urgent measures to protect forests and preventing deforestation and handling crimes against public officers.
- Strengthening leadership and examining and encouraging patrol units to protect forests at the grassroots level; checking "hot spots" for illegal forest product transportation.
- Reviewing plans and defining clear boundaries and milestones on maps and on-site, and making plans to comprehensively handle cases of encroachment on SUF and PF land. At the same time, developing plans to set up boundary milestones in SUFs and PFs for management and protection.
- Working closely with local authorities to promote communication on forest protection and biodiversity conservation.
- Effectively implementing forest protection contracting and policy on PFES payment to households, groups of households and communities.

Red-tailed Laughingthrush (Trochalopteron milnei)
Photo: Nguyen Manh Hiep

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Cat Tien National Park
Photo: Le Duc Khanh

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