



2018



Final Evaluation Report

PROMOTING LAND RIGHTS FOR ETHNIC MINORITY
PEOPLE IN VIETNAM PROJECT

HOANG VAN TU & NGUYEN THI HUONG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	ii
Acknowledgement	iii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	iv
Executive summary	1
1. Introduction	6
1.1. The Project.....	6
1.2. The Evaluation	12
2. Methodology	13
2.1. approaches	13
2.2. Methods.....	13
2.3. Limitations	14
3. Evaluation results	16
3.1. Relevance.....	16
3.2. Effectiveness	19
3.3. Impact.....	32
3.4. Sustainability	36
3.5. Efficiency	38
4. Conclusions.....	41
4.1. Achievements.....	41
4.2. Limitations and challenges	43
4.3. Lessons	43
4.4. Recommendations	44

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This final evaluation was commissioned by CARE International in Vietnam and executed by Mekong Development Services. The team consisted of two national consultants, Mr. Hoang Van Tu and Ms. Nguyen Thi Huong, as external consultants. The study has been conducted with full support and participation of all stakeholders. The evaluation team would like to present our special thanks to all those who have participated throughout the evaluation. Their contributions were highly appreciated and the evaluation would have not been taken without their engagement.

Our gratitude goes to the representatives of communities, the villagers, village elders, GAN and LandNet members, local authorities and functional bodies, CSOs, representatives of National Assembly and VNForest who have participated in and shared their reflections.

Special thanks to CARE and CIRUM project teams and leaderships for their exceptional engagement, including orientation, comments on the evaluation designs and reports as well as managerial and logistic support.

This evaluation report is a copy rights of CARE International in Vietnam but the authors are accountable for the content. For any information related to content please contact Mr. Hoang Van Tu, the Evaluation Team Leader at mdsc.tu@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Hoang Van Tu and Nguyen Thi Huong

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEMA	Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs
CENDI	Community Entrepreneur Development Institute
CFG	Community-led Forest Governance
CIRD	Centre for Indigenous Knowledge Research and Development
CIRUM	Culture Identity and Resources Use Management
CODE	Consultancy on Development Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistant Committee
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DONRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
EMWG	Ethnic Minority Working Group
GAN	Gender Ambassador Network
GoV	Government of Vietnam
HH	Household
KUSTA	Kon Tum Union of Science and Technology Associations
LandNet	The Forest People's Land Rights Network
LNGO	Local Non-Government Organization
LoF	Law on Forestry
LFPD	Law on Forest Protection and Development
LISO	Livelihoods Sovereignty Alliance
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	National Assembly
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OECD	Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
RDPR	Fund for Rural Development and Poverty Reduction in Quang Binh province
SPERI	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN-REDD	United Nations' Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
VND	Vietnamese Dong
VNForest	Vietnam General Directorate for Forestry
VUSTA	Vietnam Union of Scientific and Technology Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT SUMMARY

Overall objectives: To contribute to the protection and promotion of ethnic minority peoples' rights to community forestland.

Specific Objectives

Specific Objective 1: Key policy makers recognize and support ethnic minority forestland rights in the coming amendment of the Law on Forestry Protection and Development (LFPD);

Specific Objective 2: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and communal authorities have knowledge, skills and connections to effectively advocate for the inclusion of community forestland rights and management in the formulation and implementation of policy and law.

Expected results

Result 1: Evidence on the importance of ethnic minorities community forest governance is available, acknowledged and used by policy makers

Result 2: Increased interaction and dialogue between CSOs, LandNet, communal authorities and policy makers and media on the implementation of the Land Law - 2013 and the coming amendment of the LFPD.

Result 3: CSOs and LandNet coordinators and activists have increased confidence and capacity to engage in the campaign for ethnic minority community forestland rights

Result 4: Ethnic minority women have increased confidence to participate in decision making on community forest management and in policy dialogue on forestland rights

Result 5: Communal authorities have increased capacity to realize their responsibilities in protecting ethnic minority community forestland rights

Beneficiaries and target groups

The ultimate beneficiaries include 8 million people from ethnic minority groups who depend on upland forests for their livelihoods and spiritual and cultural identity.

The key target groups are policy makers who determine the content of the LFPD, including the Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNForest) who chairs the drafting committee, on which also sits Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA), the government body with the mandate to improve conditions for ethnic minority populations; and the National Assembly (NA) who take the final decision on ratify and pass the Law amendment.

Locations

Hanoi (advocacy level) and 6 provinces of Lao Cai, Lang Son, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Kon Tum.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is considered an external assessment that serves both accountability and learning purposes. The methodology employed is qualitative, and the evaluation scope covers five dimensions i.e. relevant, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency in consideration of the evaluation standards of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistant Committee (OECD/DAC).

The combination of various approaches was used to guide the preparation and implementation of the evaluations. That includes right-based, result-based, process-outcome, goal free, performance audit, need-based, participatory and independent approaches.

Key informant interviews (KIIs), Focus Groups, Group Interviews, Case Studies, field observations and Desk Reviews were key data collection methods. Triangulation and cross checking were the key techniques to consolidate and ensure the rigour of findings. Field studies were conducted in Hanoi, Lao Cai, Quang Binh and Kon Tum. In total, 57 informants participated in the evaluation representing village communities, LandNet, local authorities, CSOs, policy makers, and project holders. Informants representing different stakeholders were selected after desk review and consultation with project holders.

MAIN FINDINGS

Relevance

The project interventions are highly relevant. In the one hand, it addressed the fundamental needs of highland ethnic minority communities through helping claim back their rights to forest and forestland. Over the decades, their access to forest and forestland have been limited because villages did not have a right to own forests and land while those are vital needs for their livelihoods; serving as common living resources and spaces; and a sphere to practice religion as well as other cultural activities. On the other hand, it was in line with and supported the development process of the LoF-2017.

The advocacy approach applied is determined as a “smart” strategy because it is well adapted to the forestland rights of ethnic minority communities, which are sensitive topics to the government of Vietnam. Investment in building consolidation of evidence, building rapport and trust among stakeholders, and facilitating constructive dialogue and advisory process are perfectly match with the needs and the context. The project interventions synergized together and with previous work to maximize attributions to objective attainment.

Effectiveness

The project achievement has exceeded its set-out objectives as well as expected results. It has significantly attributed to the development process as well as the content of the LoF-2017. The fundamental rights to forest and forestland of ethnic village communities have been incorporated and regulated in the Law. Policy makers have fully recognized and support the ethnic community rights to forest and forestland. One of the important reasons was because they were convinced by success models of community-based forest governance (CFG) they have witnessed on the ground and strong support from all stakeholders. All relevant stakeholders, especially LandNet have had enhanced capacity and capable working together in a constructive and cohesive way to support and advocate for the inclusion of ethnic minority forestland rights in to legal and policy

framework. As a result, even though the project expected that by its end community rights to forestland would be included in a draft version of the law amendment, the Law has been approved and passed by the National Assembly one year before the project end.

Impact

Significant impacts have been attributed or contributed by the Action. First and foremost, the right, capacity and status of ethnic minority have been enhanced. Under the regulation of the LoF-2017, Ethnic minority communities are recognized as one of forest and forestland owner identities. It means that they will enjoy equal rights and benefit to other forest owners. Village communities can be secured forest spaces for their livelihoods, cultural and other fundamental living practices. They have rights to take part in forest and forestland used planning, settlement/resettlement, allocation/reallocation programs. Second, the government is mandated to build capacity for communities so that they are capable manage forest and forestland in a sustainable way; ensure transparency and gender equality in forest development processes. Third, the capacity of LandNet, a representative network of ethnic minority communities, have been further strengthened, women's capacity, and social and economic leadership has been improved within LandNet and under small grant initiatives. Furthermore, the perception of policy makers has shifted from heavily influenced by a prejudice that ethnic communities are not capable to protect and control forests to recognize their roles, capacity and incorporate into the Law. In addition, the perception on the status of local NGOs and CSOs has changed among policy makers, from suspect to recognized attitude. Especially, the status, relationship and reputation of CIRUM with all stakeholders has been strengthened.

Sustainability

LoF-2017 has formally recognized the rights to forestland of ethnic minorities. It is a firm basis for all stakeholders to comply with and respect as well as for the community and supporting stakeholders to promote the realization of their rights in the future. The enhanced capacity of LandNet and continued commitment and support from CIRUM are key elements to secure further strengthening capacity of the local communities and ensure maintaining and if possible, scale up result achieved at community level as well as to promote realization of community rights as regulated by the Law. In addition, it is most likely that the changes of awareness, attitude and appreciation of policy makers on the status of local NGOs and their recognition and relationship with CIRUM would likely to be a favorable element for their similar activities in the future.

Efficiency

It is considered that the project is very efficient. The relevant interventions and approaches; the advantages of available resources, competent and stable teams; appropriate coordination and communication mechanism among project partners; effective budget management practice; the good timing; and the timeliness of project intervention delivery form great success factors for the efficiency of the project.

Limitations and challenges

Baseline data and targets should have been determined from the inception phase of the project to serve and ensure effective planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Some indicators are likely not at the same level with results thus not sensitive to changes.

Even though it is not the accountability of the project, it is worth to mention some challenges for future sustainability of project impacts. Firstly, the actual implementation of the law might be slow due to delays

caused by time consuming for the government to issues guiding documents (decrees and resolutions) and policies for the law implementation, and these may not be specific enough. Secondly, the lack of local government capacity and national resources may also constraint the law implementation. Finally, ethnic minority communities in general still need further capacity enhancement in order to exercise their rights, both at grassroots and advocacy level.

LESSONS

As a result of the evaluation, following key lessons have been drawn from the success and best practices as well as limitations of the project:

- Constructivism can be an appropriate advocacy approach, particularly for the context which facing sensitive advocacy issues; strong evidences are in place; relationship is important; and rapport and trust can be built among stakeholders to facilitate advocacy processes.
- Strong evidence, rapport (among stakeholders), and timing are fundamental elements to ensure the success of evidence-based advocacy. While strong evidence can be considered as conditional element, rapport can be defined as a sufficient element and timing is favorable condition.
- Participation in research studies and advocacy activities can be perfect means to build capacity and rapport among actors. It can be also considered an effective means to facilitate and maintain dialogues. Participants may not necessarily be only advocates but also influenced parties, especially under a constructivist approach.
- Telecommunication network can be considered effective means to develop network among ethnic minority communities as their accessibility to smartphone and telecommunication network has significantly increased.
- Youth are considered champions and increasingly taking leadership roles in advocacy and rights exercise at both grassroots and higher levels. Further engagement of youth in LandNet would help increase their effective operation of this network.
- Compatibility and sensitive indicators as well as baseline data and targets are among core elements to ensure effective operation of a project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. It is important to consider these at the design and inception phases of projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The achievements of the project have opened windows for potential actions in the coming time to further leverage and sustain impact by accelerating the law implementation in order for the rights to forestland to be realized all over the ethnic minority communities. The lessons are worth to considered in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the future actions. Below are key recommendations for future programming of the project stakeholders:

- Promote and support the development and implementation of relevant decrees, resolutions, policies and programs of the government in order to accelerate and ensure the rights of ethnic minorities communities to forestland are exercised in practice. Application of the constructive and evidence-based policy advocacy/advisory approaches are still considered relevant for such actions.

- Continue to support the capacity enhancement of LandNet and community so that they could represent and support better ethnic communities at regional and national level in dialogues with other actors to exercise their rights to forest and forestland at policy level, as well as to support their community to practice their rights and gain actual benefits from forest at the grassroots level. It is recommended to promote youth participation in LandNet in order to increase successibility of this network.
- Promote the capacity development of government authorities and functional bodies at all levels so that they are capable addressing forest and forestland rights issues for ethnic minority communities. That may include forestland allocation, certification, capacity building services and conflict resolutions around forest and land issues;
- Advocate for increased budget and resources allocation to community forestry from both government and other sources;
- Consolidate and disseminate success models on CFG models; and develop models on resources mobilization from multi-stakeholders for sustainable forest-based economic development;
- Consolidate success models, best practices and lessons of policy advocacy on the rights of ethnic minorities to natural resources for the shared learning of development practitioners, social activists and other relevant actors.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE PROJECT

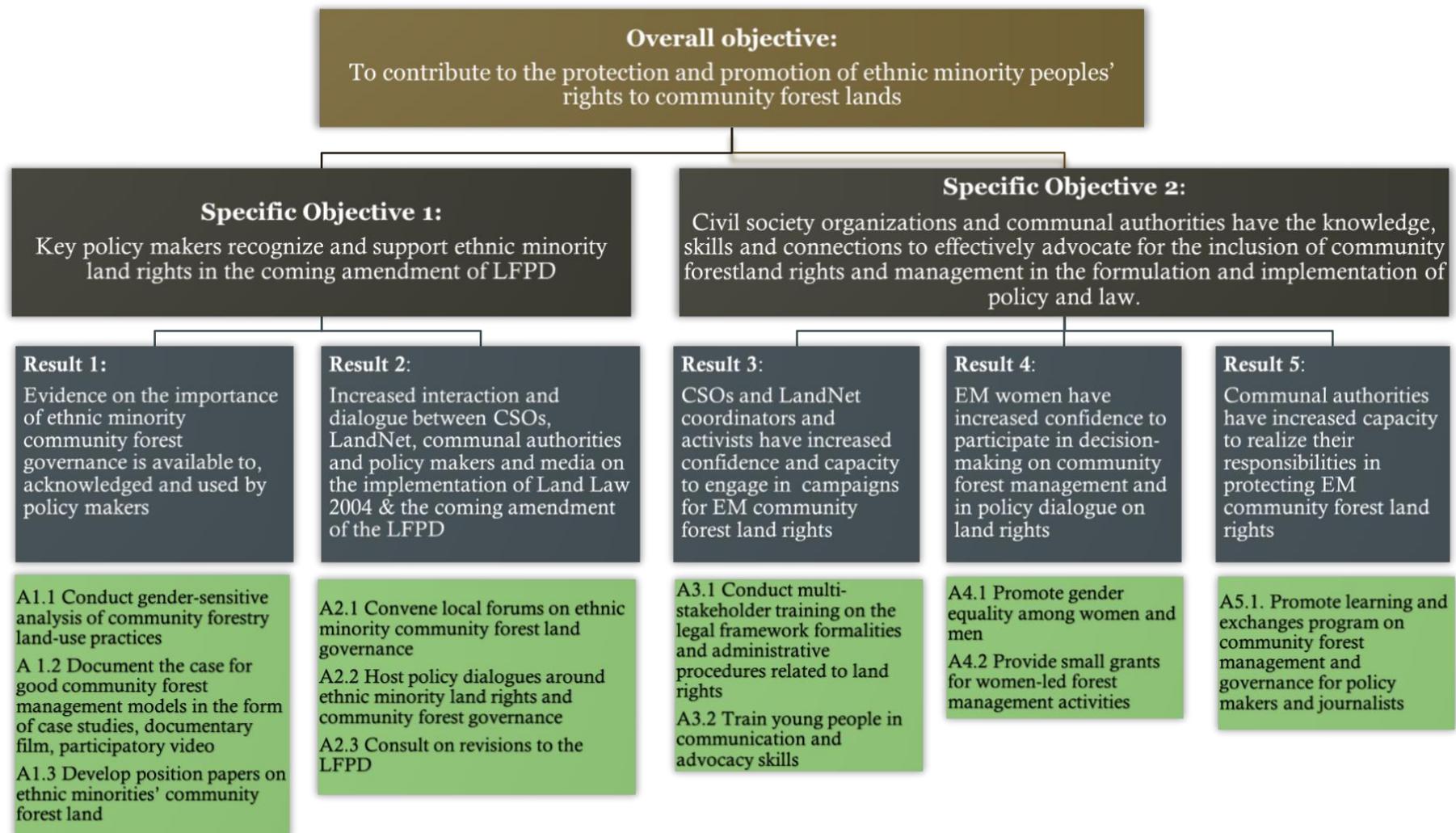
The “Promoting Land Rights for Ethnic Minority People in Vietnam” Project (herein after call the Project or the Action) was designed and has been executed within the period 2016-2018. It aims to promote the rights of ethnic minority peoples in mountainous regions of Vietnam to the community forest lands over which they have traditionally had access and control. It is the key to unlock the chronic poverty due to the combination of limited formal tenure, the allocation of forest and land to state and private enterprises, and lack of recognition of the efficacy of traditional community forest management practices.

The ultimate beneficiaries include 8 million people from ethnic minority groups who depend on upland forests for the livelihoods and spiritual and cultural identity. They are the right holders who are subject to enjoy the rights to get access to and manage forest land. It is expected that their rights would be better recognized in law, protected and promoted in practice through an amended LFPD and its implementation, which the Project aims to influence.

The key target group are the key policy makers who determine the content of the Law on Forest Protection and Development. That include the Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNForest) who chairs the drafting committee, on which also sits Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA); the government bodies who have the mandate to improve conditions for ethnic minority populations; and the National Assembly, who take the final decision on ratify and pass the Law amendment.

The Action was developed in the context that the Government of Vietnam (GoV) was reviewing the Law on Forest Protection and Development (LFPD). The primary objective was to contribute to the protection and promotion of ethnic minorities peoples’ rights to community forest lands through influencing the process and content of the law amendment. The project intervention and result framework is summarized in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: PROJECT INTERVENTION AND RESULT FRAMEWORK



The project has been co-implemented by CARE in Vietnam and Culture Identity and Resources Use Management (CIRUM) in partnership with the Forest People's Land Rights Network (LandNet); It has been cooperated with LISO alliance and other partners.

The project builds on the accumulated experience of CIRUM and project partners to scale-up their work at community level, document best practices, lessons learnt and evidence, and direct their attention to the advocacy sphere. The methodology is guided by the following principles:

- Putting rights into practice – advocate for law modification and promote enforcement of communities' rights to ownership of forest and community resources;
- Evidence-based advocacy – Unlock the barrier of community participation in policy making by “bringing life into policy”;
- Harnessing capacity of partners – drawing on strengths and experience of project partners;
- Reaching out wider networks – seek collaboration with organizations that have specific mandates and capacity to support implementation; and
- Promoting women's agency - Actively engaging female and male ethnic minority community members in project activities; and stimulate women-led community forestry activities.

1.2. THE EVALUATION

The project was designed for three-year period and will come to its end by the end of 2018. The external final evaluation is mandated to assess the project results and performance, covering five dimensions i.e. effectiveness, impacts, sustainability, relevance and efficiency. Based on that it draws lessons and provides recommendations for future actions or the project holders, the donors as well as other relevant actors (**Annex 1 – Terms of Reference**).

Specifically, the evaluation address the following key research questions as elaborated in the TORs:

- How relevant were the project objectives and expected results to the target population and national policy and program?
 - How relevant were the project objectives and expected results to the national policy and program?
 - Does it fulfil the needs of the target group/population?
- How effective were project strategies and approaches in achieving the expected outcomes?
 - To what extent the results have been achieved vs project targets in the log frame?
 - To what extent were project strategies and approaches effective in achieving results against the outcome areas?
- How efficiency of the model/ inclusion of community forest land rights and management applying in terms of time, financial and human resource investment?
- How sustainable and enduring are the outcomes of the project likely to be?
 - What external factors and internal/project related factors will determine the project sustainability and achievements?
 - How would these factors be addressed?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. APPROACHES

In consideration of the project nature and the requirements of the final evaluation, a holistic paradigm is applied in which the following approaches were employed to guide the design, deployment, analysis and reporting processes:

- *Result-based* – ensure the proper measurement and judgment of project achievements against the stated objectives, expected outcomes or outputs.
- *Goal-free* – figure out positive and negative as well as intended and unintended impacts.
- *Process-outcomes* – analyze management systems and implementation processes to explain why and how project results have been or not been achieved. That helps analyze strengths, weaknesses, and draw lessons and recommendations for future programming.
- *Performance audit* – analyze and value project outcomes against given consumed resources.
- *Needs-based* – analyze if project interventions, approaches and resources allocated address the needs of beneficiaries, relevant to the given context, and in line with strategies as well as priorities of key stakeholders.
- *Participatory* - ensure interactive communication and multi-stakeholder consultation/cross-checking to validate findings in order to build rigor.
- *Rights-based* – utilize a rights-based lens to analyze the right dynamics among stakeholders (i.e. right holders, duty bearers and allies) in order to measure changes at intermediate and end result levels.
- *Independent* – regardless findings and sources of data and information all judgements conclusions, lessons and recommendations purely reflect the independent view of the evaluator that are based on rigorous evidences.

2.2. METHODS

Qualitative methodology was used for this evaluation. As an advocacy action this project aims at structure and quality changes at policy level rather than quantitative results among target populations. Qualitative methodology is therefore considered appropriate to help generate convincing evidences to verify, describe and

explain changes. Quantitative data addressing project indicators collected during the project life by its internal M&E system can be also verified throughout the evaluation study.

Desk review, key informant interview, focus group, small group interview, field observation and case study are the main evaluation methods. Key informants representing different rights stakeholders around community forest and land rights (i.e. right holders, duty bearers and allies), and project stakeholders (i.e. project holders, implementing partners, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries) are selected to participate in the evaluation. In total, the evaluation interviewed 57 informants, of those 19 are female (33.3%) and 38 are male (66.7%). 28 people participated in individual interviews while 32 participants involved in focus groups or small group interviews.

TABLE 1: EVALUATION INFORMANTS

INFORMANTS		FEMALE	MALE	KII	FG	TOTAL
Right holders/ Beneficiaries	Community	12	8	0	20	20
	LandNet Member	2	2	4	0	4
Duty bearers/ Beneficiaries	Communal Cadres	1	4	5	0	5
	Provincial and district	2	13	10	5	15
	Central government	0	2	2	0	2
CSOs/ Project partners	Social organizations	0	2	2	0	2
	Independent scientific organizations	0	4	4	0	4
Project holders	CARE in Vietnam	1	1	2	0	0
	CIRUM	1	2	3	3	3
TOTAL		19	38	28	32	57

Given the diversity of stakeholders and each was involved in a certain intervention while having limited information about others, purposeful sampling technique was employed to ensure right informants being selected covering all project interventions. Informants were selected after desk review and discussion with CARE and CIRUM to ensure those who participate in the interviews having comprehensive and in-depth knowledge enough to provide rich and solid information.

Crosschecking and triangulation were used as key techniques to ensure the reliability of qualitative information. Triangulation was applied for both sources (different informants and sources of data) and collection methods (different data collection methods e.g. interview, observation and desk review) to solidify findings. Random and spot checks were conducted to verify data and information provided from project holders and collected from other sources.

2.3. LIMITATIONS

Except for fewer number of people at the national level interviewed (Only two. One representing VNForest - Forestry Law drafting agency, and one representing National Assembly - Forestry Law ratification body), all informants at provincial, district and local levels; those representing project stakeholders as well as right stakeholders were met and interviewed as planned.

Although the project is coming to its end, it is yet to be fully completed both in practice and administrative level. Therefore, the final internal report and financial report are yet to be presented. That caused a constraint to the systematization of project performance and results for cross-checking and lack of a basis for the assessment of project cost-effectiveness.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1. RELEVANCE

This section discusses the relevance of the project design (objectives, key interventions and strategies) as well as coherence with the context such as other programs/strategies of the government, project holders as well as other actors in the same theme of geographical areas. Specifically, it aims to address the following questions:

- If the project objectives and interventions address the needs of the target populations?
- To what extent the project has contribute to or create synergy with other existing programs?
- If the project strategies/approaches are appropriate to the context?

The evaluation confirms that the project design is highly relevant. It has addressed the vital needs of ethnic minority community in the mountainous region of Vietnam. Furthermore, the Action has contributed to address the top priority tasks of the Government of Vietnam in the period 2016-2017 which was to develop the LoF. The project advocacy approach is confirmed to be very appropriate to the context of Vietnam, particularly for the ethnic minority and forestland right issues.

RELEVANCE TO THE NEEDS OF ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The action aims to promote the rights of ethnic minorities to get access to and control over forest land, thus contribute to addressing chronic poverty due to the lack of access to productive land and therefore livelihood opportunities. Indeed, the evaluation confirms that forest is vital living space of ethnic minority people in mountainous regions of Vietnam and their rights to forest have been limited due to regulations. Under current government laws and policies, most of forests and forestlands are allocated to state and private enterprises. *“We all lived on and cultivated in the forest for generations but the Government collected all the forests since 1989. Those who live in the forest can still collect forest products but the ones who live outside cannot even “touch”. We even did not know the government had collected, but just noticed that the state forest companies banned and announced that we would get fine and even be arrested if chopping trees. Since 2016, the government paid us honorarium for forest protection, still have not allowed us cutting trees. We had repeatedly requested the government to reallocate forest and land to communities”*. Said a villager in Truong Son Village

Furthermore, village communities which live on forest are not just because it is a mean for livelihoods but also to practice religion, culture and customs. All these practices are fundamental to living activities of communities. That also found the identity of communities and ethnic groups. By claiming the rights to ownership and access to forest, the project has contributed to the protection of ethnic minorities' culture and customs.

Nevertheless, community rights to forest, especially ownership right were not recognized by laws and regulations. Government policies on migration in the previous decades and recent resettlement programs have made forest and land become a more burning issue. The project aims therefore directly contribute to address this problem.

RELEVANCE TO THE PRIORITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Action is especially very timely and relevant to the needs and priorities of the Government of Vietnam (GoV). According to an informant from VNForest, at the beginning, it was planned that the LFPD amendment was planned to be approved by 2018. However, the loss of natural forests and social security threats around forest and forestland were among the main reasons for the National Assembly to request for the acceleration of the LFPD amendment process. VNForest did need the consultation and contribution from both state and non-state actors to the content of the amendment. However, due to time constraints contributions from many other actors were not of expected quality. CIRUM, with its strong and highly relevant experience from the ground had brought in valuable inputs.

RELEVANCE OF PROJECT APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

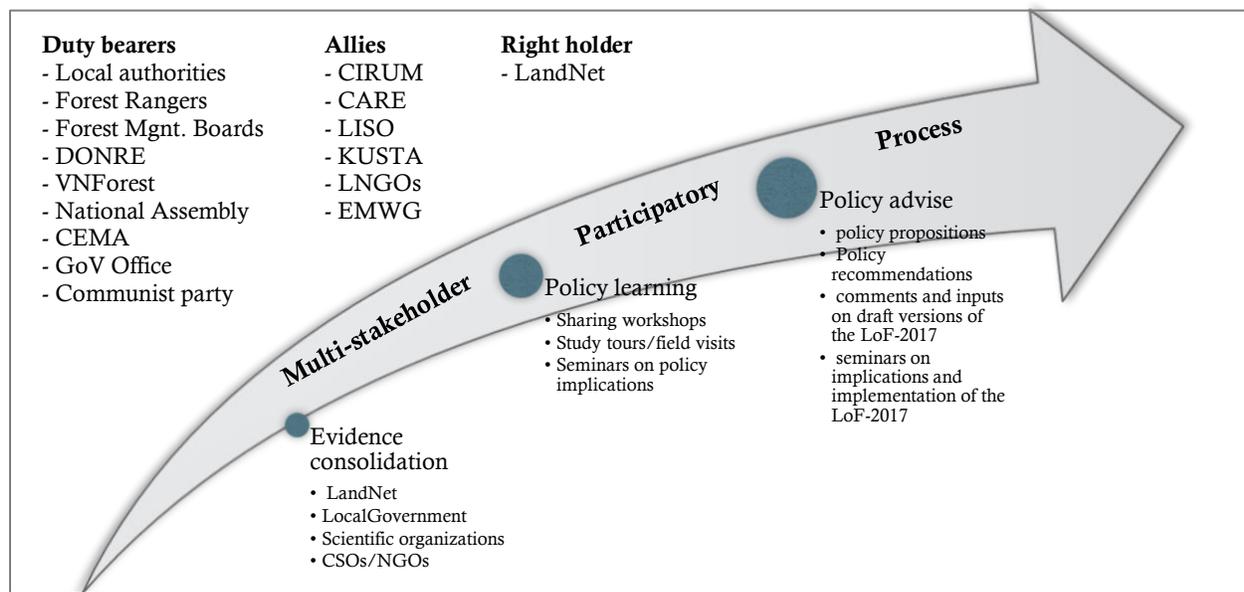
The project aimed to realize the rights of ethnic minorities to forest and forestland through an evidenced based advocacy approach. Successful models of CFG would be consolidated to form evidences and based on that generate policy propositions and recommendations. CIRUM and CARE would mobilize their existing experience, expertise and network as well as further develop coalitions to ensure advocacy success.

CIRUM and LISO members have worked in the community forestry and forest-based livelihood areas for over two decades in the mountainous regions of Vietnam. A number of successful models of community-led forest governance have been developed, and have proved to be highly effective, sustainable and appropriate to local contexts. All local stakeholders including government authorities have recognized and supported. Policy makers are convinced when they visited and witnessed visualized pictures of success in the field.

The project approached the advocacy following a multi-stakeholder and participatory policy advisory process, which is considered appropriate. At the evidence consolidation phase, CIRUM engaged LandNet members, local government, scientific organizations (KUSTA) and local NGOs (SPERI, CIRD and RDPR) in case studies to consolidate community-led forest governance models to generate best practices, lessons and policy recommendations. This process proved to help build rapport among stakeholders as well as capacity and confidence for LandNet members.

At the second stage, CIRUM facilitated and engaged all stakeholders in policy learning events, which shared lessons and discuss policy implications that support policy development. Learning activities were organized in different forms. It can be seminars or workshops at local, regional and national levels as well as field visits to different successful models of CFG. Evidences were distributed, presented, analyzed and discussed intensively throughout such learning and advocacy events, mostly not by CIRUM but by LandNet, who had already gained knowledge, skills and confidence by involved in the previous phase, and other stakeholders, especially local governments and scientific organizations. As reported by the project holders, instead of aiming to involve as many NGOs and CSOs as possible, CIRUM only engage credited organizations. It was explained that given the Government was still sensitive with land, ethnic minority rights and civil society issues, this way would help maintain rapport with government agencies and their confidence to engage themselves in policy dialogues. In order to build rapport with the policy makers, CIRUM also signed an MoU to participate in and support VNForest for its law consultation and development process. The organization actively participated in seminars and workshops organized by the Government and invited VNForest to co-chair CIRUM's events. Especially, CIRUM invited policy makers to visit various models for customary based forest management and protection on the ground.

FIGURE 3: THE EVIDENCE-BASED AND PARTICIPATORY POLICY ADVOCACY UNDER THE PROJECT



Different to the second phase, CIRUM played a more active role at the policy advice step when trust has been firmly built. It engaged deeply in the policy development process, provided valid, concrete and intensive comments, recommendations and inputs in a constructive way to every draft version of the Law. Both the contents of the comments and the way of working were highly appreciated by the policy makers. As a result, many of them were adopted and incorporated in the new LoF-2017.

It can be concluded that the evidence-based and constructive advocacy approaches being carried out under participatory process are highly relevant to the context. Building rapport was also considered a key to facilitate the engagement of all stakeholders. These approaches and processes formed the success factors of the project.

RELEVANCE OF INTERVENTIONS

Under the project framework, CARE and CIRUM carried out the following key activities/interventions:

- Consolidating evidences on the ground based on what CIRUM and its partners have constructed;
- Facilitate learning and dialogue events around community forest and forestland rights, and policy implications;
- Building capacity of LandNet members, CSOs and engage them in the policy and rights learning and dialogues;
- Building capacity and empowering women in decision making process of community-led forest governance;
- Building capacity for local authorities so that they realize their responsibilities in protecting ethnic minority rights to forest and forestland

In general, all intervention areas and activities aimed at and addressed directly the needs of the target groups. Evidence documentation, policy dialogues and advisory activities have targeted and influenced directly the policy makers and contributed to the law development processes. Capacity building to LandNet members helped bring their capacity and confident to the next level so that they were able to represent well the voice and

proposition of ethnic minorities in dialogues at all levels that were impressed by decision makers. As local authorities witnessed and supported community rights to forest, engaging them more in learning and dialogues events would help them improve further understanding and support better evidences on the rights of ethnic minorities. Building capacity and empowerment of women would help reinforce gender equality priority as committed by CARE International under its country program framework.

It is worth noticing that, there is a sound coherence and echo among project interventions. Each project activity did attribute to more than one result. For instance, while conducting case studies to analyze and document successful models in order to form evidence and policy recommendations, the project engaged local government, LandNet members, CSOs and scientific organizations. Participants confirmed that it was the perfect opportunities for them to learn hence enhance their knowledge and confidence. A field visits for policy makers were other examples. These were not only to convinced them that ethnic minority communities are competent to manage forest and they should have the rights to access and own forests. Furthermore, it was unique opportunities to interact, build rapport and trust among stakeholders as well as to enhance their confidence.

3.2. EFFECTIVENESS

This section presents and analyses the effectiveness of the project in respect to the achievement level of set-out objectives and expected results. The main focus is on qualitative assessment. Quantitative data is provided by CIRUM are verified during the evaluation where relevant and possible.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLES' RIGHTS TO COMMUNITY FOREST LANDS

It was expected that the rights of communities to get access to, ownership and management of forest and forestland would be included in the draft amendment of the LFPD; increased opportunities for dialogue between ethnic minority people and other stakeholders on forest land rights issues created by civic networks and ethnic minority-led groups; and an increased number of community regulations on forest management approved by local authorities.

The evaluation confirms that the achievements exceed the set-out targets. First, the fundamental rights of ethnic communities have been fully respected and regulated in the new Law on Forestry (LoF) which have been even approved and passed by the NA in 2017 and will officially activated on January 1, 2019. Second, ethnic minorities have indeed proactively and actively taken the stage and maintain dialogues with full respect of policy makers and other stakeholders, and achieved successful results. Finally, local authorities have fully recognized the advantages of

BOX 1: OVERALL OBJECTIVE INDICATORS

- The rights of communities in forest land allocation and management is included in the draft revision of the Law Amendment on Forest Protection and Development and mentioned in the policy monitoring agenda of the National Assembly Sessions.
- Number of ethnic minority-led groups and civic networks that create opportunities for dialogue between ethnic minority people and other stakeholders on forest land rights issues
- Number of districts where community regulations on forest management are approved by local authority

community ownership over forest and forestland and community-based forest management practices. Customary-based forest management regulations have been therefore fully supported and approved without hesitation from local authorities.

INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY RIGHTS TO FOREST AND FORESTLAND IN LAW ON FORESTRY

There are major changes in the new LoF-2017 comparing to the former LFPD-2004, that includes the rights of grassroots community over forest and forestlands. “Due to big changes, the government decided to rename the Law instead of just an amendment as initial plan”, said a representative of the General Directorate of Forestry (VNForest). **Table 2** briefs main changes regarding the rights of grassroots communities over forest and forest lands which are included in the new LoF-2017.

TABLE 2: RIGHTS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES OVER FOREST AND FORESTLAND IN THE NEW LAW ON FORESTRY

Law on Forestry (2017)	Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004)
Ownership rights and benefits	
Grassroots communities at village level can be forest and forestland owners with fully equal rights and benefits to others.	Grassroots communities does not have forest and forestland ownership
Governments at all levels are mandated to ensure the forest and forestland allocated to forest dependent communities in order for them to practice their livelihoods, culture and spiritual worship.	Not-mandatory (Forest owners can hire community to manage forests)
Grassroots communities are subject to allocation of spiritual, watershed and productive forests; being introduced with integrated forestry, agriculture and aquaculture practices as guided by forest management regulations; being supported to develop forest economy.	Grassroots communities are not recognized as forest owners (Can be hired to manage forests only).
Grassroots communities (who own forests) are allowed to organize, cooperate, collaborate or rent their forest environment for doing eco-tourism or recreation businesses; harvest and own forest trees that they plant according to regulations.	Grassroots community has no respective rights
Communities are secured compensations for the management of special and protective forests	No respective article
When doing forest and forestland planning, recollection, resettlement, etc. the Government bear responsibilities to secure forest spaces for the livelihoods, cultural and spiritual practices of grassroots communities.	No respective article
The Government bear responsibilities to ensure transparency and community participation regardless ethnic groups, religions; and ensure gender equality in forestry activities including forest planning and allocation. Grassroots community shall be consulted and participate in monitoring processes of forest planning, recollection or reallocation.	No respective article
Inclusion of indigenous forest concepts and classifications	
Community forest concepts (traditional forests and customary law legally recognized in the LoF 2017) and classifications are recognized and included as criteria for forest classification in the LoF-2017 (sacred forest is included as a criterion to determined special forest; Water generation forest is included as a criterion of protective forest).	Sacred forest and water generation forest are not referred to in the LFPD-2004.

The Table shows that under the LoF-2017, grassroots communities are officially recognized as forest and forestland owners. They enjoy equal rights and benefits of forests that they own comparing to others. Forest and forestland can be allocated to village communities, including special-used forest (particularly spiritual forest) as well as watershed and productive forests. It means that they can have real ownership like other forest owners such as forestry companies, protective forest management boards and national park management boards. They can enjoy benefits as regulated to specific types of forest that they own. For instance, they can do forestry business or rent their forests to other investors to do so. They can also enjoy other benefits such as payment for environmental services (PES); fees/compensations for forest management; and training/technical assistance on forest management and forest-based livelihoods. Furthermore, the government has to secure forest spaces for livelihood, cultural and spiritual practices of grassroots communities. It is also important that grassroots communities have the rights to participate in and monitor forest planning, allocation and reallocation, as well as resettlement processes. Also, indigenous concepts and classifications are respected and used in the LoF-2017. These are important change comparing to the LFPD-2004, in which village communities are not determined to be owners but can only be hired to manage forests.

“Due to the LFPD-2004 had major limitations, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) proposed to make an amendment. When reviewing the LFPD-2004, it was found that systematic changes are needed. Therefore, VNForest proposed to redraft and consequently rename the law. The LFPD-2004 regulates only forest protection and development, that only bounds activities and stakeholders involved in this scope. The new LoF-2017, however covers entire forestry value chains. In regards to ownership, there were only six identities recognized as forest owners under the LFPD-2004, but in the new LoF-2017 village communities are also recognized as an additional forest owner identity, making the number of forest owner identities to seven. The new law also regulates the transparency principles and the participation of grassroots communities and people in monitoring processes of forest and forest land planning, allocation, reallocation and resettlement is mandatory”.

Said the representative of VNForest

There are strong evidences that CIRUM and CARE, under the project framework, have made important contribution to influence the LoF development process as well as its content. *“Reviewing the LFPD-2004 and drafting the LoF-2017 were the duties of VNForest. However, CIRUM made real contribution to all the processes, from consolidating lessons and best practices to supporting us organizing consultation activities and reviewing every article. We received their comments to every draft versions and all of their comments were always thoughtful and insightful. We were very impressed and appreciated that such a small organization like CIRUM can make important and great contribution to the entire law development process”*, Said the Representative of VNForest. The representative of National Assembly said: *“not just in formal consultative events such as seminar or workshops, CIRUM send us their comments to every draft version. In addition, they send their updates or policy brief every month. While reviewing the laws, they sometimes even called for informal meetings to discuss, even on meaning of words to ensure they reflect well their implications”*.

“We were very impressed and appreciated that such a small organization like CIRUM can make important and great contribution to the entire law development process”

Said the Representative of VNForest

It can be confirmed that the rights of grassroots ethnic minority communities to access, ownership and control over forest and forestland as well as their rights to livelihoods and practice of their spiritual and cultural life are well respected and included in the new LoF – 2017 comparing to the former LFPD-2004, and the contributions of the Action are obvious and valuable.

ETHNIC MINORITY-LED GROUPS AND CIVIC NETWORKS THAT CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOGUES BETWEEN ETHNIC MINORITIES PEOPLE AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON FOREST AND FORESTLAND RIGHTS

Responses from LandNet members and policy makers confirm that ethnic minorities have participated deeply and comprehensively throughout the LoF development processes with policy makers as well as with local governments to address practical issues in regards to their rights to forest and forestland. A young woman who is the head of a village (of Se Dang ethnic minority group) and a core member of LandNet shared that she has had a few times representing her village as well as LandNet members participating in workshops. *“Right at the first time participating in a workshop I had raised a request that forests shall be allocated to village community. It was because the fact I had seen forest losses under the management of other forest owners, which was very painful. Seeing a tree being chopped down which damaged all surrounding ones I felt like I myself was bleeding. I wished that if forests were allocated to our village it should have been better protected”,* said a LandNet member. *“Since working with CIRUM I had an honor to represent ethnic minorities to meet with government at all levels, including the National Assembly. Every time, I raised the same concern that ethnic minorities no longer have land and forest to live on because all the forest and lands have now allocated to forest management boards or companies. They are all outsiders, who cannot manage forest properly so forests are losing. Local people live in and on forests so they would protect them better. They said that they would consider my point. I am now very proud that under the new LoF forest and forest land can be allocated to village community, that I am very proud of. Perhaps because they have considered our recommendations”.* Said another LandNet member from Quang Binh province. Representatives of VNForest and NA shared that they were impressed by the active participation of ethnic minority peoples. *“CIRUM has always invited community members participating in forums. Community participants always raised very burning but authentic concerns in a timely manner. Such issues we have never heard through local government information channels. Their arguments and evidence were therefore very impressive and convincing. They said, we live on forest so we cannot be separated from forest. Because we live on forest, we value and protect the forest. If the government allocate forest to community we take the real ownership so we of course can look after forests better than just under forest protection contracts”,* Said the representative of National Assembly.

To create enabling environment for dialogues, The Action has mainly developed capacity and support for LandNet (a civil society network of ethnic minority champions of forest and land) and other partners like LISO alliance on its capacity and experience in order to prepare for and facilitate forums. In addition, CIRUM and CARE have collaborated with other stakeholders around forest, land and ethnic minority issues such as local and central governments, policy makers, local and international NGOs to all stakeholders in dialogues.

Supported by CIRUM, LandNet was established by forest and land champions of ethnic minorities since 2013. To date, it has 148 members (39 female) spreading six provinces in Northern Mountainous, North-Central and Central Highland Regions. According to CIRUM, under the project framework, firstly, the organization has helped strengthening LandNet’s organizational capacity through assigning one staff for moderating regular meetings (online and off-line); facilitating and taking note of all meetings/workshops; and providing back-up support on capacity development; and involving them in project activities on the ground. CIRUM leaderships have provided advice to address burning and strategic issues as well as bring up to policy level. Secondly, CIRUM has supported building their knowledge of land and forestry through training, study tours, and providing small grant projects; Thirdly, CIRUM has engaged them in policy dialogues so that they can raise their voice at all levels. Engaging LandNet members in research studies to consolidate evidences; strengthening their networks (LandNet); and empower their organization and voices are the key to help developing their capacity and confidences. According to CIRUM’s leader, the organization never represent

LandNet’s voice, instead it build their capacity and confidence, empower, inspire and create favorable environment so that they can speak out their authentic concerns and aspirations.

As a founding member, and share human resources as well as strategic agenda with other members of LISO, CIRUM has mobilized human resources and consolidate lessons, best practices and evidences from all LISO members to serve as evidences and inputs for dialogues at all levels. CIRUM also work closely with other LISO members, mobilizing expertise from them to organize and facilitate policy dialogues, as well as contribute to the law development process.

With other stakeholders, such as Fatherland Front and EMWG, CIRUM and CARE maintain information sharing activities in order to support each other, organize and participate in policy dialogues in a coordinated and effective way.

COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT APPROVED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Under the framework of the project, only one community forest management regulation was approved by local government. Due to an absence of a set out target, there is lack of basis to determine if the project has achieved its expected outcome.

Considering the design, and as confirmed by project staff, the project aims to realize ethnic minorities’ rights to forest and forestland through advocacy at the policy level instead of recognition at a case by case basis. In this regards, recognition of community-led forestry regulations at local level would serve as evidences to prove the success of community ownership model. Nevertheless, CIRUM has already built numerous successful models of community forest management regulations which have been widely recognized both local and central governments as best practices and impactful models. The indicator: “number of community forest management regulations approved by local authorities” is therefore considered irrelevant.

OBJECTIVE 1: KEY POLICY MAKERS RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT ETHNIC MINORITY LAND RIGHTS IN THE COMING AMENDMENT OF LAW ON FOREST PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Table 3 presents the achievements of the project (according to CIRUM monitoring data) against key indicators. Since the project did not set out specific quantitative targets, there is no basis to determine if it achieve respective quantitative targets. However, evidences confirm that best forest management practices have been well documented; forest and forestland rights issues of ethnic minorities are of top priorities during the law revision processes; and key policy makers strongly support the rights to forest and forestland of village community.

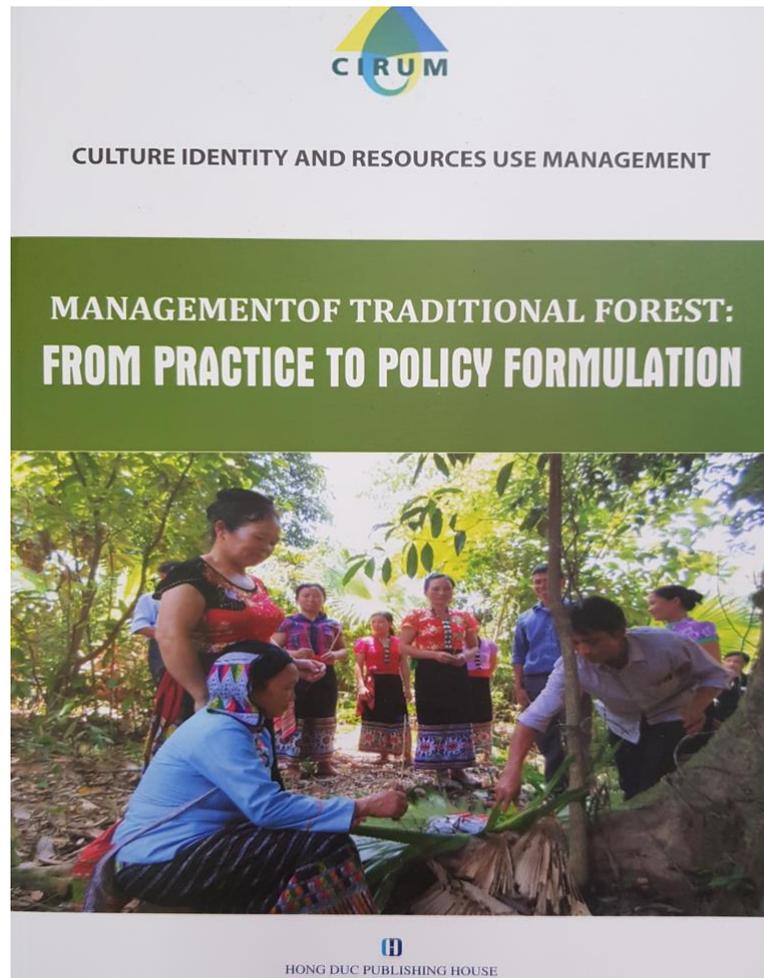
TABLE 3: ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST TARGET OF KEY INDICATORS – OBJECTIVE 1

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
# of key policy makers express recognition and support for ethnic minority land rights in the coming amendment of Law on Forest Protection and Development	N/A	131
Ethnic minorities’ land right issues placed on agenda for discussion by law makers in the amendment process of Law on Forest Protection and Development and in the thematic supervision of National Assembly members.	Yes	Yes
# of forest management practices documented by the project that are cited in	N/A	20

Under the project framework, 11 models and best practices have been analyzed and documented and published (Picture 1) in a form of case studies. Document review indicates that each case study analyzes a community-based forest management model/practice that is practical to specific context of different custom/culture of an ethnic minority. All case studies however present impressive stories/pictures of how ethnic minorities effectively manage community forests. Each case study then provides policy implications and recommendations for decision makers. This publication was shared to all relevant actors, and served as inputs for CIRUM to prepare different policy proposition papers sending to LoF drafting agencies, task forces as well as law appraisal and ratification institution (i.e. National Assembly), and to present at different advisory workshops. *“Different to other organizations who just come (to workshops or contribution to the law development processes) with general speeches, CIRUM always come with concrete and constructive comments and contributions, together with evidences, that is very convincing and valuable to us”*. Said the representative of National Assembly. *“I*

have reviewed the publication, and even participated in some field visits to CIRUM actions on the ground. I was very convinced that ethnic communities are indeed the right actor to own, and they are capable managing forest sustainably because they simply live on and value forests, he continued. “The publication on community-based forest management not only presents convincing evidence but also a valuable reference for us”, said the representative of VNForest.

It is true that the forest and forestland rights were one of the top priority issues during the law revision processes. The representative of VNForest confirmed that the two important issues include forest ownership (including community ownership) and the scope of the law (expanding to all value chain actors instead of only forest directly related ones). A representative of NA was impressed that CIRUM has very actively participated in the entire processes. The organization shared policy propositions every month. It also send comprehensive but concrete comments/inputs on every draft version of the LoF. That make community forest rights become one of the hottest topic. As above discussion, community forest right issues drew the attention and participation of all actors, from national to grassroots level. LandNet members have engaged actively in the entire processes (see discussion above). A representative of KUSTA said that he even sent a recommendation



letter to the Prime Minister to share his concerns and recommendations on community forest and forestland issues.

It can be confirmed that as a result of bold efforts to bring up the issues and engaged all actors in the dialogues and advisory activities, community rights to forest have received full support from policy makers as well as all stakeholders. The inclusion of the rights of village community to forest is the most convincing evidence for the recognition and support. The representative of VNForest shared that: *“CIRUM has participated as a very active actor during the law development processes. It has provided a lot of valuable inputs, especially in regards to community forest issues since it has long and practical experience in working at grassroots level. Its recommendations and inputs are therefore very practical and realistic to the actual context. That helps address the root causes of chronic conflicts of forest and land among actors”*. It is not only the right to ownership and access; concepts and indigenous knowledge of ethnic minorities are also respected by policy makers. A representative of Lao Cai Forest Rangers shared that: *“spiritual forests are adopted and categorized as a special used forest. In addition, the new LoF respects community customary laws of forest management as a supplementary to other state laws”*.

OBJECTIVE 2: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNAL AUTHORITIES HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CONNECTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR THE INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY FORESTLAND RIGHTS AND MANAGEMENT IN THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY AND LAW

Table 4 shows the achievements of project Objective 2 in respect of key indicators, according to the updated data provided by CIRUM. Since the Project does not set targets, there was no basis to determine if the Action achieve the quantitative results. Nevertheless, it can be seen that a significant number of cases related to the rights of ethnic minorities to forest and forestland have been referred to higher-level meetings by local authorities, and a modest increment of forest allocation has been undertaken. Also, forest and forestland issues of ethnic minorities has been raised and discussed at all levels.

TABLE 4: ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST TARGET OF KEY INDICATORS – OBJECTIVE 2

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
Ethnic minorities’ issues on forestland are formally raised in local, regional and national level workshop/meetings.	Yes	Yes
# ha of forest land allocated to ethnic minorities with long-term certificates as a recognition of effective models of community-based forest land use.	N/A	538.82
# cases where communal authorities raise ethnic minority land rights issues at higher level meetings	N/A	58

It shall be understood that the primary target of this objective is to increase capacity, particularly in terms of knowledge, skills and collaboration, of CSOs and government authorities (at commune level). Because of that, they could effectively influence decisions for the inclusion and implementation of community forest and forestland rights in respective policies and laws.

CAPACITY OF COMMUNAL GOVERNMENT

It is likely that the project has not provided any capacity building activity directly targeting communal government cadres. Interestingly, those who were interviewed showed very strong confidence, understand

quite well about the project interventions and especially confirmed that they have improved capacity only through participating in the project. Some of them are not only commune cadres but also the members of LandNet. They have therefore participated in LandNet activities and hence enhanced their capacity. It is also evidence that changes in their awareness and confidence so that they could support community forestland rights have been improved through participating in as key facilitators and processors of community-based forestry management models. A former commune cadres in Kon Tum said that: “*We had to completed all procedures of forest allocation for village communities together with forest inventory and measuring company, from measuring, clearing all conflicts and completion of dossiers. I have gained a significant knowledge from participating in such activities. But as a LandNet member, I have valuable chances to get access to government policies, learn from peers through knowledge exchange and common actions*”.

CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY

The Project has focused on building capacity for LandNet as a network representing ethnic minority communities. Action learning are the main means to develop capacity of LandNet and its members. That includes:

- Involved in project activities as local coordinators on the ground;
- Knowledge exchange through monthly on-line meetings;
- Training on policy advocacy for key members;
- Selected key members participating in research studies to consolidate community-based forest management models and best practices; and
- Key members participating in policy dialogues.

Evidences show that LandNet members have proven capacity and connections for forest and forestland right advocacy. All LandNet members being interviewed show an impression that they are very confident and have participated very actively in promotion of community forest rights at local as well as advocacy at higher level. A LandNet member said that because she used to be a provincial people council member, she has certain skills and confidence to speak in front of crowds. However, since being involved in conducting studies plus different study tours and training sections as well as participating in meetings and knowledge exchange with other LandNet members, she got more in-depth knowledge and understand better the forest and forestland issues that her community is facing. That was the reason why she can even feel more confidence representing ethnic minorities in dialogues with policy makers.

“There are many members in the LandNet network but only me from Truong Son commune. LanNet bring in people who can help increase our knowledge and awareness, form united voice and empower ourselves. I used to be a village women’s leader, a village health worker, and then a provincial people council member. I have chances to go to different places, meet different people so that I have certain background knowledge and skills to speak in front of crowds. I have become interested in forest and forestland rights since I had a chance to work with Mr. Tai and Mr. Nha. They helped me to understand the rights and benefits of communities in there. Gaining knowledge and information from LandNet, working with the experts plus participating in different events, I have become very confident. Because I have firmed information and knowledge so I fully confident to speak out without any fear of fault.”

“I have participated in many workshops in Hanoi, Lao Cai and Da Nang, etc. and meetings at CIRUM office in Hanoi. Every time I raised the same issues of ethnic minorities’ forest and land rights. I even had chances to talk directly with the Vice Chairman of Prime Minister about this”

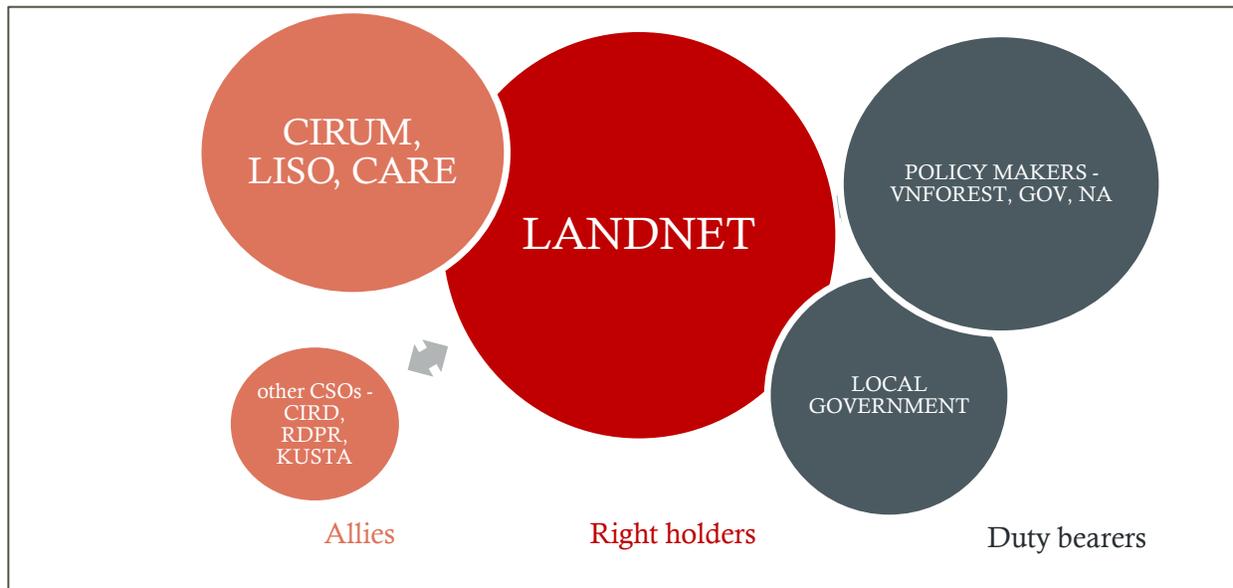
Said a LandNet member.

Once attending a national workshop, I said: “Comrades please create favorable conditions for communities in remote areas having land for production. If the government cannot protect the forest comrades can allocate to people so that they can manage. I trust people who live on forest protect the forest better than those who come from the city (forestry companies). Local people manage while city people benefit would definitely result in forest loss consequence.” I was confident that what I said was correct. Others, including forest companies and forest management boards as well as local authorities were also convinced and shared their understanding. They said an ethnic minority women who confidence like me was rare, and what I said was absolutely right. They have respected me better. Villagers said that thank to me they have forest and land to live on (some people in her village have been allocated forestland to manage and harvest non-timber forest products). CIRUM and Mr. Tai (RDPR) worked closely and supported me a lot. Without them I would not know what and how to act. Thanks to these two agencies I had special chances to meet and raise the issues to right people”.

COHERENCE AMONG ACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

The connection among community forestland rights actors has significantly improved. The fundamental reason is the right approach that CIRUM applied to facilitate understanding of roles and capacity as well as common concerns/vision among stakeholders.

FIGURE 2: RELATIONSHIPS OF COMMUNITY FORESTLAND RIGHTS STAKEHOLDERS UNDER THE ACTION



It is a finding from the evaluation study that under the project framework, CIRUM has engaged local government, CSOs/LNGOs (e.g. LISO, CIRD, RDPR and KUSTA) and LandNet members in various activities such as carrying out *community-led forest management models and research studies*. CIRUM has also organized different field study activities with the participation of different stakeholders, especially policy makers to learn about success models of community-led forest management and discuss policy implications. These activities promoted understanding and appreciation of the roles and capacity of communities, LNGOs and CSOs among policy makers. As a result, policy makers have increased their trust, enhance cooperation and engagement in policy advisory services by CIRUM, LandNet and other civil society actors.

“The MoU signing (between VNForest and CIRUM) indicates that VNForest recognizes its (CIRUM) status. VNForest invited CIRUM when we organize workshops. We participated in seminars CIRUM organized. Mrs. Hang, the Deputy Director of VNForest even co-chaired a seminar organized by CIRUM in Kon Tum. If we devalue the cooperation we would have not done that”.

Said a representative of VNForest

It is worth noticing that participatory and constructive are principle approaches that were applied throughout all activities. That inspired sharing to seek mutual understanding, trust and vision among actors. It is the fundamental success factor for the effectiveness of policy advocacy activities throughout the project.

ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT RESULTS

RESULT 1: EVIDENCE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITY FOREST GOVERNANCE IS AVAILABLE TO, ACKNOWLEDGED AND USED BY POLICY MAKERS

Key evidences are success models of CFG, which have been developed previously. Under the project, CIRUM, in partnership with LandNet, and in collaboration with LISO, CIRD and RDPR, conducted 11 case studies to consolidate 11 village CFG models, which had been developed by CIRUM and LISO members, and supported by other donors (such as ICCO, BFTW, Mcknight Foundation, CARE International, CCFD). Each case study analyzed CFG operation models, benefits to community and forest management, success factors and policy implications. These case studies were compiled in a publication and broadly distributed to all stakeholders as well as presented in different seminars of forest and land rights. They were also used as inputs for further analysis and preparation of policy propositions sending to policy makers. According to CIRUM, 510 copies of the publication have been shared with government official at policy making levels. Besides the publication, CIRUM organized field visits, in which all stakeholders, including policy makers to learn about the models and discuss policy implication. A representative of National Assembly admitted that the case studies and study tours to the field helped policy makers convinced that village communities are able to effectively manage forest. That make them more confident to approve the LoF-2017. *“CIRUM was successful in bringing lessons from the field to prove that current policy and law are inappropriate. When visiting a village (organized by CIRUM), I asked a village elder: “if you have your own forest and land (meaning forest is allocated to individuals) you can sell or use as mortgage for earning or investment. He said, this forest is of the village, no one can sell”. What I heard was an eye opener”*, said a Representative from NA.

RESULT 2: INCREASED INTERACTION AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CSOs, LANDNET, COMMUNAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICY MAKERS AND MEDIA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND LAW 2013 AND THE COMING AMENDMENT OF THE LAW ON FOREST PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT.

According to CIRUM's report, 40 seminars, workshops and dialogues have been held at all levels with about 12,000 participants from all stakeholders. Document reviews and informant interviews indicate that policy advisory activities were organized in different forms:

- Local consultative meetings
- Field study visits
- Regional seminars
- National conference and workshops
- Thematic meetings

Evaluation confirmed that participatory, experienced learning and evidenced-based advisory were principle approaches. Evidences were effectively generated and used. As above mentioned important efforts have been made to consolidate CFG successful models, being supplemented with documentary films, and field visits. That make participants convinced. Furthermore, policy proposition papers were presented every month and after every draft version, being submitted in a constructive manner that generate appreciation of policy makers. *"We maintained very intensive discussion and opinion exchange because both government and CIRUM were interested. Many seminars and meetings were held. Mr. N even called me for personal meetings to discuss about specific articles and terminologies. We worked seriously so we are very satisfied with results now"*, said a representative of NA.

RESULT 3: CSOs AND LANDNET COORDINATORS AND ACTIVISTS HAVE INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND CAPACITY TO ENGAGE IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITY FOREST LAND RIGHTS

Beside LandNet, CIRUM works in cooperation with LISO Members, CIRD, RDPR and KUSTA as CSOs. Learning by doing is the key and principle for capacity and confidence enhancement. As a co-founder and sharing human resources, office premise and strategic agenda with LISO members, CIRUM work closely with other members throughout the process, including evidence generation, consolidation and policy advocacy, etc. other NGOs and CSOs (i.e. CIRD, RDPR and KUSTA) also took part in development of field demonstrations on CFG models, generate lessons and policy dialogues. As a result, although no single capacity development activity being carried out, all local NGOs/CSOs confirmed that they have learnt a lot by working with CIRUM. A representative from KUSTA said: *"As a provincial scientific organization KUSTA has a policy advisory mandate. Since working with CIRUM we have learnt a lot. I was surprised that CIRUM is very knowledgeable, not only forestry but also ethnology. More importantly, they are very skilled in policy research and generate evidence for advocacy that I think we could learn"*. Another KUSTA representative said that he felt very inspired in working with the project. Therefore, he drafted a policy proposition paper on forestland rights of ethnic minority communities and sent to the Prime Minister.

Being formed in 2013, under the project LandNet has received further intensive support to strengthen its capacity, especially in terms of advocacy skills for key members. As discussed above, LandNet members participated very actively and effectively in advocacy work. Their skills and confidence received great impression of other actors, including policy makers. *"I was impressed that communities (LandNet members) were very sharp. Perhaps, in addition to increased education level and access to information in general, they have participated in more meetings and experienced in addressing more practical issues. That was why their arguments were very convincing and authentic"*, said an informant from National Assembly.

RESULT 4: ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN HAVE INCREASED CONFIDENCE TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING ON COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT AND IN POLICY DIALOGUE ON LAND RIGHTS

Overall, gender has been systematically addressed in project interventions and integrated in all project activities. Under this project, woman empowerment is expected to be achieved through gender equality promotion and small grants for woman-led forest management activities, partly addressed through capacity building under Result 3, and integration of gender in other project activities. At the implementation stage, in addition to above mentioned interventions, the project conducted a gender analysis in community forestry at the beginning of the project to form a basis for gender mainstreaming.

According to project data, the ratio of women’s participation in project activities are generally lower than that of men. For instance, women account for only 21.6% of the total LandNet members, which is slightly lower than the percentage of female members in the Vietnamese National Assembly’s current term (26.82%). Given LandNet members are mostly among remote and ethnic minority communities, this figure is still not too discouraged. It is worth noticing that women seem to be not less active than men in policy dialogues. When being asked which member of the LandNet he was impressed the most, a male member said he appreciated a female member in Quang Binh the most because she was very warm hearted and always give opinion in all policy dialogue events and all were very relevant.

Under the woman-led small grant initiatives, woman leadership empowerment was effectively addressed in a context responsive way. In Tu-mo-rong district - Kon Tum province for instance, CIRUM selected a village which has a young female leader to support a community forest governance development model. A district representative said that at the beginning he asked himself why CIRUM did not select a village with a male header to better ensure the success of the model. At the end, however, he admitted that she quickly became mature, demonstrated strong leadership and gained high respect from all villager members. In Gia A Zup, as another example, CIRUM organized a study tour for all 10 households who received forest land from the Chu Mom Ray National Park with a condition that both husbands and wives must join. *“It was the first time we go together outside our village to learn how to do things. My wife was very happy and we talked together quite a lot during the trip. We really shared understanding and commitment and work, not just in our forest but also other duties in our family”*, said a man in Gia A Zup village.

TABLE 5: GENDER IN WOMAN-LED FOREST MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES VISITED

	Tu-mo-rong village	Sai Duan village	Gia A Zup village	Truong Son village
Forest owner	Village community	Village community	National Park	Individual households
Intervention	- Forest allocation and ownership certificate (245.34ha) - Cultivating ginseng (<i>Panax vietnamensis</i>) under forest shade (120 seedlings)	Developing Herbal bath service	Cultivating purple amomum (<i>Amomum longiligulare</i>) under forest shade (10 HHs, 20ha)	Cultivating Asia Broom Grass (<i>Thysanolaena latifolia</i>)
Organizational model	Village community	Village community and collaborative group	Household and collaborative group	Household and collaborative group
Number of beneficiaries	65 households	46 households	10 households	10 women

Leadership	Woman	Woman	Shared (husband and wife)	Woman
Income impact	+ PES income: 45 million VND/year	No income yet (at the evaluation time)	No income yet	+ 11-17 million VND/HH
Environmental impact	+ More frequent forest patrol by village members	N/A	+ More frequent forest patrol by villagers and NPMB - A few trees have been damaged by villagers for better grow of amomum/firewood	- Mono-cropping

Under the gender equality promotion activity, the project initiated a gender ambassador network (GAN). According to document reviews, a training/orientation workshop was provided then participants who were interested signed a pledge to become a member of GAN. GAN launching event was organized right after the training and GAN members were asked to sign a pledge that they commit to take active actions in their communities to promote gender equality.

Document review indicates that no follow-up activities focusing on activities of GAN after that. CARE and CIRUM project staff however explained that under the framework of the project, gender equality was integrated in project activities rather and stand-alone gender focus activities.

In summary, gender has been addressed systematically and context response manner. As a result, women has gained skills and confidence, and actively participated in community forest management as well as policy dialogues at higher level. Nevertheless, additional interventions to enhance capacity of GAN and its member should have been considered in order to ensure effectiveness of this network.

RESULT 5: COMMUNAL AUTHORITIES HAVE INCREASED CAPACITY TO REALIZE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROTECTING ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITY FOREST LAND RIGHTS

The project expected to increase capacity of local authorities in order to clear a prejudice that *“local people do not have capacity to protect forests”* so it would be ineffective if allocating forests to them. The baseline study indicated that in fact, local authorities and functional bodies from provincial down to communal levels understand well the important roles of local communities since they stay closer together. Such prejudice remained however at policy maker level. Top-down approach in Vietnamese government’s decision making system make local authorities do what the higher level direct rather than right things. The baseline study also pointed out that few journalists had in-depth knowledge of community forestry. Also, Vietnamese media tend to transmit messages of decision makers as well as social prejudice regarding ethnic minorities, including paternalistic disregard for ethnic minorities as *“backward”*.

The learning visits organized by the Project were really eye openers for stakeholders, especially from National Assembly, State Government Office, and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, who are state policy makers, and journalists. *“When visiting a community, where the government allocated forest to households but they gathered all and jointly managed by the village, I asked a village elder: “If allocate forest and land to you, you can sell, deposit or invest to earn money why you didn’t like that?”. He said: “No, it is the village’s forest. No one can sell or own*

it!". When hearing that I thought we might had ignored community ownership to forests (under the LFPD-2004, community was not a forest owner), and that we need to rethink", said an official from the National Assembly.

Project records as well as informant interviews reveal that local authorities and functional bodies have been very confident to raise the community forest ownership issues to policy dialogues at higher levels as well as taking actions to allocate forests and forestland to village communities as pilot schemes (because the current LFPD-2004 still not allow village community to own forests) to prove the rights and capacity of community to forest ownership and management.

3.3. IMPACT

This section describes and discusses impacts of the project on project stakeholders, that can be either expected or unexpected. It is noted that although the project is lasted within three years, which is considerably short period of time, important positive impacts have been obviously seen. It is because the Project has contributed to ultimate results which have been the effects of continuous interventions or CIRUM over the last twenty years.

IMPACT ON ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

In general, the rights to forest and forestland of ethnic communities have been formally recognized and protected under the new LoF-2017. Firstly, communities are defined as an identity that can own forests. Secondly, government is mandated for ensuring communities have forest spaces to practice their livelihoods, cultural and worship practices. Thirdly, village communities have rights to give opinions and monitor the planning and usage of forests. In addition, indigenous knowledge and customary law of community on forest management are recognized. Finally, the law also regulates that the government is mandated to build capacity and support so that communities are able to exercise their ownership and manage forests as well as ensure gender equality in forest planning, allocation and other processes.

THE RIGHTS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES BEING RECOGNIZED AND PROTECTED BY LAWS

As mentioned in this report under the effectiveness section, first and foremost, ethnic minority village communities have been recognized as an identity that can own forests, by the new LoF-2017, which is a big improvement comparing to the LFPD-2004. Therefore, they have equal rights and benefits like others such as forest companies, and state owned organizations such as State Forest Enterprise, Protection Forest Management Board. It means that forests can be allocated to villages and they can invest to enrich and enjoy benefits brought by forests. They also have rights to make decisions to respective types of forests that are regulated by the Law. For instance, if owning a productive forest, communities can plant and harvest trees, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and forest environment. They can also trade or deposit their ownership right as regulated by the LoF.

Second, under the new law, ethnic communities who depend on forest can be secured to have forest space for livelihoods and cultural practices. For many ethnic minorities living in forest regions, forest is vital space. It is the only means of livelihoods and fundamental space of their cultural and spiritual lives. Recently, hydropower development and forest reallocation (for rubber, coffee plantations and mining, etc.) have occupied surviving places of ethnic minorities. The LoF-2017 regulates that forest planning, allocation, reallocation and resettlement programs must secure forest spaces for livelihoods and cultural practices of

ethnic minority communities who depend on forest. The government is mandated to provide training and support so that ethnic minority people who own forests can have capacity to manage and live on the forest in respect of the laws and regulations. The government also take the responsibility to pay for the protection of protective and special used forests.

Third, the LoF-2017 regulates the respect of traditional and indigenous forest management knowledge and practices. For instance, customary laws on forest management of village communities can be recognized by the government as a means to protect forests provided that they do not conflict with state laws. Religion and other spiritual worships as well as cultural activities in forest spaces are respected and promoted.

Last but not least, gender equality is regulated in the Law. The government is mandated to ensure gender equality in all processes related to forest, that include forest planning, allocation, reallocation and resettlement.

ENHANCED CAPACITY, COHERENCE, GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITHIN TARGET COMMUNITIES

It is evidenced that village communities which benefit from the project have generally improve their capacity and coherence. A villager from Gia A Zup shared that: *“Because both husband and wives were invited for study tours, it was an unique opportunity for us to discuss lively during the trips, our wives were very happy, they even sang along the way back. Both husbands and wives decided to plant amomum together so we are all very committed”*. Another villager said that: *“Because of (planting) amomum together, our relationship (among families) become closers. Before some of us even had never visited each other though we live in the same village”*.

Woman social economic empowerment is a key element of Women-Led CFG Small Grant Initiatives. Although most of small grants have recently made, a model has been able to generate income. A woman group in Truong Son commune, Quang Binh province shared that their project has been carried out for one year. However, each woman has been able to generate an income in between 11 Million VND to 17 Million VND¹. *“It was a significant amount of income for my family. Since the income is generated at the harvest marginal time (just before the harvest season when people face food shortage), we were able to pay for food to pass over such a difficult time. I can even save some money to pay education fee for my children”*, said a Woman-led CFG member in Truong Son.

“Before, although women also worked hard on farm, we made a lot of rice but our husbands could normally make more money because they can work in the forest to get NTFPs such as rattan and honey. They keep their own money and did not do anything (housework) after getting back from the forest. We now have our means to generate income so we could become more empowered”, said another woman.

IMPROVED CAPACITY AND STATUS OF LANDNET MEMBERS

Under the project framework, LandNet is a key actor which represent communities in policy advocacy. Intensive support has been provided to LandNet members with series of activities such as training, study tours, participating in CFG studies, policy dialogues, etc. Furthermore, LandNet maintains its monthly online meetings to discuss emerging issues around forest and land rights as well as exchange knowledge. Almost all capacity building activities for LandNet were designed and delivered under an experience learning form. As a result, LandNet members have impressively represented communities in different policy dialogues at all levels. Their capacity has not only contributed to ethnic minority rights to forest and forest land but also to other issues that benefit the communities. *“Ms. C has very good capacity and relations. She has participated in many*

¹ 1 EUR ≈ 26,500 VND

different events from local to central levels. She works hard to protect and support our community members. She understands our needs and bring our issues to the higher levels”, said a villager in Truong Son commune about a LandNet member.

IMPACT ON GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND POLICY MAKERS

There are significant changes among government agencies and officials as well as policy makers, which are proved to be contributed from the project interventions. That include their perception on the roles, capacity, indigenous knowledge and cultural of ethnic minorities and communities to forest governance and management; their respect to living space and cultural values of ethnic minorities; their capacity to manage and address issues related to forest and forestland; their perception on the status and roles of (local) non-government organizations; and their awareness on the gaps of legal and policy framework as well as policy development processes.

PERCEPTION ON THE ROLES, CAPACITY AND CULTURAL VALUES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

Informant responses show that while local government had certain understanding and appreciation, the prejudice of “backward” knowledge and customs is still common at central level and general public. A Representative of NA said that: *“We used to think simply that “no one cry for a common dad”². We also experienced a failure of government cooperatives in the past. That was the reason why policy makers hesitate to give forest and land to village communities. But when I witnessed a village elder giving his forest (certificate of forest ownership) back to the village and said it is the forest of the village, no one can occupy, I was very surprised. Perhaps it was the reason why under the government Decree 304, the government made a pilot to allocate to households but almost all forests were lost soon after allocation. We really need to rethink when witness things like this”*. It was observed by the evaluators that through intensive dialogues with communities, local governments and other stakeholders, with support from presentation of success models and best practices as well as field learning visits to communities, real changes in awareness and attitude have seen among policy makers at central level.

RESPECT TO INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL VALUES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

The integration of customary laws, spiritual worships in forest spaces are also recognized and integrated in the LoF-2017. Under the Law, community sacred and watershed forests are categorized as special used and protective forests that can be allocated to village communities. This recognition is the result of success models that CIRUM has promoted for decades and that has convinced local authorities, especially provincial forest rangers. Spiritual and other community functional forests³ are well protected if they are allocated to village communities. It was highly appreciated by forest rangers as they are directly responsible for overall forest management. During policy consultation activities, they have strongly support the solution to allocate community functional forests for communities, which has been proved by success models. It was one of important reasons for the recognition of community forest classification and community-led forest governance practices. *“We recognized that for communities who live on forest, it is vital as parts of their bodies. They not only need land for cultivation but also forest spaces to practice their trusts and religions, to collect firewood, medicinal herbs, spices and*

² Vietnamese idiom. Meaning: a father may have many sons but they may not take care of him better than the one who have only one. Implications: task/property given to more than one person is most likely not be completed/cared of better than giving it to only one.

³ Community functional forests, in this report, refer to forests which has specific usage purpose for village communities such as spiritual worship forests; watershed management forests; and firewood, food, medicine collection for domestic consumption forests, etc.

food items, construction materials and water sources. They cannot live without forest so allocating forest to them they would not ruin it but would care of and protect it well for their long-term usage. Allocating forest to villages we feel much more safe comparing to other forest owners”, said a Lao Cai Forest Ranger.

ENHANCED CAPACITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

It is interesting that although the project did not provide any specific training targeting local cadres, all local official being asked told that they have learnt quite some good things when working with CIRUM. They all confirmed that experience and skills of CIRUM staff was very helpful for them. That include not only advocacy skills but also skills of working with communities as well as forest management.

A Representative of the Bat Xat DONRE said: *“CIRUM staff are very skilled in forest and land allocation. Procedures they applied were very effective. Before, we (when allocating forests) just measured and completed all procedures by ourselves then handed over certificates to forest owners. However, a lot of overlaps and even conflicts occurred afterward because borders may be different between what in dossiers and actual, or people may occupy from each other because no one know borders exactly. Different to what we do, CIRUM requested all parties who share forest borders to verify before completing dossiers. We learned from that because it helps minimize conflict after allocation. Lao Cai People Committee has applied these procedures to our forest allocation programs. Recently, we have applied the same process with a forest allocation project funded by UN-REDD”. A representative of Tu-mo-rong DARD said that: “CIRUM has in-depth understanding of forest, at both grassroots and policy level. CIRUM staff has worked closely with every village, listen to them and discuss every detail with them. Last year, I participated in a workshop organized by CIRUM they discuss every term to explain facts at community level. What I learned from them is that how to work effectively with communities”.*

CHANGES ON THE PERCEPTION OF DECISION MAKERS ON THE ROLES OF NGO/CSO

Although it is not the expectation of the project, changes on the perception of the role of NGOs/CSOs, especially in policy making is considered significant as a result of the project. In Vietnam's political context, legal framework for NGOs/CSOs is even still uncompleted and many NGOs have to be established under the form of a social or scientific organization. Confirmation from government officials on the role of NGOs/CSOs in policy development is considered a highlighted change.

A representative of VNForest said that, just about five years ago, government agencies were sensitive with NGOs. It was rare for the Government agencies to cooperate with and listen to NGOs because we perceived they may pursue hidden aims for certain interest groups or even opponents but not for the national interest. Under this project, CIRUM approached in a constructive way. It was why we can collaborate with each other. During the law development process, policy proposition papers as well as their comments on the draft law versions were very practical, and constructive, even with tough issues like land rights and land conflicts. It provided in-depth and comprehensive analysis together with practical solutions. Because of this successful cooperation, government agencies now, to some extent, have changed their perception on NGOs, considered them as an active actor.

IMPACT ON CIRUM

Although it was not an intention of the project, strong evidences indicate that the status and reputation of CIRUM is considered reaching a higher level to both local and central governments for its work in general and for the areas of ethnic minority rights to forest and land in particular. Lao Cai Forestry Department and Simacai District People Committee signed an MoU with CIRUM to develop and carry out a pilot project to implement the LoF-2017. VNForest Representative shared that thanks to the contribution of CIRUM to the LoF-2017 development process, VNForest awarded CIRUM an Official Compliment. He also confirmed that

the MoU signed between CIRUM and VNForest to for development and consultation of the LoF-2017 is still valid because Decrees and Resolutions are still need to be developed to guide the law implementation. Those tasks are under the MoU framework so both organizations can still collaborate.

A representative of KUSTA said that, because Kon Tum has complex composition of ethnic minority groups as well as forest and land issues. The authorities were therefore very hesitated to permit an NGO to work in the province. CIRUM has worked in Kon Tum for quite a number of years. At the beginning, we cooperated but still watched out. We have witnessed that CIRUM has very good skills and experience in addressing forest and land issues. Under this project CIRUM engaged us in policy dialogues, it was also the first-time village communities were involved in policy development process. The provincial government recognized and appreciated our cooperation.

3.4. SUSTAINABILITY

This section considers the extent to which project results can be sustained, replicated or expand in the future. The evaluation analyses influencing factors in various aspects, including legal, organizational, environmental and financial dimension.

SUSTAINABILITY AT LEGAL LEVEL

The Project designed expected that community rights to forest and forestland would be included in a draft amendment of the LFPD-2004. The achievement is considered exceed the expectation because the new LoF-2017 was even approved and will be formally activated right after the completion of the Project (January 1, 2019). Under this law, all fundamental rights of ethnic minority communities have been fully recognized. It means that village community can be forest owners; the government is mandated to secure forest spaces for communities living with forest to earn living as well as cultural practices. Communities can enjoy capacity building services to properly manage their forest, receive honorarium to protect forests or environmental services. Village communities have the rights to be consulted for forest planning, allocation, reallocation and development as well as monitor forest management and development processes. All such rights are well regulated and protected by LoF-2017.

A risk is that despite the LoF-2017 will be effective very soon, in order for the law to be implemented, under Vietnamese legal system, it needs guiding documents such as decrees and resolutions. Similar experience in the past is that the development and approval processes of these documents in many cases are time consuming. Consequently, it would take more time in order for the LoF-2017 to take real effectiveness. Similarly, decrees and desolutions which guide the implementation of the relevant articles may not adequate. As a result, that would affect the effective implementation of such article. Furthermore, since village community is not determined as a legal identity under the Vietnamese Civil Law, a risk is that there would be obstacles if conflicts between villages as forest owners and other actors occurred.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are several results of the project that the sustainability at organizational level can be considered. That include LandNet; community collaborative groups under the woman-led CFG initiatives; the continuation of best practices as the result of the project; and the cooperation between CIRUM and government and civil society actors at all levels.

LandNet has been established with support from CIRUM under different projects. Beyond the completion of the Action, although LandNet will certainly need continuous support to continue its operation and growth as it has not been able to generate fund for itself, CIRUM can still support LandNet operation under the support from other projects. A success factor for LandNet organizational sustainability is that CIRUM has allocated a moderator cum secretary to support operation of LandNet. This person also take the responsibility as a bridge to bring policy recommendations/implications from the group to the management level of CIRUM. CIRUM management, in turn will then analyze and provide strategic advice or support for LandNet to address. It therefore can be said that the sustainability of LandNet is at high level.

For community-based organization which were established under the Woman-led CFG initiatives and village CFG (in Tu-mo-rong), since almost all of them were newly established, it is hard to confirm that they will be able to operate their organization sustainably without external support. For these organizations, the best way to support is the time they face a certain problem. Therefore, continuous monitoring and on-sport support is certainly needed.

For CIRUM, throughout this action, the trust, status and relationships of CIRUM with other actors, including community, local and central government as well as CSOs have remarkably enhanced. It is a great success factor to continue its collaboration for future projects.

ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY

The project focuses on the policy advocacy, capacity building, and the rights to forest and forestland of ethnic minority communities. These appear not directly influent the environment but interventions at the field level that aims to woman empowerment and CFG have, to a certain extent.

To the environment aspect, almost all woman-led community forest governance initiatives have an aim for better forest management. The environment impact under the project is yet to be measured since the interventions have been taken in a short period of time. Environmental sustainability is therefore analyzed at an outlook and risk level rather as no major issues have yet been materialized. To this extent, the evaluation confirms that more frequent forest patrol have been taken place by villagers in Tu-Mo-Rong Village and proper actions have been taken to address forest violation issues.

In Chu Mom Ray national park, it was assumed that people who live nearby the forest shall have land to cultivate so that they will not violate the core zone. In addition, frequent existence of people around would create a ring to prevent crimes to come into the National Park. The Management Board leaders however also shared that some villagers who were allocated forest land to cultivate amomum chopped down forest trees for firewood and for the better grow of crops. They also share a concern that it may be a challenge to ensure effective monitoring the compliance with regulations when scale-up.

Regarding the case of Truong Son village, Asian broom grass is not considered forest-cover trees and it can be grown on bare land but not under forest shade. Therefore, it is considered not result in contribution to increment of forest coverage. Scaling up the plantation of Asian broom grass (if not well considered and control) may even cause negative effect to forest coverage and biodiversity. It implies that good land use planning for Asian broom grass shall be well considered if scale-up in order to ensure a do-no-harm to environment.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Similar to environment sustainability, the economic sustainability of this project is analyzed only in regards of women-led community initiatives.

Two out of four cases where the evaluator visited has proved to generate income for the owners. In Tu-morong, the villagers confirmed that after getting the forest ownership certificate, they have received PES with an amount of 45 million VND per year, from 2016. Even though ginseng has not given any income for the next five years at least, the villagers hope that they would become valuable crops as they are growing well and the market price is very promising. In Truong Son village, Asian broom grass has given significant income for the women. The group members shared that each one has earned between 11 million VND to 17 million VND for the last year. They hope the income would be much higher for the coming years because yield would be higher as the growth of the plants and the market price is relatively stable. For the amomum plantation in Chu Mom Ray, it is expected that income would be generated in the next two years while the herbal bath model will be put in business in the yearly January, 2019.

In summary, although the economic income is varied, depending on the businesses, concrete evidence proved that some have brought income to women, their families as well as village communities. Nevertheless, it would take more time to confirm the economic sustainability of all the business models.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The ultimate outcome of the project is the access and ownership of ethnic minority communities to forest and forestland. As discussed, the achievement exceeds the plan as the Law has been approved but not just a draft as expected. Nevertheless, all stakeholders are still concerned about the shortage of government financial resources that may threaten the forest allocation processes so that ethnic minority village communities would have real access and ownership.

According to a representative of VNForest, the state investment budget for forestry sector was only 1,600 billion VND per annum, equal to 25 billion VND per province, in average. This can be just equal to 10% of total budget needed for each year. Nevertheless, almost all provinces do not allocate local budget to forestry because those which have forests are all poor and face deficits. Beside advocacy for additional budget from the state and local governments, mobilization of social budget seems to be another realistic option.

3.5. EFFICIENCY

This section considers the effective use of resources through the analysis of various aspects regarding project performance addressing the following questions:

- If the design (intervention, methodology, approach) allowed project achieved cost-effective results/objectives?
- How timing and timeliness effects project cost?
- If the project management instruments are effectively used to ensure sound management?
- If the project personnel are competent and human resources are sufficient to fulfill project tasks required?

At the time this evaluation was undertaken, the project has not fully completed. Therefore, the consolidated project financial report was still unavailable. Furthermore, there was a lack of standards or references to

analyze and quantify cost effectiveness/efficiency. The evaluation under this section is therefore purely based on analysis of factors which effect the efficiency of the projects.

TABLE 6: FACTOR INFLUENCING PROJECT EFFICIENCY

Factors	Specifications	Effect
Interventions and methodology		
Constructive advocacy approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using influencing/lobbying/advisory, not public instead of others, public campaign for instance; - Investment in building rapport among key stakeholders - Support the agenda of the policy makers; - Facilitate and engage in advisory processes; - Provide advice, inputs to the law. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement of advocacy objectives; - Appreciation; - Cost – effectiveness
Make use of available evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidate and document evidences generated by previous projects by CIRUM and LISO on the ground for the last two decades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time saving - Cost saving
Make use of partners' experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIRUM has strong experience in CLFG, forest and land rights; - CIRUM staff are competent at both community, and policy research and advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leverage impact - Cost-effectiveness
Make use of available networks/coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIRUM had supported establishment and built capacity of LandNet; - CIRUM has good relationship with communities, local and central governments, local CSOs - CARE has experience in advocacy, good relationships with INGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leverage power - Take the advantage of available resources - Cost effectiveness
Participatory approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage different stakeholders in project activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Consolidation of evidences o Learning, seminar, policy dialogues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning by doing; - Learning from each other; - One activity contributes to more than one results; - Cost - effectiveness
Timing and timeliness		
Perfect timing for advocacy on community rights to forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project was responsive to the law revision process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement exceed set-out target
Respect to timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consolidation of evidences and advocacy activities completed before timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rights of ethnic minority communities included in the approved LoF before the end of 2017 instead of 2018 - Cost-effectiveness
Activities carried out in timely manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIRUM and CARE reacted responsively to the change of government law revision schedule. - Inadequate basis to evaluate timeliness of specific activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement exceed set-out target
Management and coordination		
Application of out-come mapping tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map and describe changes over time with both qualitative and quantitative data; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearly present and explain changes; - Stimulate participatory reflection, learning and planning
Effective communication between CARE and CIRUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CARE and CIRUM discussed timely all requests in regards to activities and budget (contents, changes, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timely decision - Cost-effectiveness
Unspecific annual plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual activity plans presented as part of annual reports did not specify project activities but rather repeat general activities as in the project design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility for changes of activities over time; - Unable to track actual

		implementation vs. plan
Shortage of baseline data and targets	- Baseline study did not collect baseline quantitative data	- Constraints to measure and evaluate quantitative achievements
Some indicators were not relevant/sensitive to changes	- Some indicators were not at the same level as respective results, or not fully relevant thus not sensitive to results.	- Limited validity
Human resources		
Competent staff	- CIRUM staff are competent and experienced of working with both community and central partners; - CIRUM staff are competent and committed to ethnic minority, forest and land rights issues; - CARE responsible staff are competent and experienced in project management and partner relations	- Timely and quality activity delivery - Cost-effectiveness
Sufficient and stable human resources	- Sufficient human resources allocated - Stable staff in both CIRUM and CARE	- Timely and quality activity delivery - Cost – effectiveness
Budget and budget management		
Sufficient budget	- Sufficient budget granted - Sufficient budget allocated to budget lines	- No budget revision requested - Timely and quality delivered activities and results
Flexible budget reallocation at activity level	- Flexible adjudgement of activities to aim for results	- Result oriented - Cost efficiency

Table 6 presents specific analysis of factors that influence the efficiency of the project. It can be seen that almost all factors brought positive effects to project efficiency. That expands all analysis areas, including interventions and methodology, timing and timeliness, management and coordination, human resources, and budget and budget management.

INTERVENTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The appropriateness of project's interventions designed and approaches formed important factors for the project cost-effectiveness. From the evaluator's point of view, the constructive advocacy approach is highly relevant to the context of Vietnam, especially to the forestland and ethnic minority rights, which are still sensitive with the GoV. Under this approach, CIRUM has invested in building rapport among stakeholders and trust from the policy makers. Because of that the project was able to engage policy makers and took part in the law development process. Organizing activities in line with the government agenda maximized the contribution of the project to the law development framework. Constructive comments, inputs have eased the consultation, adoption and incorporation of community rights into the law document. The available evidence, experience and network are great facilitating factors for the advocacy projects. If the project had to build evidences or networks from the beginning, or having incompetent expertise, it would have missed the chance. Participatory approach engaged various stakeholders in project activities. It was not only able to ensure good result delivered but also an effective way to build capacity, rapport and trust among actors.

TIMING AND TIMELINESS

The project has been carried out in a good timing. Since the time matched the national law revision schedule, the project activities have been easily aligned with and contributed to the law revision processes. Even though the GoV accelerated the law development processes, CIRUM and CARE were able to adjust the project plan to ensure good matching with the government's schedule. As a result, the project successfully advocated for and community rights to forest and forestland was included in the new LoF-2017 one year before the expected.

It is noted that due to the unavailability of project specific plan, the evaluators were unable to verify if all project activities were carried out as planned. Nevertheless, it can be considered still that the project was delivered in a good timing.

MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

The project's management and coordination are considered relatively efficient. The application of outcome mapping monitoring method, from the evaluators' perspective, is very efficient. It helped track project results (both qualitative and quantitative) at all levels, attributed by activities in a systematic way. It was particularly relevant for interventions with complex result chains or each activity attributes to various results. Communication and coordination between CARE and CIRUM were confirmed to be efficient and highly satisfactory. Both organizations were very responsible, responsive and flexible. It was also confirmed by both parties that clear roles and responsibilities of each project staff were defined clearly that ease the communication and coordination.

Some limitations that the evaluators have determined include project annual plans were not specified comparing to the overall project plan. It was therefore lack of basis for the evaluation of the timeliness of project activities. Shortages of baseline data and target were also another limitation of project management. In addition, some indicators are not fully match so that they were not sensitive to results.

HUMAN RESOURCES

For a policy advocacy project, human resources are major inputs and staff competency is crucial. It was the evaluators' observation and stakeholders' confirmation that CIRUM has senior, competent and committed staff for both community and advocacy work. Project partners also confirmed that project management staff of CARE are very skilled, experienced and committed. The project teams of both CIRUM and CARE were very stable. Those formed an important success factor for the project timely and quality delivery thus its efficiency. It was also confirmed by project partners that sufficient staff and level of efforts were allocated. It was reported that CARE mobilized staff in a flexible way in response to the needs of the project. It can be summary that the human resources are sufficiently allocated and satisfied by project partners. Staff competency is considered at high level.

BUDGET AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Due to unavailability, the evaluators were unable to review the project final financial report. It was reported by CARE that the project budget was sufficient for the action. The allocation of budget for interventions were adequate so that no request for budget revision or reallocation was forwarded to the donor. It was also reported that minor budget allocation and revision had been undertaken at the activity level provided that they attributed to the same expected results. Based on available information, it can be considered that the project budget was sufficient and adequately allocated to project interventions. Budget revision were under the thread holds that need to get approval from the donor.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

The project aimed to realize the rights of ethnic minority people to community forestland through an evidence-based advocacy approach. The evaluation confirms that the project design including interventions, approaches and strategies are highly relevant to the context of Vietnam. The project has addressed one of the most burning issues and the vital needs of ethnic minority communities. The constructive policy advocacy is determined as a “smart” strategy to the forestland and ethnic minority rights, which are sensitive to the government of Vietnam. Investment in building rapport and trust among stakeholders to foster constructive dialogue and advisory process are perfectly match with the strategy. The project interventions synergized together and with previous work to maximize attributions to objective attainment.

The Action has achieved, and even exceed its set-out objectives. It has significantly attributed to the development process as well as the content of the LoF-2017. As a result, the fundamental rights to ownership and access to forest and forestland of ethnic village communities have been well incorporated and regulated in the Law. The law itself and evidences from the evaluation confirms that policy makers have fully recognize and support the ethnic community rights to forest and forestland, and all relevant stakeholders have been capable (especially LandNet) and worked together in a constructive and cohesive way under a joint agenda to support for the inclusion of ethnic minority forestland rights in to legal and policy framework. As a result, even though the project expected that by its end community rights to forestland would be included in a draft version of the law amendment, the Law has been approved and passed by the National Assembly one year before the project end.

At the impact level, first and foremost, the right, capacity and status of ethnic minority have been enhanced. Under the regulation of the LoF-2017, Ethnic minority communities are recognized as one of forest and forestland owner identities, which is equal to other forest owners. Village community can be secured forest spaces for their livelihoods, cultural and other fundamental living practices. They have the rights to take part in forest and forestland used planning, settlement/resettlement, allocation/reallocation programs. Furthermore, the government is mandated to build capacity for communities so that they are capable manage forest and forestland in a sustainable way; ensure transparency and gender equality in forest development processes. The capacity of LandNet, a representative network of ethnic minority communities, have been further strengthened, women’s capacity, and social and economic leadership has been improved within LandNet and under small grant initiatives. Impressively, the perception of policy makers has shifted from heavily influenced by a prejudice that ethnic communities are not capable to protect and control forest to recognize their roles, capacity and incorporate into the Law. In addition, the perception on the status of local NGOs and CSOs has changed among policy makers, from suspect to recognized attitude. Especially, the status, relationship and reputation of CIRUM with all stakeholders has been strengthened.

Fundamental elements that can ensure the sustainability of project results and impacts. First and foremost, the LoF-2017 has formally recognized the rights to forestland of ethnic minorities. It is a firm basis for all stakeholders to comply with and respect as well as for the community and supporting stakeholders to promote the realization in the future. Second, the enhanced capacity of LandNet and continued commitment and support from CIRUM would help further strengthening capacity of the local communities and ensure maintaining and if possible, scale up result achieved at community level as well as to promote realization of community rights as regulated by the Law. In addition, it is most likely that the changes of awareness, attitude and appreciation of policy makers on the status of local NGOs and their recognition and relationship with CIRUM would likely to be a favorable element for their similar activities in the future.

Even though there was no basis to conduct a quantitative assessment, it can be considered that the project is very efficient. The relevant interventions and approaches; the advantages of available resources, competent

and stable teams; appropriate coordination and communication mechanism among project partners; effective budget management practice; and the right timing of the project and the timeliness of project intervention delivery form great success factors for the efficiency of the project.

4.2. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The only limitation lays on the project planning and M&E. The project should have determined baseline data and set targets from the beginning to serve and ensure effective planning and M&E. Indicators would have been tested to ensure that they are sensitive to changes. In addition, annual plans would have been specified comparing to the project overall plan to better guide implementation and management.

Challenges are mainly on the risk for the actual realization of the rights of ethnic minorities to forestland. It is not considered as the accountability of the project but presented for the outlook and recommendations for future actions. Firstly, the actual implementation of the law might be slow due to delays caused by time consuming for the government to issue guiding documents (decrees and resolutions) and policies for the law implementation, and these may not be specific enough. Secondly, the lack of local government capacity and national resources may also constraint the law implementation. Finally, ethnic minority communities in general still need further capacity enhancement in order to exercise their rights, both at grassroots and advocacy level.

4.3. LESSONS

Following lessons can be learned from the success and best practices as well as limitations of the project:

- Constructivism can be an appropriate advocacy approach, particularly for the context which facing sensitive advocacy issues; strong evidences are in place; relationship is important; and rapport and trust can be built among stakeholders to facilitate advocacy processes.
- Strong evidence, rapport (among stakeholders), and timing are fundamental elements to ensure the success of evidence-based advocacy. While strong evidence can be considered as conditional element, rapport can be defined as a sufficient element and timing is favorable condition.
- Participation in research studies and advocacy activities can be perfect means to build capacity and rapport among actors. It can be also considered an effective means to facilitate and maintain dialogues. Participants may not necessarily be only advocates but also influenced parties, especially under a constructivist approach.
- Telecommunication network can be considered effective means to develop network among ethnic minority communities as their accessibility to smartphone and telecommunication network has significantly increased.
- Youth are considered champions and increasingly taking leadership roles in advocacy and rights exercise at both grassroots and higher levels. Further engagement of youth in LandNet would help increase their effective operation of this network.

- Compatibility and sensitive indicators as well as baseline data and targets are among core elements to ensure effective operation of a project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. It is important to consider these at the design and inception phases of projects.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The achievements of the project have opened windows for potential actions in the coming time to further leverage impact by accelerating the law implementation in order for the rights to forestland to be realized all over the ethnic minority communities. The lessons are worth to considered in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the future actions. Below are key recommendations for future programing of the project stakeholders:

- Promote and support the development and implementation of relevant decrees, resolutions, policies and programs of the government in order to accelerate and ensure the rights of ethnic minorities communities to forestland are exercised in practice. Application of the constructive and evidence-based policy advocacy/advisory approaches are still considered relevant for such actions.
- Continue to support the capacity enhancement of LandNet and community so that they could represent and support better ethnic communities at regional and national level in dialogues with other actors to exercise their rights to forest and forestland at policy level, as well as to support their community to practice their rights and gain actual benefits from forest at the grassroots level. It is recommended to promote youth participation in LandNet in order to increase successibility of this network.
- Promote the capacity development of government authorities and functional bodies at all levels so that they are capable addressing forest and forestland rights issues for ethnic minority communities. That may include forestland allocation, certification, capacity building services and conflict resolutions around forest and land issues;
- Advocate for increased budget and resources allocation to community forestry from both government and other sources;
- Consolidate and disseminate success models on CFG models; and develop models on resources mobilization from multi-stakeholders for sustainable forest-based economic development;

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Annex 2: Field study schedule

Annex 3: List of informants