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Results of the assessment of governance and equity in Cat Tien National Park



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Responsibility

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In cooperation with

Pan Nature

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On behalf of the

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

CPC: Commune People's Committee

DPC: District People's Committee

GIZ: German Development Cooperation

IIED: International Institute for Environment and Development

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

MARD: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NP: National Park

METT: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool

PFES: Payment for Forest Environmental Services

SAGE: Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity

VNFOREST: Vietnam Administration of Forestry

I. INTRODUCTION

Special use and protection forests are two of the three forest types in Vietnam's forest classification system. According to the 2017 Forestry Law, they are created for the purpose of "conserving natural forest ecosystems, forest bio-genetic resources, doing scientific research, preserving historical, cultural relics, beliefs, relaxation, entertainment, and providing environmental services", and "protecting water resources, soil, preventing erosion, landslides, flash floods, floods, desertification, natural disasters, regulating climate, contributing to environmental protection, and national defence and security"¹.

By 30 September 2019, the combined area of these two forest types reached nearly 6.9 million hectares, accounting for some 47% of the country's forest land area². These areas are under the direct management of state forest owners, including special-use and protection forest management boards, forestry companies, and the armed forces.

Non-state stakeholders (private sector, households, and communities) use forest protection or forest environment leasing contracts to manage forest protection. According to the Forestry Law 2017 (effective from 1 January 2019), forest owners who are forest management boards (state forest owners) are required to develop sustainable forest management plans as stipulated by Circular No.28/2018/TT-BNNPTNT (dated 16 November 2018).

The participation of other social actors, the encouragement of benefit-sharing among stakeholders, and paying attention to the rights of local people and communities, are criteria for good and fair protected area governance, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) principles for good and fair protected area governance. They also adhere to the implementation framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and related goals.

Vietnam is one of the first Asian countries selected to pilot the IUCN Green List initiative. To be included in the Green List, protected areas must meet good governance criteria, which include legality and voice, transparency and accountability, and governance and adaptive capacity.

Governance and equity in protected areas have been increasingly considered key issues in nature conservation, and date back to the 2003 IUCN World Parks Congress, held in Durban, South Africa. Up to 30 different governance assessment methods have been developed to date, all of which provide assessments to support adaptive management and monitoring of the governance improvement process in protected areas. However, these assessment tools still have shortcomings in terms of uniformity, high cost and limited replicability at large scales. For this reason, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has been promoting the development of Site-level Assessment of Governance and Equity (SAGE) tools to overcome the gaps and challenges mentioned above to ensure simplicity and cost-effectiveness. Like the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), SAGE is a multi-purpose tool that provides useful assessment information at the site level. This allows protected area managers and stakeholders to integrate such results into planning and the development of strategies and policies. It also improves reporting at national and global levels.

Many organisations have used SAGE, including the German Development Cooperation (GIZ). The "Programme on Conservation, Sustainable Use of Forest Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Vietnam" was implemented jointly by GIZ, the Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST), and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), within the

¹ The 2017 Forestry Law

² Decision No.1423/QĐ-BNN-TCLN on the country's forest status in 2019

framework of capacity/finance enhancement and effective management of special-use and protection. Four special-use and protection forests were selected for SAGE, including Cat Tien National Park (NP), Bidoup Nui Ba NP, Than Sa Phuong Hoang Nature Reserve, and Tram Tau Protection Forest. Cat Tien NP was the first pilot area in Vietnam.

Goal: Use SAGE to strengthen understanding and capacity for developing and implementing sustainable forest management in the context of the Forestry Law 2017 and inclusive biodiversity conservation.

Objectives:

1. Assess the quality of governance and equity at Cat Tien NP and related conservation and development initiatives and activities.
2. Identify and understand any differences in the way stakeholders are aware of the quality of governance and equity at Cat Tien NP, and related conservation and development initiatives and activities.
3. Identify actions to improve the quality of governance and equity at Cat Tien NP, and related conservation and development initiatives and activities. Promote consensus among stakeholders.

II. LOCATION AND ASSESSMENT METHOD

1. LOCATION

The assessment workshop was held at the Management Board head office in Cat Tien NP, Tan Phu district, Dong Nai province, to ensure the full participation of selected participants in the assessment and to reduce costs. However, the Management Board meeting hall had already been booked for another event, so the first day of the assessment workshop was held at a tourism location in Tan Phu district, about 5km from the NP head office. Day 2 was held in the meeting hall of the Management Board head office in Cat Tien NP.

2. ASSESSMENT METHOD

1.1 Assessment tool

The SAGE framework consists of 10 principles of governance and equity, which are included in the guidelines of the IUCN and CBD. It is a rapid assessment tool that helps stakeholders in nature conservation areas identify governance challenges, make necessary actions, and report to higher level managers. Governance assessment results can be used as inputs for developing strategies, management plans, monitoring, reporting and applying to the IUCN's Green List.

Like METT and other tools for governance assessment of nature conservation areas, SAGE collects data through a questionnaire consisting of about 40 questions (3-5 questions for each principle). Unlike some other governance assessment methods, SAGE is a process that includes multiple stakeholder participation. The main activity of this method is a two-day workshop where the viewpoints of the different groups of stakeholders are independently assessed and clarified. These parties then explain differences in the scores they gave to each assessment item in order to reach a consensus and propose actions to improve the quality of governance and equity. SAGE consists of three outputs:

1. *Site profile*: Information about the protected area and background issues related to governance and equity.
2. *Impact analysis*: This includes the environmental impact of human activities, other impacts (such as risks to the protected area), and the social impact that protected areas and conservation have on people.
3. *Governance and equity score*: This is the score that reflects the underlying reasons given by the different groups of stakeholders when answering each of the 40 questions and, where possible, the score agreed upon by all stakeholders.

1.2 Workshop facilitators

The SAGE assessment was facilitated by three independent officers from the Centre for People and Nature (PanNature), who are not affiliated with any workshop participants. These key facilitators are invited to a one-day workshop to clarify the questions. They are guided by an IIED technical officer to address issues that typically arise in the discussion and scoring process. This assessment also received technical support from five officers of the BIO project.

Facilitators are supervised to ensure compliance with the SAGE method. They must strictly comply with the principle of “5 DONT’S and 5 DOS” as follows:

5 DON'TS	5 DOS (SHOULD)
Don't explain and don't give specific examples to participants according to your viewpoint.	Stop the debate of team members if they are going off-track.
Don't say the choices of participants are right or wrong. Just note down the opinions of participants.	Encourage all participants to speak up and avoid situations where some participants are too talkative or too quiet. However, don't try to force participants to have opinions.
Don't “educate and raise the awareness” of participants even if they say something not entirely correct.	Be as neutral as possible without bias to any party.
Don't argue with assessors even if what they say is irrational.	Focus on listening to the discussion to record the participant's comments.
Don't do other things or deal with private matters during the facilitation process.	Be flexible in the facilitation process.

The first two questions typically take groups longer to understand how they should be answered. Therefore, facilitators need to concentrate when guiding groups so that assessment can move quickly and easily.

1.3 Implementation process

1.3.1. Select and decide the number of participants to be invited to a SAGE evaluation workshop

As described in the site profile, grassroots (district, commune, village/hamlet) stakeholders of Cat Tien NP belong to three provinces (Dong Nai, Lam Dong and Binh Phuoc) and are administered by seven districts and 33 communes and towns. People living around the NP belong to 11 different ethnic groups, divided into three main groups based on the area's settlement history. Some indigenous people have lived in the area for hundreds of years, such as the S'Tieng, Chau Ma and Chau Ro. There are also migrants from the north, such as the Tay, Nung, H'Mong, Dao, and Kinh groups. Ideally, selected representatives should come from various departments and agencies within the province, district, commune, and different ethnic groups. However, due to geographical constraints and long travel distances, all invited participants to the evaluation workshop came from Tan Phu district. This also helped reduce the cost of the SAGE workshop.

Based on the functions and tasks of stakeholders, workshop participants were selected from Cat Tien NP, non-governmental organisations/projects, district government and functional agencies, commune governments and functional agencies, and community/household representatives.

On the first day of the workshop, there was full participation, so participants were divided into five groups, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Number of participants in the SAGE workshop

Stakeholder Group	Unit/Position	# Participants
Cat Tien NP (Group I)	Board of Directors, Department of Scientific Research and International Cooperation, Department of Finance and Planning, Forest Protection Officers, Tourism Division, and Forest Protection Division.	10
Non-governmental organisations/projects (Group II)	Bear Rescue Centre	2
Tan Phu district	District People's Committee, Department	4

(Group III)	of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and the police.	
Ta Lai, Dac Lua and Nam Cat Tien communes (Group IV)	Commune People's Committee, Women's Union, Youth Union, Farmer's Association, and the Forest Club.	15
Hamlet 4 (Dac Lua) and Hamlet 4 (Ta Lai) (Group V)	Village heads, Women's Union representatives, elderly villagers, and forest protection teams.	7

On the second day of the workshop, the number of participants in each group was changed, so that groups with the same functions, tasks and close relationships were merged. Accordingly, the District People's Committee group and the NGO group were merged with the NP group. The three groups for Day 2 were as follows:

Group I: Ten people comprising forest protection officers, leaders from Cat Tien NP, representatives of the District People's Committee, and the Bear Rescue Centre.

Group II: Ten people from commune governments.

Group III: Ten community representatives, including four additional members from Nam Cat Tien commune.

a. Time

The evaluation workshop was held on 19 and 20 November 2019 and included a separate stakeholder group discussion on 19 November and a plenary discussion session on 20 November to discuss and agree on scores for all groups.

b. Selecting assessment principles

The assessment framework included ten principles (Table 2) but depending on the actual conditions of the protected area, only certain assessment principles deemed appropriate were chosen. Assessment principles should be prioritised from easy to difficult and depend on each case and on which principle that were most easily accessible.

Table 2: Good governance and equity principles based on IUCN and CBD guidelines

Implementation process of good governance	Principles	Assessed principles
EQUITY RECOGNITION	1. Recognise and respect the rights of all relevant stakeholders.	
	2. Recognise and respect knowledge, values, and the institutions of relevant stakeholders.	X
PROCESS TO ENSURE EQUITY	3. Ensure complete and efficient participation in the decision-making process for all stakeholders.	X
	4. Ensure competent authorities' accountability and transparency when implementing or not implementing activities as prescribed or agreed to.	X
	5. Ensure accessibility to laws, including efficient dispute resolution processes.	
	6. Ensure effective and fair enforcement of the rule of law.	
EQUITY IN DISTRIBUTION	7. Take effective measures to mitigate adverse impacts on local people and communities.	
	8. Ensure equal benefit sharing among stakeholders.	X
OTHERS	9. Meet conservation and other objectives.	X
	10. Ensure effective coordination and cooperation among actors, sectors and levels.	X

The Cat Tien NP assessment workshop selected six of these ten principles, with a total of 22 assessment questions. The six chosen principles (9, 8, 2, 3, 4 and 10) were ranked logically.

Each assessment principle covered from three to five questions. Each question had four choices with a score from low (0) to high (3) and one choice of 'no answer' (Table 3). Each question was printed on an A4 sheet of paper with three columns. Column 1 was the score after discussion. Column 2 contained the headings of the principles, questions, and answers. Column 3 contained the names of the principles and the contents of question and answer information participants had to choose from. Facilitators gave the questions to the groups for discussion, and the final answer corresponding to each score was recorded.

Table 3: SAGE question template

Recording scores after reaching a	Principle	Name of principle
	Q 1	Question content
	Answer	0.
	

consensus (e.g. 1 or 2)

	? No answer

Before groups were split up for assessment, they learned about governance concepts, reasons for SAGE implementation, and their role in the workshop. The community groups were placed in a separate room while the remaining participants were given a presentation.

c. Facilitating the discussion and SAGE questionnaire scoring

Scoring by separate groups: Groups were divided into different rooms to ensure that their discussions were not affected by other groups and provided with pens and coloured memory cards. The groups chose their card colours, but they could only use two colours, and they had to agree on the use of colours from the beginning. One coloured card was for reasons, while the other coloured card was for proposing options. Members of each group discussed their choice for the appropriate answer for each question corresponding to each governance principle given by the facilitators. Each actor or individual had a different understanding for each question. Therefore, for each chosen answer, groups had to explain why the answer was selected and provide relevant evidence for the answer by writing it on the coloured cards. After agreeing on answers and providing evidence, team members continued to discuss and propose ideas to improve the management and conservation of Cat Tien NP by writing comments on the second colour card.

General discussion to agree on scores: After finishing the separate discussion session, groups gathered in the plenary in the presence of all stakeholder groups. Answers, reasons for selecting the answers, and suggestions were posted on boards or walls for easy observation. Facilitators synthesised the couranswers of all the groups onto one board. Answers were further discussed by stakeholders to enage consensus among all participants.

In the plenary, facilitators synthesised the answers of all the groups onto one board and then presented them on a large screen. One of the three facilitators encouraged the plenary discussion for stakeholders to reach a consensus. The remaining facilitators recorded the arguments of participants as evidence of consensus.

Note: If one or two people in a group in separate discussions or one or two groups in plenary talks insisted on defending their views, then facilitators took note of the reasons and moved on to the next question to avoid wasting time.

d. Data analysis

At the end of the plenary session, the evaluation results were imported into a pre-designed tool using Microsoft Excel provided by IIED. This toolkit automatically analysed raw data and generated result graphs.

Although it was impossible to determine the threshold of practices, the toolkit ranked results according to three levels. A score from 0 to 1 meant the practice was unacceptable, a score of 2 was satisfactory, while a score of 3 was excellent.

However, apart from these scores, the experiences of the evaluation process are also vital in assessing governance and equity in a protected area.

III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Due to various reasons, there were not as many participants in the afternoons of Day 1 and Day 2 compared to the beginning of the workshop. The Results Achieved Principle and the Benefit-Sharing Principle were assessed by five stakeholder groups. On the afternoon of Day 1, the Bear Rescue Centre group merged with the Cat Tien NP group, while on Day 2 the District People's Committee group also merged with the Cat Tien NP group (from now on referred to as the Cat Tien NP group), reducing the number of assessment groups from five to three. Therefore, workshop results were divided into three groups: Cat Tien NP group; Commune People's Committee (CPC) group; and the Community group. The final scores were the average values after reaching a consensus on Day 2.

1. GENERAL RESULTS

SAGE scores for each principle and actor ranged from 1.8 to 2.8, with no principle achieving the maximum score. The Benefit-Sharing Principle had the highest score with an average of 2.8 and 2.6 before and after the plenary discussion, respectively, and was equal to the scores of the Respecting Actors Principle. The Transparency Principle had the lowest score of 1.9, unchanged before and after the plenary session. Of the four principles discussed in the plenary, two (the Transparency Principle and Participation Principle) had the same score both before and after. However, the Benefit-Sharing Principle decreased from 2.8 to 2.6, while the Achieved Outcomes Principle fell from 2.4 to 2.2 (Figure 1).

The Benefit-Sharing Principle was the only principle that nearly reached a consensus among the three groups with an average score of 2.6, in which the CPC and Community groups had the same score of 2.7. At the same time, the Cat Tien NP group (after the three group merger) also had the same score of 2.6. On the other hand, although discussed in the plenary, the Transparency Principle and Participation Principle did not reach a consensus, with scores ranging from a low of 1.5 from the CPC group to a high of 2.3 from Cat Tien NP group.

The average score for six principles after the plenary discussion was 2. The score for the Cat Tien NP group was 2.3, the CPC group was 2.3, and the Community group was 2.2. Therefore the groups had certain similarities.

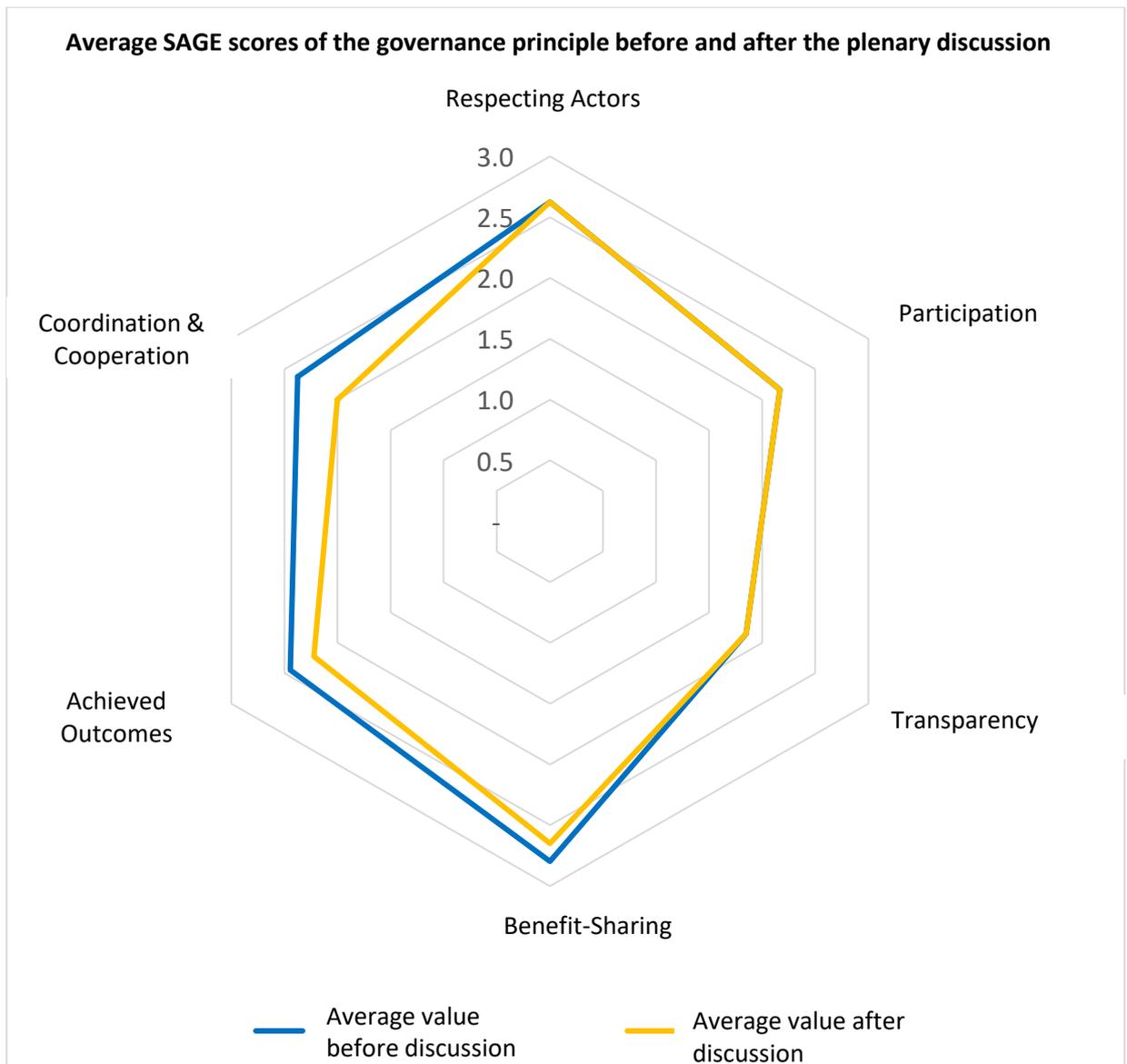


Figure 1: Average SAGE scores for the governance principle before and after the plenary discussion

Figure 2 below shows the final average score for each group, which included respecting actors, participation, transparency, benefit-sharing, achieved outcomes, and coordination and cooperation. Overall, the principles reflecting the quality of good and equal governance in the NP ranged from medium to high, but none achieved the maximum score. The two principles reaching the highest average score of 2.6 were the Respecting Actors Principle and the Benefit-Sharing Principle. The Transparency Principle and the Coordination & Cooperation Principle had the lowest average scores of 1.9 and 2, respectively. The Participation Principle and the Achieved Outcomes Principle both had an average score of 2.2.

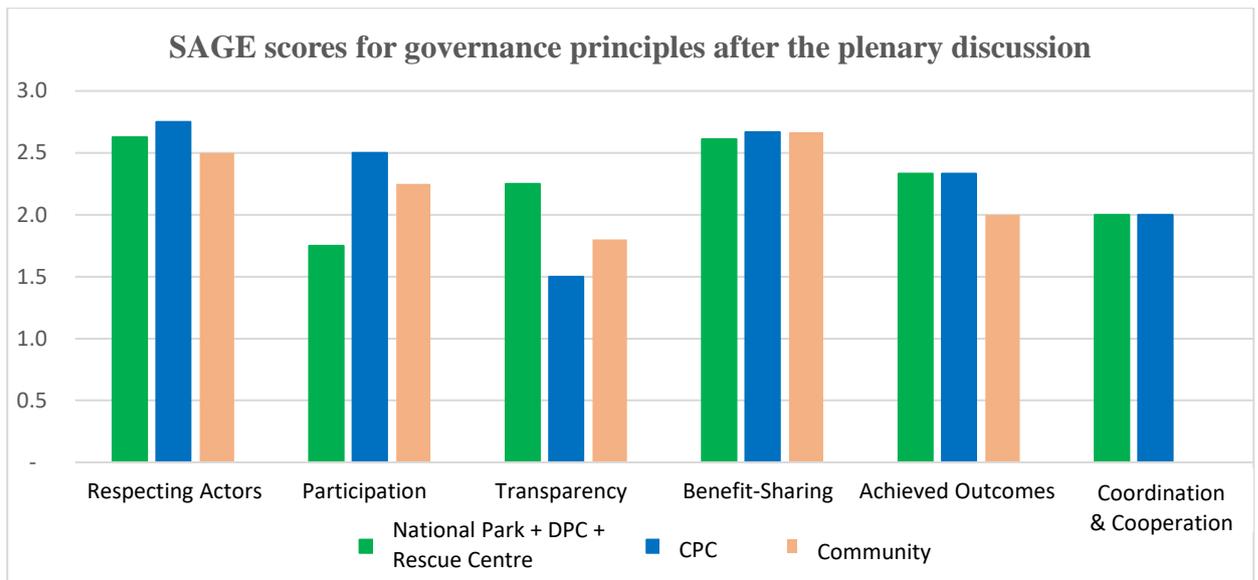


Figure 2: SAGE scores for governance principles

Regarding various aspects of governance practice, including equity recognition, equity-ensuring processes and others, the recognition and distribution of equity (through corresponding principles) in governance practice in Cat Tien NP were highly appreciated by the assessment teams. However, equity-ensuring processes are assessed at a lower level (corresponding to the lower scores for Participation, Accountability and Transparency principles). On the other hand, the fulfilment of conservation objectives was also assessed at a high level, but coordination and cooperation were not as highly appreciated.

2. EVALUATION RESULTS FOR EACH PRINCIPLE

Below is the average score for each principle, along with stakeholder groups' explanations for scoring and their comments on challenges, score differences, and suggestions for improvement.

1.1 Respecting Actors Principle

Results (average value: 2.6)		
Explanation for scoring	NP + DPC + Bear Rescue Centre (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was an acknowledgement that commitments had been signed to protect and patrol forests jointly. However, some livelihood needs, such as harvesting wood for house construction, have not been met. - People had sympathy because they could benefit from the NP due to Decision No.24, and through projects and PFES (except for some violators). - Consensus has been reached on some fine cultural practices like brocade weaving and Cong Chieng culture. There has been disagreement on several unsound customs, overhunting, and forest burning for cultivation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders are equally treated in the implementation and benefit-sharing process. Individuals and organisations that have been doing well are acknowledged, and sanctions have been imposed on individuals and organisations that have not been doing well.
	CPC group (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are allowed to harvest forest by-products such as Malva nuts and Tweezers leaves, have the right to visit tourist attractions in the NP, and to discuss, comment, and exchange ideas in meetings. - The NP is considered a biosphere reserve area that is an asset to the country. Officers working in the NP meet regularly, exchange information, and organise cultural-art-sport exchanges. - Community festivals such as the Cong Chieng festival are respected. - Ta Lai's tourist area's development has been supported.
	Community group (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are able to contribute ideas and participate in forest protection and payment for PFES. - The NP respects some community cultures, but not all. - There is no discrimination; men and women are able to participate, and all ethnic groups are treated equally.
Recommendations for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support policies to create livelihoods and increase incomes. Encourage people to cultivate and plant production forests. - Continue to pay attention to and support improved livelihoods. Communicate and encourage actors to comply with laws. - Collaborate with local governments to preserve cultural heritage and encourage the gradual ceasing of customs and values that affect the NP. - Set up a mechanism to ensure equity for targeted groups. Impose sanctions on groups that have engaged in misconduct or do harm to the NP. - Support the research of markets for traditional products such as bamboo tube rice, brocade weaving and Can wine (rice wine drunk out of a jar through pipes).

1.2 Participation Principle

Results (average value: 2.2)		
Explanation for scoring	NP + DPC + Bear Rescue Centre (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholders are invited to participate in developing plans and policies for contracting forest protection services and have been consulted in decision-making processes. - A bottom-up approach has been applied. The NP organises monthly inter-departmental meetings to listen to the voice of the grassroots level. - Community representatives are primarily men. The NP considered major issues, but not all opinions influence the NP's decisions. - The role of women in the community is still weak. However, meetings and discussions at Cat Tien NP still pay attention to their opinions.
	CPC group (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community comments are included in the development of forest protection and management plans. - All comments are approved and responded to through community meetings and voting: 100% agreement. - Men account for 80% of the weight in final proposals and opinions. - Women's comments, such as harvesting, which account for about 70-80%, have been included in the commitments with the NP.
	Community group (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local people are notified of support annually . There is participation in the discussions and agreements between the community and the NP. - There are announcements about cultural conservation, but traditional objects from ethnic minority groups have not yet been collected. There is cultural and art preservation. - Men often go to meetings, so they contribute more opinions. However, the views of both men and women are accepted if they are useful. - Women go to meetings less often than men, but their voices are still heard.

Recommendations for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to improve the mechanism for ensuring the rights of stakeholders when participating. Increase information exchange through feedback channels. - Develop a mechanism to ensure that people have their voice in the management decision-making process. - Enhance the role of women in community institutions. Encourage them to be team leaders and vice team leaders. - There should be more discussions on the cost of supporting the protection of surrounding areas.
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1.3 Transparency Principle

Results (average value: 1.9)		
Explanation for scoring	NP + DPC + Bear Rescue Centre (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information about relevant programmes and projects for beneficiaries is publicised. - Information is exchanged through annual inter-departmental meetings. - Information is shared on the NP's website.
	CPC group (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities have been informed about visiting the NP on public holidays. Information about PFES is shared and made available to the community. Forest patrol, management, protection and forest fire prevention efforts are coordinated. Violations related to forest management and protection are reported and shared. - Some households or communities know the threats but do not provide enough information. - Business and service households only report if they have guests but do not publicise their income and expenditure.
	Community group (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are informed of their protection responsibilities and benefits such as fresh air, natural resources, and the environment. However, the benefits have not been reasonable, and PFES has not met expectations. - One team member recounted a personal story where he reported a forest fire to Cat Tien NP while some 40-50 people did not.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The hamlet has made public all information about income and expenditure items related to the NP in the cultural house, but they could not answer all questions.
Recommendations for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide and share information related to new legal documents. - Share the hotline telephone number with people and reward informants in a timely fashion. - Make revenue sources public and transparent and share information with the people. - Strengthen coordination between the NP and communities. - Increase benefits to communities around the NP.

1.4 Benefit-Sharing Principle

Results (average value: 2.6)		
Explanation for scoring	NP + DPC + Bear Rescue Centre (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication meetings are held in the community, and consensus has been reached regarding payment for PFES, Decision No.24³ and other projects. - Decision No.24 and PFES have been implemented without any discrimination towards men or women, who have equal rights. - Under Decision No.24, the number of beneficiary villages is only 37/78 villages. The forest protection allocation level was low. The level of allocation under Decision No.24 is also low.
	CPC group (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community comments on the implementation of Decision No.24/CP have been collected. - Contracted households for forest protection enjoy the same benefits. - The community has received full benefits according to decisions and agreements. Payments are made via Viettel Pay.
	Community group (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PFES and forest protection contracts are discussed and approved in meetings. Both men and women attend meetings.

³ Decision No.24/2012/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister (June 1st, 2012) on investment policy for special-use forests for the period 2011-2020.

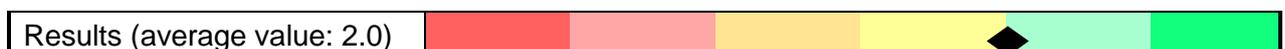
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under Decision No.24, both men and women receive benefits. Households have been selected to be contracted for forest protection according to regulations. - Community meetings gather opinions from the people, and upon agreement, they are deployed according to regulations.
Recommendations for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of villages benefiting from Decision No.24 and increase the payment value for forest protection contracts. - Have measures/mechanisms to ensure the participation of local communities in forest protection contracts. Provide uniforms, logos, and identification. Increase support levels to ensure livelihoods and better protection of forests. - Continue to implement Decision No.24 and increase the support level.

1.5 Achieved Outcomes Principle

Results (average value: 2.2)		
Explanation for scoring	NP + DPC + Bear Rescue Centre (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People use the wrong name of the NP in consultations. People do not fully participate. There are not enough representatives of departments and communities living around the NP. The quality of consultation is still limited. Consultation information is not entirely accurate. - The Master Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Development has undergone adjustment during implementation, and there are no guidelines from the legal framework for internal guidance. - The diversity of fauna and flora has been maintained but hunting and trapping practices remain.
	CPC group (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is coordination in disseminating the Forest Law, as shown by a collaborative management and protection plan that enhanced forest fire fighting/prevention and forest resource management.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opinions are provided on adjusting the plans of community groups and households contracted for forest protection. - The goals of conserving several wildlife species and the development of eco-tourism have been achieved.
	Community group (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The NP has coordinated with local governments in communication on forest protection and management. Cat Tien NP has coordinated with communities, but not yet fully or comprehensively. - Patrol plans have been adjusted according to reports from the community. - Environmental pollution, the number of tourists, and environmental protection have all decreased. National culture has been well preserved. The number of wild species has declined. People's lives have improved.
Recommendations for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand the diversity of actors in consultations. Disseminate information before consultation and notify participants of the objectives before consultation. - There should be adjustment instructions from the higher level. Reviews should be conducted annually and every five years. - Strengthen law enforcement, conduct propaganda, education and persuasion. Develop livelihoods. - Build community-based tourism models for surrounding communes. - Increase income sources for community groups. - Propaganda should be done by word of mouth, at meetings, and integrated into hamlet activities. - Disseminate information about plans for communities. - Join hands to protect and plant forests. Request Cat Tien NP's support.

1.6 Coordination and Cooperation Principle



Explanation for scoring	NP + DPC + Bear Rescue Centre (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination with local governments is still limited. - Coordination with functional agencies is still limited. - Communities and commune governments coordinate on ongoing programmes and projects. - Buffer zone projects are limited. - The number of hamlets enjoying benefits under Decision No.24 is limited.
	CPC group (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is commitment to implementing processes for forest management and protection, forest fire prevention and other activities. - There is coordination in implementing activities, but sometimes objectives are not achieved. - The coordination is good, but feedback and interaction are sometimes inconsistent and irregular.
	Community group (3)	This group did not participate in the evaluation.
Recommendations for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update, supplement and improve annual commitments between communities and the NP. - Regularly exchange information to coordinate implementation of tasks to achieve greater efficiency.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCLUSION

The assessment results show that the quality of governance and equity in Cat Tien NP is from above average to high, with no aspect under average.

Respecting the knowledge, values and institutions of related stakeholders as well as sharing benefits from projects and programmes receive the highest level of appreciation. The NP respects the culture of ethnic minority groups through activities to support the development of community-based tourism for people living in surrounding areas. In particular, the NP has a temporary solution to resolve conflicts over land-use rights. These conflicts can occur when land traditionally cultivated by local communities has been allocated to the NP; land-use rights in these areas are 'overlapping' because in practice the land-use rights belong to local communities, but at the same time they belong to the NP on paper.

For example, land-use rights for about 50 hectares of land traditionally cultivated by local communities have been granted to the NP. The NP resolves these issues by offering short-term contracts that allow people to use cultivated land in overlapping areas. This helps the NP to reduce tension or conflict with local people. For benefit-sharing, thanks to the effective implementation of PFES policy and the policy to support the development of buffer zones under Decision No.24/2012/QD-TTg dated 1 June 2012 of the Prime Minister on special-use forest investment and development policy for the period 2011-2020 and project activities of other donors, the NP has enhanced its image and relationships with local stakeholders.

The NP has strengthened information exchange, transparency, and accountability by supporting livelihood development and forest management contracting. It has attracted the participation of many stakeholders, especially commune governments and villages. These activities have helped the NP achieve its assigned nature conservation objectives.

However, evaluation results show that no principle received a maximum score, indicating that there are still many issues to be addressed, such as transparency and accountability in implementing activities. In particular, there is a need to ensure the full and meaningful participation of multiple stakeholders so that they are present and can raise viewpoints, express concerns, and contribute constructive opinions on implementation and monitoring. Participation, transparency, and accountability are required for people and units directly participating in and coordinating the implementation of project activities, as well as for indirect stakeholders.

The brief facilitation process shows that participating in a SAGE questionnaire helped stakeholders to understand the concerns, response capacity, limitations, strengths, weaknesses and challenges in the governance and equity practices of Cat Tien NP. In other words, the SAGE implementation process is an activity that raises the awareness and understanding of stakeholders. This which will be helpful to mitigate limitations and promote existing strengths for future improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The NP can use these results to supplement the assessment to apply for the IUCN's Green List. In addition, they can be used as evidence, particularly recommendations from stakeholder groups, on the different principles that can help to develop a sustainable forest management plan

as required by the Forestry Law 2017 and Circular No.28/2018/TT-BNNPTNT dated 16 November 2018 of MARD regulating sustainable forest management.

For SAGE application, in terms of organising the workshop and facilitating the assessment, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Facilitators need to understand the questions and basic information about the area, and strictly comply with the principles of the “5 DOs and 5 DON'TS” required in the implementation of SAGE.
- When selecting evaluators, there is a need to ensure a higher level of representation in terms of geography, ethnicity, and the level of direct and indirect involvement.
- Maintain full participation of evaluators so they participate sufficiently in workshop discussion sessions.

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