

Term of Reference

Study on strengthening institutional sustainability of FFD work in Vietnam

1. Background

Founded in 2013, Food and Forest Development Finland (FFD) is a non-profit expert organization dedicated to supporting agricultural and forestry producer organizations and cooperatives in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. FFD's mission is to improve the livelihoods of agricultural and forestry producers in developing countries by fostering strong producer organizations that create jobs, enhance economic opportunities, and promote sustainable practices. With a vision of prosperous rural areas where men, women, and children can live sustainably, free from hunger and poverty, FFD has directly reached 108,000 farmers across 11 countries over the past decade.

Since 2013, FFD has been actively engaged in Vietnam, contributing to sustainable forest management, climate adaptation, and capacity building for smallholders and their organizations, including cooperative alliances and cooperatives. The work of FFD in Vietnam has primarily focused on improving forest-related activities such as better seedling production, nursery management, and sustainable forest management practices, ultimately leading to forest certification for smallholder forestry. These efforts have been implemented through several key projects, including:

- **Support to Forest Producers' Organizations in Central Vietnam (VIE6123)** (2014–2016): Funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Government of the Netherlands, this project supported three provincial cooperative alliances (Thua Thien Hue, Quang Tri, and Quang Ngai) to strengthen their capacity in sustainable forest management.
- **Smallholders Thriving for Forest Certification in Vietnam (VIE6566)** (2017–2020): This EU-funded project, with support from Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government of the Netherlands, focused on advancing forest certification for smallholders through cooperative alliances in Thua Thien Hue, Quang Ngai, and Phu Yen provinces.
- **Towards Resilient Smallholder Forestry (VIE8701)** (2022–2024): Supported by the EU, this project aimed to strengthen the resilience of smallholder forestry in Nghe An, Quang Ngai, and Phu Yen provinces by enhancing local capacity for sustainable forestry.
- **Informed Forestry Decisions and Sustainable Forest Management (VIE8748)** (2023–2025): Funded by Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, this project focused on improving decision-making and sustainable forest management in smallholder forests in Nghe An and Thua Thien Hue provinces.

Through these projects, FFD has strengthened the capacities of cooperatives and cooperative alliances in managing forest-related activities and promoted forest certification, contributing to long-term environmental and economic sustainability. FFD remains committed to ensuring that this progress endures and that local institutions are equipped to continue these efforts independently. However, the long-term sustainability of FFD's work in Vietnam now depends on further enhancing the ability of local institutions to manage, adapt, and scale these initiatives autonomously. To support future initiatives, a comprehensive assessment of the institutional structures, partnerships, and performance of cooperatives and alliances involved in FFD's projects is essential. This evaluation will be key to securing the sustainability of FFD's impact in Vietnam.

2. Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the current institutional capacity, sustainability, and effectiveness of FFD's partnerships in Vietnam. Additionally, the study will focus on identifying overlaps in roles and responsibilities among various farmer organizations, providing strategic recommendations to ensure the long-term sustainability of FFD's interventions. Specifically, the study will:

- Assess functional overlaps among the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance, provincial cooperative alliances, and other farmer organizations, including the Vietnam Forest Owner Association (VIFORA), the Vietnam Farmers Union (VNFU), and related institutions. This analysis aims to identify synergies and opportunities for strategic partnerships.
- Evaluate FFD's alignment and effectiveness by:
 - Assessing how well FFD's initiatives meet with the needs of smallholders, aligning project goals with local priorities and government strategies.
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of FFD's partnerships with partners and other institutions, including both cooperative alliances and relevant government agencies
 - Identifying key challenges and opportunities for enhancing the institutional sustainability of FFD's work
- Provide recommendations and a clear to enable FFD to expand its initiatives beyond the project's lifecycle.

3. Scope of work

Working closely with the program staff, the national coordinator, and relevant stakeholders, the consultant will undertake for the following tasks:

- To develop a comprehensive plan, including content and methodologies, to ensure the successful completion of the assignment and achievement of study objectives.
- To review existing documentation related to FFD's projects in Vietnam to understand their scope, objectives, and outcomes.
- To conduct interviews and/ or focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including FFD staff, representatives from FFD's local partners, local governments, and other partners involved in FFD projects
- To conduct consultations with relevant stakeholders and finalize the report
- To review and evaluate the structure, governance, and operational capacity of cooperatives and cooperatives alliances at both national and provincial levels, particularly those engaged in FFD's project. This review will evaluate the ability of these institutions to manage and sustain forest-related activities, including forest certification and sustainable management practices.
- To assess and compare the capacity of other farmers' organizations mentioned in Section 2 to identify potential opportunities for new or strengthened partnerships that could support the sustainability of FFD's work.
- To evaluate FFD's partnership, alignment, and effectiveness in Vietnam based on the criteria defined in Section 2.
- To provide actionable recommendations for enhancing institutional sustainability and develop a roadmap for the implementation of these recommendations.

4. Methodology

The study will be conducted using a combination of methods, including, but not limited to, desk research, field visits, interviews, stakeholder consultations, and participatory workshops.

5. Deliverables

The consultant will be expected to deliver the following outputs:

- Inception report: Detailing the approach, methodology, and timeline for the study.
- Draft report: Presenting initial findings, analysis, and recommendations
- Final report: A comprehensive report incorporating feedback from key stakeholders, including:
 - Executive summary.
 - Detailed analysis of the findings.
 - Conclusions and a detailed roadmap for the enhanced institutional sustainability.

The report will be prepared in English.

6. Budget and Timeline

The consultancy is estimated to last **20** days, with a daily fee of **EUR 250**. The work will begin on the date the contract is signed between FFD and the consultant and will conclude on **December 20, 2024**. The consultant is responsible for covering their own insurance and personal income tax. Fieldwork-related expenses will be reimbursed based on receipts and in accordance with the project's cost norms. The consultancy proposal should be submitted using the detailed table below:

No	Activity	Number of consultancy days	Expected deliverables	Deadline
1	Document review, data collection, methodology, etc.		Technical report on implementation	
2	Field work, stakeholder consultations		Field data	
3	Data analysis and report writing		Drafted report	
4	Consultation and report revisions		Feedback	
5	Submission of final report		Final report	20.12.2024

7. Qualifications and experience requirements

The consultant is expected to have:

- A minimum of a Master's degree in sustainable forestry, development studies, institutional capacity building, or related field
- Proven experience in conducting similar assessments and developing strategies for institutional sustainability, particularly in the context of forestry or rural development.
- Strong understanding of Vietnam's forestry sector, including policies and the institutional landscape, as well as experience working with smallholder farmers and rural communities in Vietnam or similar contexts.
- Experience and strong connections with government institutions as well as international development organizations, enabling effective collaboration, communication, and facilitation of partnerships across different levels of stakeholders.

- Strong analytical, writing, and communication skills.
- Ability to work effectively both in teams and independently.
Willingness to conduct field trips and engage directly with local stakeholders as required.

8. Application process

Interested candidates are required to submit the following: 1) An initial work plan based on the timeline outlined in Section 6, 2) A CV in either English or Vietnamese, and 3) A copy of the highest relevant degree. Please send your application to tranthiphuong@huaf.edu.vn with a CC to chi.bui@ffd.fi.

All proposals must be submitted by **November 19, 2024**.