



Evaluation Report

DEFENDING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE BASED USE-
RIGHTS IN CO-MANAGEMENT OF FOREST AND
LAND

Submitted to: Secours Catholique/Caritas France

By: Mekong Development Services

Evaluator: Hoang Van Tu

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35 Nhat Giang Road
 Tay Mo ward, Nam Tu Liem
 Hanoi, Vietnam
 +84 943 46 84 88
 mdsc.tu@gmail.com

Abbreviations

CENDI	Community Entrepreneur Development Institute
CODE	Consultancy on Development Institute
CPC	Commune People's Committee
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DONRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
DPC	District Peoples' Committee
ER	Expected Result
GoV	Government of Vietnam
GPS	Global Position Setting
IEM	Indigenous Ethnic Minorities
IP	Indigenous Program
KUSTA	Kon Tum Union of Science and Technology Associations
LISO	Livelihoods Sovereignty Alliance
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
N/A	No Answer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
OECD	Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PFMB	Protective Forest Management Board
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
SCCF	Secoures Catholique/Caritas France
SPERI	Social Policy Econolgy Research Institute

Executive summary

The project: “***Defending Local Knowledge Based Use-Rights in co-management of Forest and Land***” was developed for the period 2016-2018 by Community Entrepreneur Development Institute (CENDI) and funded by Secoures Catholique/Caritas France (SCCF). The project’s aim is to build up a pilot model for inter-villages cooperation in Co-Management of Forest and Land in securing livelihood sovereignty for indigenous people in the Central Highlands to learn and share.

The evaluation was mandated as an independent study to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the project: “*Defending Local Knowledge Based Use-Rights in co-management of Forest and Land*”. The study aims to: *Evaluate the program relevance toward beneficiaries’ needs and local context; Understand CENDI’s strategy and capacity in term of programming, monitoring; and Measure the program’s impact*”

The evaluation addresses five evaluation criteria i.e. relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Approaches for end-of-project evaluation are applied, which include *need-based, result-based, process-outcome, goal free* and *participatoy*. A mix of information gathering techniques was employed including desk study, key informant interviews, focus groups and observation. A field study was conducted to Kon Tum province and the project’s target communities for four days.

Relevance

The evaluation found that selected villages are in high needs and fit well with project interventions. Forests selected in these villages are out of government’s programs for forest protection payment schemes such as payment for environmental services and out of protective forest managment areas. Those are also not overlap with support of other programms. The community represents very well the social, economic conditions and development problems in the regions. The project model therefore has high potential for replication in the future when approved to be successfull. The interventions and activities are fully in line with the community

culture and value. They also address the needs and obstacles that both local and central government has been struggling with. The combination of community-based approach and evidence-based lobbying and advocacy in proved to be effective.

It seems that the participation of disadvantaged groups at community level is limited. Interest, needs and voice of the poor, disadvantaged and women may therefore not be thoroughly analysed and incorporated in community decision-making.

Effectiveness

The project has achieved its objective. Three villages have got increased knowledge and capacity for customary based forest co-management. Concrete action plans are in place and management actions have been taken in routine in order to assert their rights to community forests.

At the expected result level, the project has delivered almost all outputs as planned. Two sets of customary based forest co-management titles, covering 232 ha of forestland have been granted to 2 villages, benefiting 113 households. These figures are lower comparing to the expected data, which are 3 sets of titles, covering 300 hectares of forestland, granted to 3 villages and benefiting 240 households. Capacity building and supported activities to exercise rights to forest have been delivered in all 7 villages of the commune instead of 4 as project design. This has resulted in united application of customary based forest co-management in all villages within the commune.

At the management level, report quality is yet to meet the donor's expectation until the project end. Although reports attempted to address indicators and targets, little analysis cover objective level and there was still absence of management analysis and learning. Different understanding of the donor and project holder concerning the expectation of reporting and accountability in financial management and reporting also remain until the end of the project. The sub-contract between CENDI and CODE was not properly communicated with SCCF as regulated in project agreement.

Efficiency

Significant efforts have been made to save cost, avoid overlaps, increase synergies, maximize results and ensure sustainability. LISO members's knowledge, expertise, experience and network have been great advantages to ensure high achievement of project's results. Some activities have been combined to save costs and maximize result achievements. Furthermore, CODE and CENDI

have actively participated in policy forums for advocacy and realization of synergies, especially concerning policy influence efforts.

Impact

Thanks to project support, H're People in Po E commune communities have successfully reserved and exercised their rights over forest and land; forests have been better managed and protected; knowledge on forest based sustainable livelihoods has been improved; and solidarity within village communities have been strengthened. Significant impact on policy and institutional level has been materialized as contribution of the project. Kon Tum People Committee has replicated customary based forest co-management model in other communes and districts under government and donor-funded programs. The revised proposal of forest protection and development law has incorporate key elements concerning the rights of IEMs to spiritual and livelihood forests.

Sustainability

The certification of customary based forest co-management and the incorporation of community rights to spiritual and livelihood forests are important sustainability elements. That forms legal basis for communities and their allies to defence for their rights and ensure the successful forest co-management. The influence of privatization and market-oriented economy as well as the unseen material benefit are main threats to the sustainable maintenance of community co-ownership and co-management model.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: To ensure the success of the application of customary based forest co-management, CENDI and SCCF are recommended conduct a comprehensive study/analysis on the types of forests and IEM groups that customary based co-management model could be applied. This study would guide the future programming and advocacy for replication of this model.

Recommendation 2: Empowerment and inclusion of disadvantaged groups in community and public decisionmaking is important elements for development project. Sensitization and equipment of skills and techniques for staff and community workers as well as development of

guidelines or even putting in funding agreements is suggested to SCCF and CENDI for future projects.

Recommendation 3: The combination of community-based and advocacy approaches is an important success factor of the project. Future projects are recommended to intensify this combination in order to facilitate and sustain changes at both grassroots and structure levels.

Recommendation 4: To enhance successful management of future projects, ensuring effective operation of project planning, monitoring, reporting and decision-making as well as learning and accountability system, it is recommended to have a more comprehensive risk analysis, intervention methodology in project design document. The respect to cooperation agreements can be reinforced, and reporting guidelines can be introduced. SCCF should also consider a solution for regular monitoring visits to project sides in order to ensure good planning, learning and accountability processes together with CENDI as an implementing partner.

Recommendation 5: To ensure sustainability of project interventions, the consultant recommends intensifying forest-based sustainable livelihood and community entrepreneurship development for future projects to integrate economic benefit in forest protection and development so that it could contribute to enhancing project sustainability at practical and grassroot level.

1. Introduction

1.1. Context

Inspites of impressive economic growth and poverty reduction achievements at the national scale, poverty remains a great challenge amongst ethnic minority groups in Central Highlands of Vietnam. In addition, having an ambition of becoming a more developed nation through integration to global market, Vietnam is inevitably affected by the globalization and industrialization processes. Furthermore, most development schemes fail to improve the quality of livelihood for marginalized indigenous minorities. The shortage of community consultation and participation creates disparity in social structure. This goes together with an immature view from governments and mainstreams about values traditional culture, practices, customary law and local knowledge have to offer; and the history of centralized control in natural resources management. Still today concepts of decentralization and participation in natural resources management are only partly understood and practiced. IEMs have even less political influence because of living in isolated areas, but more importantly as their marginalization by society. Most often from the institutional framework, the laws and policies have not yet fully recognizing rights of local communities over forest and land.

With support from SCC, CENDI developed and has demployed the project: “***Defending Local Knowledge Based Use-Rights in co-management of Forest and Land***”. The project was planed to complet within a three-year period of 2016-2018 it it was completed within one year in 2016. This project aimed to build up a pilot model for inter-villages cooperation in co-management of forest and land in securing livelihood sovereignty for indigenous people in the Central Highlands to learn and share. The project intervention framework is sumarized in Box 1.

Box 1: Project intervention framework

General Objective: To secure livelihood of indigenous ethnic minorities in upland Vietnam.

Specific objective 1: To strengthen self-determination of local communities through securing use-rights over land and forests especially sacred forest, and facilitating co-management with authorities and stakeholders.

Expected Result 1: 3 Hre villages (240 households) in Po E commune obtain community title for 300 hectares of land and forests, especially sacred forest.

- Lobby local authorities and functional offices for agreement on implementation of land allocation
- Conduct field studies on current land uses, forest governance, review relevant policies relating to

1.2. Evaluation objectives

The evaluation was mandated to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the project: “*Defending Local Knowledge Based Use-Rights in co-management of Forest and Land*”. The study aims to:

Evaluate the program relevance toward beneficiaries' needs and local context; Understand CENDI's strategy and capacity in term of programming, monitoring; and Measure the program's impact.

1.3. Scope of work

The evaluation measures project's results and assess strengths and weaknesses in respects of five dimensions i.e. relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Specifically, the study will address the following questions in respect to each evaluation dimension as presented in Box 2.

Box 2: Evaluation questions

Relevance

- Is the selection of target villages relevant according to the context?
- Are the actions developed in the above mentioned program answering the needs of the beneficiaries (here the IPs of Po E Commune)? Are beneficiaries identifying other needs?
- Are the activities adapted to the IPs context in Vietnam/Mekong region?
- Is the methodology used by CENDI relevant according to the context?

2) Effectiveness:

- Does the program reach all its objectives? Were some activities neglected? If yes why?
- Are the results coherent with the initial objectives? How can the rapid progress of the project be explained (the activities were finalized within 1 year instead of 3).
- Is the program management system operational, sufficient and result oriented?
- Is the monitoring, planning, reporting system effective?

3) Efficiency:

- Does the program reaches its expected result with sound ratio achievements/costs, as compared to other actors on the “market”?
- Does the program use all possible synergies and cost reduction strategies?
- Are there synergies with other programs from other NGOs, public services or International Organizations?

4) Impact

- What has been the impact of the activities on the communities?
- Is CENDI’s work with IPs known and recognized among the different stakeholders (notably IPs and other NGOs)?
- Is CENDI able to measure the impact of its work? How could it be reinforced?

5) Sustainability:

- What were/are the strengths of CENDI and its program in term of sustainability? What are the weaknesses/threats?
- How to develop the program learning capacity and adaptability?

2. Methodology

1.1. Evaluation approaches

The evaluation applied a holistic evaluation paradigm in which a combination of need-based, result-based, process-outcomes, goal-free, performance audit, participatory and independent approaches is applied.

Needs-based: Needs-based evaluation helps answering the question to what extent the project interventions, expected results as well as intervention approaches response the needs of its beneficiaries and capacity as well as inline with mandates of stakeholders.

Result-based: result-based aims to addressing the effectiveness criteria by judging the worth of the project on the basis of the extent to which the stated objective and expected outcomes have been achieved.

Process-outcomes: This is the reflection process to the project approaches and strategies to analyze and explain why and how project results have been or not been achieved. The process-outcomes approach helps identify strengths and weaknesses in project implementation and management and draw lessons and recommendations for future programming.

Goal-free: Goal-free approach enables figuring out positive and negative as well as intended and unintended impacts of the project.

Performance audit: This involves determining project efficiency based on valuation of project outcomes given project resource consumed.

Participatory: Participatory tools are employed that allow two-way communication and finding validation to help the consultant develop his understanding before analysis and building rigorous and sound judgment.

Independent: the external consultant based on analysis and interpretation of evaluation findings makes and being accountable to all judgments and conclusions.

1.2. Data collection methods

Quantitative data such as area of forestland allocated with land title given to the communities and number of households benefited are collected from project database and reports and verified through interviews with stakeholders. Qualitative findings such as changes of community-based organization, government and institutional capacity in forest co-management were collected and analysed using various methods and tools for information collection and analysis such as outcome mapping, focus groups, key informant interviews, benchmarking, semi-structure interviews, unstructured interviews and story telling. Table 1 presents key tools employed in this evaluation as well as sources of data/information.

Table 1: Data collection tools

Tools	Types of data	Informants/sources
Desk study	Background information Project design Project progress Project results (Quantitative and qualitative) Challenges/obstacles and solutions Changes in project implementation and management Other relevant information	Project design document; Baseline survey and mid-term review reports; Project regular plans and reports Project publication and training materials; activity reports; important field-trip notes; Other relevant documents including study reports, policy documents, etc.
Semi-structured and unstructured interviews with key informants	Primary qualitative information to address all the evaluation questions, interprets quantitative data, verify and explain findings from other sources.	CENDI staff Beneficiaries, Elders and Head of Villages Government Authority Representatives (DONRE, commune people’s committee, district people’s committee, etc. Other NGOs working on IPs.

Focus Groups	Primary qualitative information to address relevant research questions, interpret quantitative data, verify and explain findings from other sources	Beneficiaries CENDI staff Government Officials
Observation	Project results and impacts	Visit to beneficiaries households and forests to observe and discuss forest management practices Observation of forestland titles/certificates

1.3. Sampling

Representative sampling was employed in this evaluation. At grassroots level, the consultant visited all three villages. In each village, a focus group plus key informant interviews with village elders, village heads and representatives of beneficiaries were conducted together with a field visits to a community forest in Vi Po E 2 village. At commune and district levels, group interviews were conducted with government authorities including people’s committees, department of natural resources and environment, department of agriculture and rural development and forest rangers, etc. Interviews with representatives from other NGOs working in IPs will be also conducted.

1.4. Reliability

Crosschecking and triangulation was employed as key techniques to ensure the reliability of evaluation findings. Triangulation was applied for both data sources (different informants and sources of data) and collection methods (different data collection methods e.g. interview, observation and desk review) to solidify findings. The consultant visited and discuss with some villagers on what and how they have benefited from the project in a way of story telling in order to get comprehensive and in-depth information of project results and impact on their ownership to forestland, capacity and livelihoods.

1.5. Limitations

The evaluation went smoothly thanks to the great arrangement effort of the Deputy Director, Ms. Nguyen To Kien and the Project Field Coordinator, Mr. Le Van Ka. There were several limitations

in this evaluation. At the village level, few participants were pure villagers but mostly village elders, village heads and cadres. In addition, timing was not fully respected in all three villages because it was reported that villagers were working in the field during daytime so it was not easy to mobilize them to participate in the meetings. There was therefore not sufficient time for site visits and individual interviews. To compensate the shortage of time at the formal interviews and field visits, the consultant spent additional time in the evening and lunchtime for informal interviews to get additional and relevant information.

At the district level, instead of small group interviews, CENDI organized a plenary meeting with all relevant stakeholders, and the meeting was organized in a form of reporting and sharing project results as well as evaluation of different stakeholders to the project. This setting somehow limited the chance to have in-depth interviews with individuals or small groups as well as crosschecking and triangulation techniques. The evaluators collected telephone numbers of some key persons and continued to conduct interviews individually after the plenary discussion in order to verify information needed.

It was requested to interview other local/international NGOs working in the same theme in Kon Tum. However, according to CENDI and CODE, there are no NGOs working in the same thematic area in the province, except for the two similar programs, one is supported by KfW (Germany Government), and another is a Vietnamese Government's Program namely the 30A Program. District People's Committee is the project holder of both programs. A project supported by Norwegian Peoples' Aids (NPA), also implemented by CENDI, already completed one year ago. Interviews with Government Authorities did cover the coordination and synergies between the project and the two programs but not with NPA.

3. Findings

3.1. Relevance

The project sites selection

Cultural and economic structures as well as natural habitat of Central Highlands in general are facing a real fragile situation due to major external factors. It was witnessed that the temptations of commercial crops (e.g. cassava, coffee and rubber), timber, hydropower, bauxite mining and eco-tourism has made critical pressure on forests, land and water resources. A rapid change in ethnic composition and economic activities due to Kinh majority migrants, in combination with modern agricultural technology, as well as private sector development has disturbed traditional livelihoods, community, cultural structures and practices. Forests have been heavily exploited and damaged for the abovementioned economic activities by different stakeholders namely illegal loggers, private enterprises, migrants and even local communities. In addition, unthoughtful development interventions have caused negative impacts. Po E commune represents all typical pressures on human and natural ecological systems of Central Highlands. Cultural and spiritual spaces, including sacred forests are heavily threatened by human factors. The field study found that selected villages of Po E commune have rich forest-based spiritual life and livelihood activities. Their indigenous knowledge and customs have been generated and developed from forest ecology. Therefore, more than any others, they determine the value of forest for their livelihood and cultural spaces, and have strong and self-commitment to make every effort to protect it. Especially with sacred forests, people believe that they have a mandate to keep them genuine so Forest Lords would in turn support their lives and communities. The selection of such villages to help defending indigenous knowledge on co-management and use-rights over forest and land is confirmed to be highly relevant. It fits with the local community culture and customs; and addresses their needs. Therefore, the project has been considered a good role model for replication and policy advocacy purposes. That has formed an important success factor for the project deployment and achievement of expected results.

The right decision of choosing the villages of Po E commune as target areas is also proven by a fact that while forest in other communes is benefited from the payment for environmental service scheme, those in Po E commune is excluded. It is because environment services to date is only from hydropower plants but forest in Po E commune does not belong to any hydropower catchment. Therefore, there is no incentive for both individual and corporate owners to take protection mandate over such forest. Giving forest rights to Po E communities would reinforce their ownership and rights to protect and manage their livelihood and cultural spaces. Vi Ko Oa, and Vi Po E 2 were selected also because other villages have been benefited from other programs i.e. KFW10 program funded by German Government. This program is implementing a similar intervention, which is progressing forest and land titles and ownership to communities. The selection of Vi Ko Oa and Vi Po E 2 avoided overlaps with the other two programs and contributed to increase the coverage of forest allocation. The changes in the villages selected at the project implementation comparing to the project design also reflect the CENDI's response to avoid overlaps.

Interventions and activities

The backbone intervention of the project is transferring forest and land rights from state and individuals to community and applying customary regulation based co-management in order to fulfill the rights of IEM communities to forest-based livelihood and cultural spaces, and enhance forest management effectiveness. According to the villagers, this model is relevant to the traditional customs of H're people in Po E commune, especially for sacred forests. These are parts of community cultural and livelihood spaces that should be assessible by all community members, and everyone has a mandate to manage and protect. This is one of the reasons why individual households who have been already granted private ownership agreed to give back their ownership

“I was granted a forest and land title but decided to give back to the village for co-ownership and co-management. I may have my own benefit with the forest but it would affect community solidarity. If I had salt and source to eat and money to spend but other don't then I would not be happy. It is more equal to grant forest to the whole community because nobody planted so it does not make sense to give to individuals. The Government's 30A Program allocated forests and land to individuals but at a village meeting the whole community agreed to give them back to the village and co-manage”, said A Khan - a villager in Vi O Lak village.

certificates to the communities and adopt a co-management initiative.

Local governments and functional bodies admitted that the model of community-based co-management using customary laws has important advantages. The Vice Chairman of Po E Commune People's Committee (CPC) claimed that transferring to community ownership model is to ensure equality and avoid conflict within the communities. *"In Vi O Lak village, the Government gave the forest to 7 households but the Village Elders, Village Head and Village Communist Party Secretary initiated and persuaded to transferred to co-ownership and co-management, and it was agreed by all villagers to ensure equality. In the future, if they receive payment for environmental services (PES) the whole village would enjoyed equal benefit"*, said the CPC Vice Chairman. The Representative of District Forest Ranger supported this argument by saying that it would be failed if giving a forest and land title to a village community in low land area (or in the other words to Kinh people) but it is very convincing to do that with indigenous ethnic minorities (IEMs) in Kon Tum. He also added that for IEMs, customary laws are even more stricted and respected by IEM people, and therefore more effective comparing to applying government's laws. For him, laws and regulations are generated with a primary purpose to ensure effective forest management but not to fine people. Because customary laws have proved to be effective, their advantages shall be made use to improve management effectiveness. The Chairman of Kon Tum Unions for Science and Technology Association (KUSTA) said: *"No one could work alone to protect the forest from violation and crimes. The Government has given natural forests to individuals for protection but it has been proved to be ineffective. The province was struggling with finding a proper model so when CODE introduced a community-based forest co-management it was very welcome. H're people still have strong communal customs so this model fit with their customs"*.

The levels of ownership to forests of communities and violation of community members are varied depending on the types of forests. Community members would not cut trees in sacred forest but they can clear forest for cultivation in others. *"You see, the forest overthere, no one in the village would come and cut a tree, but here in this forest they have cleared all the land for cassava cultivation"*, said a villager in Po E 2 village. The forest to be perceived as genuine is the most sacred one for the village and located insite a protective forest managed by Thach Nham Protective Forest Management Board (PFMB), while the forest being heavily damaged is a natural productive one which had been granted to individual households and later being transferred to the

community. It can be understood from this fact that transferring sacred forests to community might be more relevant.

There is a fact that privatization thought and practice is growing rapidly. It influences communities' organization and their members' way of life, culture and customs. That might be an objective rules and it would not be possible to prevent this change process. It would be worth to determine which types of forest are more appropriate for co-ownership/co-management and which are more appropriate to manage by the government and private sectors. It is recommended that CENDI and SCCF to conduct a research study on this topic to guide their future actions.

At the activity level, the project deployed three key actions including progressing community forest and land title to 2 selected villages; ensuring 4 villages obtaining rights to co-manage forest land; and strengthening the capacity of grassroots organizations, authorities and institutions to enhance community forest co-management and rights. The evaluation confirmed that determination and legalization of customary-based forest co-management is highly relevant. Actions and activities planned and implemented were very responsive to the needs and local context. It can be explained that CENDI has long experience in claiming rights and legalizing customary laws on co-governance of forest and land for communities in different regions of Vietnam and Laos. CENDI has also intensive experience working in Kon Plong and other districts in Kon Tum Province.

[Approaches and methodologies](#)

The project design document does not present intervention approaches and methodologies. Interviews with project stakeholders have however clarified and confirmed the appropriateness of project approaches. CODE, as the key implement partner of CENDI, applied a combination of community-based, lobbying and evidence-based advocacy approaches in order to achieve project result and ensure sustainability. At the grassroots level, CODE organized and facilitated village meetings to discuss and make consensus decision on transformation from individual rights to community rights over forest and land. A participatory experience learning approach has been employed, in which communities were facilitated to analyse, plan, make decisions and take actions. This has been proved to be a highly relevant approach. Community members proactively participated in forest inventory, analysis the situation, marking sacred forest trees, planning for forest rehabilitation, protection and land use, etc. This approach has empowered local community and built their capacity and ownership over forest and lands.

Through out the process, CODE has worked with highly influential persons in the villages such as village elders, party leaders and village heads to facilitate meetings and decision-making processes. With the influence of community leaders, it was easy to achieve consensus thus facilitated a smooth forest rights transformation process. Some villagers in Vi K Oa village claimed that they gave forest certificates back because they were told by village elders and other village leaders to do so but did not consider advantages/disadvantages thoroughly. In fact, the influence of village elders and other leaders have limited the participation and empowerment of disadvantaged people such as the poor and women.

To seek support from the government, CODE lobbied the DPC and CPC to adopt the concept of co-management using customary laws based on a success model from Vi O Lak village implemented over the period 2014-2015. This approach resulted in a very progressive result and appreciation from government bodies. In order to ensure sustainability, CENDI has actively participated in policy advocacy. Project results and research studies have been published and CENDI leader has actively participated in law consultation forums in order to advocate for the recognition and legalization of community rights to forest. Positive advocacy results are likely to be achieved in near future. If materialized, it would contribute greatly to project sustainability at law and policy level. As a summary, the lobbying and advocacy approaches employed by CENDI for the project is proved to be relevant.

3.2. Effectiveness

Completion of project activities

Table 1 presents an overview of project progress. Till the end of 2016, the project had completed almost all activities planned for a three-year period, which is an impressive progress. Within only five months, all administrative and technical activities and procedures had been completed; two villages had got community forest and land titles; local authorities had verified customary based community forest regulations; and Forest Co-management Teams have been established and functioned. In addition, technical training and capacity building activities for local officials had been also completed. Public awareness raising as well as advocacy activities had also finished within a short time period.

The reasons for such an impressive progress include the experience of CENDI/CODE in the sector and the locality; the needs of local authorities and community for a sustainable forest management solution; and the relevance of the model to the IEM culture in Po E commune.

Table 1: Overview of project activities progress

No.	Activities	Status
Activities for Result 1		
Act. 1.1.1	Lobby local authorities and functional offices for agreement on implementation of land allocation	Completed
Act. 1.1.2	3 field studies on current land use, forest governance, policies related to community forest land title	Completed
Act. 1.1.3	Community participatory survey on current land use planning, resources uses, claryfying types of forest, land borders, measuring land and forest areas, identifying and soving forest conflicts/overlapings	Completed (2 surveys)
Act. 1.1.4	Forestland use planning based on customary laws, local knowledge and landscape setting	Completed
Act. 1.1.5	Handover allocated forest land and titles to the communities	Completed (2 sets)
Act. 1.1.6	Lobby forestland rights through documentation and publication	Completed
Act. 1.1.7	Produce documentary movies on community sacred forests and co-management	Completed
Activities for Result 2		
Act. 1.2.1	In-depth research on customary ownership regime, forestland governance and land conflict resolutions of communities	A series of meetings organized instead
Act. 1.2.2	Facilitate local communities to set-up customary las based regulation in co-mangement of forest and land	Completed
Act. 1.2.3	Lobby local authorities to certify approval of customary law based regulations and co-management	Completed
Act. 1.2.4	Workshop with local representative about institutional framework of forest and land	Completed
Act. 1.2.5	Informing related stakeholders about customary laws based regulations and co-management	Completed
Act. 1.2.6	Set-up forest management team amongst stakeholder for co-maangement	Completed
Act. 1.2.7	Organize regional workshop on sacred forest and co-management	Cancelled
Activities for Expected result 3		
Act. 1.3.1	Raise awareness through brochure leaflets, posters, website, internal quarterly magazine	Completed
Act. 1.3.2	Organize practical training on forestland use planning, monitoring and assesment for villagers	Changed to training on nursery technques
Act. 1.3.3	Practical training for communities and technicians on using GPS and other tools	Completed
Act. 1.3.4	Organize internal trainings for CENDI junior staff on community based forest land allocation and co-management (in combination with community and local officials)	Completed
Act. 1.3.5	Organize training for CENDI staff on M&E, financial management and budgetting	Changed

Firstly, CODE, as an alliance of CENDI has intensive experience and good relationship with local government and political systems in Kon Tum, Kon Plong district, and Po E commune. This is the main success factor for CENDI to complete all activities in a short period of time.

Secondly, local authorities and community was in high needs for finding an alternative solution in order to improve the effectiveness of forest and land allocation. The GoV had granted forest to individual households with the purpose to enhance forest mangement effectiveness. However, the result was not possitive as households who were granted forest titles, materials and cash support from the Government but still not manage forest properly. Forestland clearance for cultivation remained a burning issue. The customary-based co-management model introduced in the passed years has proved to be effective. Therefore, the government strongly supports the expansion of this success model to other villages in the commune.

Finally, as H're people has a typical communal customs, the initiative of customary and community ownership model fit well with IEM culture had facilitated the progress of the project.

The evaluation however also finds that despites CODE was aware and aimed to facilitate concensus decision making process in regarding to transformation from individual to communal forest rights, the high influential leadership of village elders and other leaders made facilitated a quick decision process but that have limit the participation of disadvantaged people such as the poor and women.

Achievement of expected results

Table 2 summarizes the project achievements against expected results at output level. In general, the project has partly achieved its expected outputs. Specifically, although the project planned to support forest and land right claims in three villages but in reality it was implemented just in the two. The project had to cancel this activity in one village to avoid overlap with the KfW10 program funded by German Government. This is the only reason for the partly achievement of project outputs concerning the forest area granted community forest rights.

It can be highlighted that the area of forest being co-managed by the communities exceeds the project target. It is because CODE in fact supported 4 villages to sign and implement co-management agreement instead of only one village. Furthermore, all stakeholders have been actively participated in community forest co-management, which is higher than expected. Also,

since the project provided training for key farmers in 7 villages, the number of participants who have been capacitated exceed the plan (24 comparing to 20).

Table 2: Actual results at output level

	Targets	Actual results	Remarks
Expected result (ER) 1	3 set of title and maps	2	Partly achieved
	300 hectares of forest land granted	232.3	Partly achieved
	240 HHs obtain community title	113	Partly achieved
	Secure practice cultural rituals and collect forest products		Achieved
	3 community customary law based regulations	2	Partly achieved
ER2	4 villages obtain the rights to co-manage forestland	3	Partly achieved
	477 hectares of forest and land co-managed by social groups	406.9	Partly achieved
	477 hectares of forest and land co-managed by inter-villages	406.9	Partly achieved
	53 hectares of forest and land co-managed with external actors	406.9	Over achieved
	70% of stakeholders involved in forest co-management	100%	Over achieved
ER3	20 trained villagers able to defence their rights	24	Over achieved
	70% authorities understand and able to apply customary laws	N/A	Achieved
	10 institutional staff increase 10% professional skills	N/A	Achieved

Although there was no quantitative survey conducted to analyse increased knowledge and skills of local authorities, based on the focus groups and key informant interviews with local cadres, it is

evidenced that the officials of local authorities and functional bodies understand very well the customary based co-management system and how to operate the system effectively. They appreciate the relevance and effectiveness of this model. The Deputy Chairman of Po E CPC shared that with the customary-based co-management model, the rights and ownership of community to the forest increased. Villagers who need wood for repairing their houses can make a request for the village council to approve and then submit to the CPC/DPC for approval. The representative of Kon Plong Forest Ranger said that the combination of Forest Protection and Development Law and the customary-based forest co-management would help improve the forest management and protection effectiveness. For the IEM, people are more familiar with and strictly comply with customary laws. Therefore, the utilization of customary laws to manage forest has proved to be very effective. The Vice Chairman of Kon Plong district and representatives of KUSTA said that they have recognized the advantages and make recommendations to the National Assembly to integrate this best practice to the forest protection and development law, which is being under the revision process.

Achievement of project’s objective

The specific objective of the project is to enhance self–determination of local community through securing the rights of IEMs’ use-rights and co-management of land and forest. Table 3 shows the target and actual results at the objective level.

Table 3: Actual results at the objective level

Result level	Targets	Actual results
Objective: to enhance self–determination of local community through securing the rights of IEMs’ use-rights and co-management of land and forest	3 villages can assert rights to community forest	3
	Better governance of forest land	Proven evidence
	Co-management between villages introduced	Proven evidence

The evaluation confirms that the project objective has been achieved comparing with setout targets. **Three villages have increased their capability taken concrete plans and actions to assert their rights to community forest.** Under the project cycle, 2 villages (Vi K Oa and Vi Po E 2) have received community forest and land titles. The Kon Plong DPC certified

their community customary-based co-management regulations. These documents form legal basis for the communities to exercise their rights. To assert their rights, with support from CODE, three villages (including Vi O Lak which already received forest title and certified regulations in 2015) have established co-management teams and sign co-management agreements with Po E CPC, Kon Plong DARD and Thach Nham PFMB. In practice, co-management teams have been conducting regular forest ranging activities together with those of other villages and the PFMB. *“Youths in the villages divided into different groups, each one represent a group to participate in a monthly patrol together with Thach Nham PFMB. The PFMB informs the dates and we assign participants. We maintain a timesheet though we don’t receive any fee. In the future, if the government applies payment for environmental services, patrollers would receive compensations. After completion of each patrol we have a dinner together, discuss results and follow-ups”*, said Violak Village Head.

It is also evidenced that co-management systems has been operated effectively. The representative of district forest rangers said that since the forests allocated to the villages the violation to forest have reduced significantly. The leaderships and villagers of Vi O Lak village confirmed that occasionally we found violation cases and have properly addressed. *“Once I and Chat (the Village Head) found a person in a neighbouring village clearing our village’s forest. We informed his Village Head then we found he stopped clearing and no longer come again. If he still came, we would inform the Forest Rangers and the PFMB to fine him. In our communities, we value the solidarity so normally avoid using hard words directly to each other”*, said a Vi O Lak villager. Villagers in Vi Po E 2 and Vi K Oa shared that before villagers who were granted forest titles cleared their land for cassava production since they misunderstood that as they have forest titles they have their rights do what they want. Since the forest rights transferred to community, this situation has been no longer occurred. The representative of Po E CPC, Mr. A Chon said that the cooperation between the villages, CPC and Thach Nam PFMB has greatly improved since the co-management teams established and forest patrols regularly executed.

Management system

This section address questions related to the effectiveness of the project mangement systems i.e. Is the program planning, M&E, reporting and decision making system operational, sufficient and result oriented?

The evaluation confirmed that project design was relevant to the needs and local context. The intervention model and framework have addressed critical development challenges. However, the analysis of risks and success factors/assumption was absent. As a result, the project implementation was far more progressive comparing to its plan since CODE in fact had well prepared for project implementation. As a result, the project was planned for a three-year period but completed within only one year.

According to the project design document, the project has a very specific monitoring matrix. Deliverables of project activities were also well documented. Interviews with trainees and beneficiaries of capacity building activities reveal that pre and post activity evaluations were not conducted to measure changes. CENDI has respected reporting regimes in general. The report however referred only to expected results of the project in response to the project logical framework. Important chapters such as project management systems, success factors and lessons, etc. were absent. Reports do not analyse and inform well why and how the project has so progressive as well as facilitating and hindering factors to project management and implementation.

There are some specific gaps in project communication and decisionmaking. CENDI signed a project implementation with CODE, her sister in LISO network to implement the project in the field. This agreement was however neither communicated and seek approval in written from SCCF as regulated in Article 6 of the Cooperation Agreement (Article 6: sub-contract and the ability to substitute) nor mentioned in the project reports. In addition, there seems to be a misunderstanding/miscommunication in regards to the requirements of accountability systems. Project holder shared that the project's financial accountability system was over focused on activity and output level. That caused overuse of human resources for administrative and management.

It is recommended that in the future, a report template shall be created and agreed between CENDI and SCCF in order to guide the monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Analysis of project implementation context, results, success factors, and lessons learnt as well as recommendations or proposal for changes shall be incorporated in the project report in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the project to support decision making. Orientation and guidance shall be provided in regards to the requirement of a financial management system at the beginning of the project.

3.3. Efficiency

There was no basis to calculate and compare the ratio of costs/achievements of the project with others. However, there are evidences that CENDI has made important efforts to save cost, avoid overlaps, increase synergies, maximize results and ensure sustainability.

Firstly, CENDI has made great use of its and LISO members's knowledge, expertise, experience and network to ensure project's results. Thanks to CENDI and CODE's past experience in Po E, Kon Plong, other regions in Vietnam and Laos as well as their strong network in Kon Tum, the project was put in implementation right after it was approve. That clearly contributed to saving transaction and administrative costs. Secondly, CENDI combined some activities, which allowed saving costs while ensuring result achievements. Thirdly, thanks to the shorten down of project implementation period, the project have saved administrative and human resources' costs but deliver almost all expected results. Last, the CENDI decided to stopped its activities in Vi K lang 2 village to avoid overlaps with KfW10 project while expand its forest rights reinforcements in all 7 villages of Po E commune to enlarge project results and impact.

With its extensive experience and high reputation in forest and indigenous right sectors, CODE and CENDI have been invited and actively participated in policy forums and consultation meetings for program development to share experience and advocacy for policy imporvement. CODE Director shared that cooperation between CODE/CENDI's programs and other projects, including KfW10 limited mostly at information exchange level. KfW10 and government program 30A have learnt and adopted the model of customary based community forest co-management in other communities in Kon Tum. According to CODE Director, excepted for the KfW10 and 30A programs, there are no international or NGO funded project working in the same theme in Kon Tum. Therefore, synergies are only limited in cooperation with these two programs.

At the national level, CENDI has participated very actively and recognized as a valued contributor for the revision of the law on forest protection and development, in which it defence for the rights of IEM over community and especially sacred forests.

3.3. Impacts

Impact on IEM community

The evaluation found that the project has important impact on IEM community in Po E commune. Firstly the project has helped H're People in Po E commune community's successfully reserve and exercise their rights over forest and land. Currently, there are still inconsistencies between different laws of Vietnam. Under the forest protection and management law, community is eligible to own forest and land. However, under the civil law, community is not determined as a legal identity. Because of this inconsistency, almost all provinces neglect to grant forest and land titles to communities in order to avoid potential problems in case a conflict arise. For H're people, forest, land and surrounding eco-systems form important livelihood, spiritual and cultural space. From generations to generations they have conserved forest and land for their livelihoods and cultivation with rich indigenous knowledge and it has become important part of their culture. The forest and land titles formally confirm their rights to access to forests.

Secondly, the project has contributed to improve the solidarity of the community. *"The forest has grown naturally, nobody planted it so it shall be assessible by all and everyone can benefit from it. In a village meeting, we agreed to co-manage and co-benefit. No one can protect the forest alone. If we manage together it would be more effective"*, said the Vi O Lak Village Head. Interviewed villagers confirmed that so far people in the villages perceived that forest was for all. The allocation of forest to individual household somewhat created distrust among villagers. The recollection of forest titles and allocation to community has resumed mutual trust and the solidarity among people in the communities.

Thirdly, the project has contributed to increased knowledge of forest-based livelihoods. *"Participating in study tours to Tumerong district, I learnt that people there grow ginseng under the forest shade and earn good income. I thought we could learn from them to integrate forest protection and livelihood development. I also learnt that in Ha Tinh province people can harvest honey from forest in a sustainable way and earning from other indigenous plants"*, said A Chat. It can be seen that training, study tours has exposed the villagers to new ideas of indigenous knowledge and forest based livelihoods and businesses. That would serve as basis for future interventions of community entrepreneurship to ensure sustainability of community forest ownership.

Finally, the illegal logging and forest clearance has significantly reduced. In Po E 2 village, when forest was given to individual households, forest owners cleared land for cassava cultivation. However, since it was claimed back and allocated to community, this situation has been banned and no longer occurred. A Thap, the Village Party Leader of Po E 2 village said that in the previous years, individual households who were granted forest titles thought that it was their own forest they have their all rights do what they want. However, now the forest is of the community, no one has rights to do it.

Since the project has lasted for only one year, it is too early to see project's impact on forest cover and livelihoods. The representative of Kon Plong Forest Ranger said that the impact on livelihoods of local people yet to be seen. CENDI has also not collected and shared this data to local stakeholders. Intensification of forest-based livelihood and business would be important to help integration of income generation in forest protection in order to ensure sustainability.

Impact on policy and governance

Thanks to the best practice of customary based forest co-management model in Po E commune, Kon Plong DPC and Kon Tum PPC have recognized the advantages of community forest rights model. The DPC has decided to grant the forest and land rights to the communities in the commune and certified their customary based forest co-management regulations. The DPC and PPC have also replicated this model in other communities under the government's funded 30A program and Germany funded KfW10 program. *"The Kon Tum PPC has recognized the community rights to access to the forest, and that actually help better forest management and protection. Community would protect the forest better if they have rights to nurture, gather, and develop/rehabilitate the forest. Kon Tum PPC has therefore adopted this model and process the replication"*, Said the Chairman of KUSTA. This can be considered as an important change in the perception and policy at the local government level. As above-mentioned, due to inconsistency in the government laws, other provinces neglected to grant forest and land title to communities. With its decision, Kon Plong DPC was recognized as one of the pioneers in recognition of community rights and allocation of forest and land to communities.

Recognizing the benefit of community forest rights, KUSTA has worked side by side with CODE and CENDI to advocate for institutionalization and legalization through organizing and participating in a number of law revision consultation workshops. Kon Tum has been considered as one of the pilot model for studies to propose forest protection and development law revision.

As a result, community rights to sacred forest have been recognized and incorporated in the revised proposal of the Government. It is expected that the community rights to forest, especially sacred forest would be legalized in the near future when the National Assembly ratify the new law.

3.4. Sustainability

Although the project has implemented for only a short period, it has important potential for sustainability. First and foremost, the forest and land titles have been formally granted to communities. That officially confirms the ownership and rights of the local community to the forests. Secondly, since the community rights to forest have been incorporated to the law revision proposal, there is likelihood that the National assembly will ratify it. The terminologies, concepts and articles that regulate the respect of the rights to forest-based livelihood and spiritual spaces of IEMs are incorporated in the proposed revision. If being ratified these rights will be regulated in the forest laws.

It is certainly that with only a short period of time, the project alone would not be able to influence the policy and decision making significantly. CENDI's experience from other projects, international organizations and the Government has jointly contributed to form lessons and recommendations for such changes.

There are however important factors that may prevent the project sustainability in practice. Firstly, the influence of external and development factors on culture and customs of local communities are inevitable. The unexpected effects of privatization and market-oriented economy on community governance structure are critical and inevitable. Community structures have become fragile when facing such external change factors. That would also threaten the sustainability of communal ownership model of forests and land. There are indications that the ownership of community members to communal forest and land may be limited. Villagers said that when they see someone violate communal forests, they would report to forest rangers to process the case rather than confronting violators. Villagers also admitted that the application of customary based forest co-management for sacred forest would be more effective. It indicates that not all types of forests are suitable for communal ownership and co-management.

Secondly, the late generation of economic benefit is somehow a risk for sustainability of co-management model. Although villagers were willing to participate in regular forest patrol without allowance, they shared strong expectation of receiving some forms of allowance such as payment

for environmental service in the future in order to maintain their activities. It implies that economic return is a significant factor for the community to ensure sustainability of co-forest management model. Support for sustainable forest-based income generation could be a relevant solution.

In summary, with successful results in lobbying and advocacy, CENDI has been able to formalize and ensure the sustainability of the forest and land rights as well as the customary based co-management of forest in Po E commune at the administrative and institutional level, which is very impressive. There is also potential to legalize important aspects of community based forest co-management, right to forest-based livelihoods and especially respect to sacred forest. At practical and community level however, there need to be more intensive efforts to support sustainable forest-based livelihoods and prevention of external factor influence in order to ensure the sustainability of customary based forest co-management.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

Relevance

Conclusion 1: CENDI selected the right communities in Kon Tum province for the project support. Villages selected are in high needs, out of government's payment for environmental services and not overlap with other support. Changes regarding the village selected during of the course of the project reflect the responsive decision making to the context.

Conclusion 2: The project's interventions and activities are fully in line with the community culture and value as well as addressing the needs and obstacles that both local and central government has been struggling with. It is therefore fully supported by both communities and the government at all level in practices.

Conclusion 3: The combination of community-based and evidence-based lobbying and advocacy in proved to be a relevant approach. It mobilized the participation of all relevant stakeholders, facilitated consensus decision-making process at community level to ensure successful project implementation and sustainability at grassroots level; and support of government administrative bodies in legalization and institutionalization to ensure project sustainability and replication.

Conclusion 4: The over dependance on high influence of community leaders (village elders, village heads and communist party leaders, etc.) seems to be a limitation of the project. Interest, needs and voice of the poor, disadvantaged and women may not be fully considered and incorporated in community decision-making.

Effectiveness

Conclusion 5: Excepted for some activities planned for three villages but implemented in only two and some has been replaced by others, almost all project activities being planned for three

years but have been completed within one year, and delivered expected outputs. The main success factors include the right approach applied, strong experience and expertise of CODE (CENDI partner) in the thematic and deographical area, the good relationship with local community and partners as well as the relevance of project interventions to the needs of local communities and partners.

Conclusion 6: In general project has achieved its expected results. Two sets of customary based forest co-management titles, covering 232 ha of forestland have been granted to 2 villages, benefiting 113 households. These figures are lower comparing to the expected data, which are 3 sets of titles, covering 300 hectares of forestland, granted to 3 villages and benefiting 240 households. This is because one village already received support from another program granted by KfW. The project however, provided capacity building and supported activities to exercise rights to forest in all 7 villages of the commune instead of 4 as project design. This has resulted in united application of customary based forest co-management in all villages, thus increase the effectiveness of the project.

Conclusion 7: The project has achieved its objective. Three villages have got increased knowledge and capacity for customary based forest co-management. Concrete action plans are in place and management actions have been taken in routine in order to assert their rights to community forests. It is also evidenced that forest has been more effectively managed under the new ownership model.

Conclusion 8: The project actual implementation experienced an important change in regards to planned timeline. It draws a lesson that in the future more comprehensive analysis of success factor on project management and implementation can be improved to justify feasibility of project plans. Project's regular reports tend to focus more at activity and output levels while they should have covered also impact and management levels. Common understanding of the expectation and regulations of financial report would have been better communicated to form mutual agreement from the beginning of the project. The sub-contract between CENDI and CODE should have been properly communicated with SCCF as regulated in project agreement.

Efficiency

Conclusion 9: CENDI has made significant efforts to save cost, avoid overlaps, increase synergies, maximize results and ensure sustainability. LISO members's knowledge, expertise, experience and network have been in great use to ensure project's results. Some activities have

been combined to save costs while ensuring result achievements. Interventions in Vi K Lang 2 village were cancelled to avoid overlaps while forest rights reinforcements in all 7 villages of Po E commune to enlarge project results and impact. Furthermore, CODE and CENDI have actively participated in policy forums for advocacy, and explore synergies with other government and donor funded programs.

Impact

Conclusion 10: The project has important impact on IEM community. H're People in Po E commune has successfully reserved and exercised their rights over forest and land; forests have been better managed and protected; knowledge on forest based sustainable livelihoods has been improved; and solidarity within village communities have been strengthened.

Conclusion 11: Significant impact on policy and institutional level has been recognized as a result of the project. Customary based forest co-management has been replaced by Kon Tum People Committee in other communes and districts; the revise proposal of forest protection and development law has incorporate key elements concerning the rights of IEM to spiritual and livelihood forests. It is expected that the ratification of the revised laws in the near future will likely legalize this important rights of IEMs.

Sustainability

Conclusion 12: The certification of customary based forest co-management and the incorporation of community rights to spiritual and livelihood forests are important sustainability elements. That form legal basis for communities and their allies to defence for their rights and ensure the successful forest co-management.

Conclusion 13: There are internal and external factors that may affect project future sustainability. The influence of privatization and market-oriented economy as well as the unseen material benefit are main threats to the sustainable maintenance of community co-ownership and co-management model.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation. This section presents consultant's recommendations with a view to improve performance of future similar program of CENDI and SCCF.

Recommendation 1: To ensure the success of the application of customary based forest co-management, it is recommended that CENDI and SCCF to conduct a comprehensive study/analysis on the types of forests and IEM groups that customary based co-management model could be applied. This study would guide the future programming and advocacy for replication of this model.

Recommendation 2: Empowerment and inclusion of disadvantaged groups in community and public decisionmaking is an important element for development projects. Sensitization and equipment of skills and techniques for staff and community workers as well as development of guidelines or even putting in funding agreements is suggested to SCCF and CENDI for future projects.

Recommendation 3: The combination of community-based and advocacy approaches is an important success factor of the project. It is recommended to future project to intensify the utilization of this combination in order to facilitate and sustain changes at both grassroots and structure levels.

Recommendation 4: To enhance successful management of future project, ensuring effective operation of project planning, monitoring, reporting, decision-making, learning and accountability system, it is recommended to have a more comprehensive risk analysis, intervention methodology in project design document. The respect to cooperation agreements can be reinforced, and reporting guidelines can be introduced. SCCF should also consider a solution for regular monitoring visits to project sides in order to ensure good planning, learning and accountability processes together with CENDI as an implementing partner.

Recommendation 5: To ensure sustainability of project interventions, the consultant recommends intensifying forest-based sustainable livelihood and community entrepreneurship development for future projects to integrate economic benefit in forest protection and development so that it could contribute to enhancing project sustainability at practical and grassroot level.