



## Community-based forest management in Nghe An province

### Introduction:

Nghe An province is located in the north central coast of Vietnam. It is the largest province in the country, covering 1,649,270 hectares. The province contains over 888,695 ha of forestland, mainly located in the western areas of the province. Nghe An has a large area of natural and planted forests which covers 71.6% of the province area. Forests play a critical role in supporting livelihoods, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and soil erosion control, while helping to maintain ecological balance. However, there is a lack of sound forest management and protection, and local communities can degrade forest areas when they cut fuelwood and clear forest area for agricultural production.

### Empowering local communities to effectively manage the forest:

With the aim on improving forest conservation and raising environmental awareness, USAID's Vietnam Forests and Deltas (VFD) Program worked to implement a community-based forest management model in Ban Ve village, Yen Na commune, Tuong Duong district, Nghe An province from July 2015 to 2017. Traditionally, forest management is seen only as a government-run process, so this model aims to ensure the participation of community

members in the process of the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of forest management. It also helps strengthen the participation of vulnerable groups, such as women, the poor, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. After more than two years of implementation, many forest areas are now being managed sustainably, which has also improved the local living conditions in communities.



## Project implementation:

The main objective of the community-based forest management (CBFM) model is to raise local awareness on natural resources protection and encourage community participation in forest management, thus improving the livelihoods and income generation opportunities for local people. VFD provided support in:

- Establishing the CBFM management team in the local community;
- Identifying the villages and targeted areas for CBFM, and encouraging participation of local authorities and people in village meetings;
- Organizing CBFM training courses for technical staff, local authorities and communities;
- Organizing village meetings in the villages to re-establish key forest protection measures and set up management groups with households and Village Forest Management Board; and
- Working with locals to establish the local CBFM regulations, providing supervision and support during project implementation.

## The way forward:

The CBFM model not only helps raise the people's awareness about forest protection but also gives them access to a cleaner and healthier living environment. It has provided great support in improving the locals' livelihood at Ban Ve village, where most of the local inhabitants rely on forests for a living. The households with forest land allocation will have the rights to use the resources and enjoy other benefits as regulated by Vietnamese laws. "The project is very successful in raising the local awareness of forest protection. In the past, most of the locals did not pay much attention to the forest replantation and restoration, but now everything has changed. Most of them would like to apply for forest land allocation, and they are willing to protect their own land. It will be much easier for our team in promoting and strengthening the forest management and protection in the area", said Mr. Chu Van Hung, Vice Chairman of Yen Na commune.



## Beneficiary story:

Ms. Vi Thi Nhan, a 32-year-old Thai ethnic minority woman, is living with her family in Ban Ve village, Yen Na commune, Tuong Duong district. Like many households in the village, she practices cattle farming and land cultivation for a living, while supplementing her income by collecting products from the nearby forest. Since the CBFM model was first introduced in the village, Ms. Nhan became interested, and was assigned to be a core member of local forest management team. "Both my husband and I joined the project model because we think that forest protection is an individual responsibility. Participating in the village meetings, I can raise my voice and contribute to build the local forest management regulations. Whenever I have the opportunity to travel to fields with villagers, I feel so happy while helping them identify the different types of forest. They also support me a lot", Ms. Nhan happily shares.

Although the CBFM model has been implemented for a short time, it has already proven to be effective. Being a part of forest management and protection, many locals feel more responsible for their own decisions and solutions to protect their nearby forests. In addition, as the locals living in the area, they have a deep understanding about the local forest ecology, and can provide contextualized solutions. "After participating in some project training courses, I am very confident to help the locals and work with them to build our forest management regulations. At first, many locals misunderstood that some households with forest land allocation would enjoy better benefits and refused to join our activities. However, after explanation, they are more willing to join as they see that it's for the benefit of the whole community", said Ms. Nhan.

