



Plan Vivo
Carbon management and rural livelihoods

THE PLAN VIVO STANDARDS

2008

Version Control

This document replaces all preceding versions of the Plan Vivo Standards and comes into force on 6th October 2008.

The most up-to-date version of the standards can be accessed electronically at www.planvivo.org

Future versions of the Plan Vivo Standards will be denoted by the year in which they were published.

Suggestions and Comments

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Further Information

For further information on the Plan Vivo System, Standards and Plan Vivo projects, please visit our website:

www.planvivo.org

Language

Governance of the Plan Vivo System is in English, therefore all submissions or applications made in respect of the Plan Vivo Standards should be in English unless otherwise agreed.

Scope and Structure

Scope

When should I consider using the Plan Vivo Standards?

Project developers and organisations should consider using the Plan Vivo Standards where:

- They operate or plan to operate in developing countries to promote sustainable rural livelihoods;
- They work with or plan to work with small-scale producers to deliver ecosystem services, specifically long-term carbon sequestration and/or emission reduction benefits;
- They wish to promote the protection and/or planting of native or naturalised tree species.

Structure

[Chapter one](#) gives an **overview of the Plan Vivo System**, its **history and purpose**, and how Plan Vivo projects work. It also describes the **applicability** of the Standards, rationale for payments for ecosystem services (PES), **guiding principles**, and **governance** of the System and Standards.

[Chapter two](#) describes the different actors involved in the development, registration, operation and review of Plan Vivo projects, which include the Plan Vivo Foundation, project coordinators, producers, expert advisors and reviewers, approved third-party verifiers, purchasers of Plan Vivo Certificates (buyers and resellers), technical consultants and research institutes, and project developers and funders.

[Chapter three](#) describes the different stages involved in developing and operating a Plan Vivo project, which include:

- Registering a [project idea note \(PIN\)](#), which is the first step towards becoming a Plan Vivo project (**section 3.1**);
- Development and approval of [technical specifications](#), which describe each land-use activity, calculate the carbon benefit, prescribe risk management and monitoring activities and contain analyses of leakage, additionality and permanence (**section 3.2**);

- Development and approval of the [project design document \(PDD\)](#), which describes the project, its activities, internal governance structure and procedures (**section 3.3**);
- [Validation](#) and project registration (**section 3.4**);
- [Annual reporting](#), which allows the Plan Vivo Foundation to continually review the progress of projects and triggers [Certificate issuance](#) (**section 3.5**);
- [Third-party verification](#), which involves complete verification of the project against the Plan Vivo Standards by a third-party verifier approved by the Plan Vivo Foundation (**section 3.6**).

[Chapter four](#) contains the complete **Plan Vivo Standards** for projects. The standards provide the basis for the validation and verification of projects.



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Glossary of Selected Terminology and Acronyms

Adaptation	Initiatives and measures to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects (IPCC definition)
Adaptive Capacity	The whole of capabilities, resources and institutions of a country, region or community to implement effective adaptation measures
Additionality	A project is additional if it, and the activities supported by it, could not have happened were it not for the availability of carbon finance
Afforestation	The direct human-induced conversion of land that has not been forested for a period of at least 50 years to forested land
Agroforestry	Growing trees and crops on the same piece of land
Barrier	Any obstacle to reaching a goal that can be overcome by a project or measure
Baseline	The starting reference point from which the carbon benefits of project activities can be measured or calculated
Biodiversity	The variety of ecosystems and living organisms (species), including variability and genetic variation within species, and the ecological complexes within and between ecosystems
CO₂	(Carbon dioxide) A naturally occurring gas and by-product of burning fossil fuels or biomass, or land-use changes and industrial processes. It is the principal anthropogenic greenhouse gas that affects the Earth's radiative balance.
Carbon pool	A system that can store and/or accumulate carbon e.g. above-ground biomass, litter, dead wood and soil organic carbon
Carbon sequestration	Direct removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through land-use change, afforestation, reforestation and/or increases in soil carbon (biological sequestration only).

Climate change	A change of climate which is attributable directly or indirectly to human activity (UNFCCC Article 1)
Community Technicians	Plan Vivo producers that have been trained and authorised to carry out monitoring activities
Deforestation	The direct human-induced conversion of forested land to another land-use or the long-term reduction of the tree canopy cover below the minimum 10% threshold
Double-counting	Measuring or selling a unit of carbon reduction more than once
Ecosystem	A community of plants and animals (including humans) interacting with each other and their environment
Forest	A land area of more than 0.5 ha, with a tree canopy cover of more than 10%, which is not primarily under agricultural or other specific non-forest land-use. In the case of young forests or regions where tree growth is climatically suppressed, the trees should be capable of reaching a height of 2m in situ (Kyoto Protocol)
Forest Restoration	The process of assisting the recovery of a forest that has been degraded or damaged
FSC	(Forest Stewardship Council). An independent certifier of sustainably managed forests.
GHGs	(Greenhouse gases) Six gases are defined in the Kyoto Protocol as contributing to climate change: carbon dioxide, hydrofluorocarbons, methane, nitrous oxide, perfluorocarbons and sulphur-hexafluoride. These contribute to the greenhouse effect
ISO	(International Standards Organisation). Standards for the quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and removal
Leakage	The unintended change (normally thought of as being negative although positive leakage can occur) of carbon stocks outside the boundaries of a project resulting directly from the project activity. The change

may be an increase in emissions or a decrease in sequestration, resulting in a lower carbon benefit being created by the project

Mitigation	Implementing activities or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or enhance carbon sinks
Native Species	A species that has arrived and inhabited an area naturally, without deliberate assistance by man, or would occur had it not been removed through past management
Naturalised Species	A non-native species that reproduces consistently and sustains populations over more than one life cycle without direct intervention by humans
Plan Vivo	Sustainable land-management plan for a specified piece of land, drawn-up by the land-holder
Plan Vivo Project	A project the Plan Vivo Foundation has registered following validation that it is successfully implementing and developing the systems it requires to provide quantifiable ecosystem services and promote sustainable livelihoods
PDD	(Project Design Document). The PDD pulls together all information on the project including governance structure and processes.
PIN	Project Idea Note. A registered project proposal that has been judged by the Plan Vivo Foundation as having the potential to help producers, assure effective, quantifiable ecosystem services and promote sustainable livelihoods
Reforestation	Direct human-induced conversion of non-forested land to forested land, on land that was previously forested but converted to non-forested land
Registry	The official record of how many Plan Vivo Certificates have been issued by the Plan Vivo Foundation and to which projects

Reseller	A company, organisation or individual that has been registered by the Plan Vivo Foundation as an official reseller of Plan Vivo Certificates
Producer	Small-scale farmers, forest dwellers and land-users in developing countries with recognised land tenure or user rights who are part of or have formed organisations and groups such as cooperatives, associations, community-based organisations or other organisational forms. Producers must have a registered Plan Vivo for their own piece of land or be part of a group with a Plan Vivo for a piece of community-owned or managed land. Producers should not be structurally dependent on permanent hired labour, and should manage their land mainly with their own and their family's labour force.
Reforestation	The establishment of forest on land that has been deforested
Small-holding	Land where owner or tenant manages the area largely using his or her own labour or that of their family i.e. there is no structural dependence on permanent hired labour
Sustainable Land-Use	The planned use of land, consistent with meeting livelihood requirements, protecting soils, watercourses and biodiversity
Technical Specification	A project-specific methodology for a land-use system (e.g. woodlot) used in a Plan Vivo project, including calculations of the carbon credits, baseline assumptions, monitoring and management activities and analyses of additionality, leakage and risks to permanence
Validation	The initial evaluation of a project against Plan Vivo Standards, undertaken by an expert-reviewer (pre-registration)
Verification	The evaluation of a project post-registration, against the Plan Vivo Standards, by an approved third-party verifier, to ensure continued compliance with Standards

VERs

Voluntary Emissions Reductions . reductions made where there is no legal requirement to do so, i.e. out with Kyoto or any other regulatory scheme

Woodland

An open, park-like vegetation type with scattered trees at least 8m tall

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Plan Vivo System

The Plan Vivo Standards are part of a broader Plan Vivo System, which is a framework for planning, managing and monitoring the **supply of verifiable emission reductions (VERs) from community-based land-use projects**.

The project participants are small-scale producers and communities in developing countries. They create sustainable land-management plans (Plan Vivosq. see figure 2 below) by combining existing land-uses with additional eligible project activities:

- **Afforestation and reforestation**
- **Agroforestry**
- **Forest restoration**
- **Avoided deforestation**

The Plan Vivo System includes a set of standards (**the Plan Vivo Standards**), administrative processes, tools and guidance. It is governed and overseen by the Plan Vivo Foundation to ensure producers in developing countries receive fair payments for ecosystem services (PES) they deliver through their Plan Vivo.

These payments strengthen the ability of producers to protect and improve the natural and productive ecosystems on which they depend and which also provide global public goods (for example, carbon sinks and biodiversity).

History of Plan Vivo

The System was first conceived and developed in **1994**, as part of a UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded research project in the Chiapas region of Southern Mexico.

The development of the project was led by the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management (ECCM), in partnership with El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (ECOSUR), the University of Edinburgh and other local organisations. The project itself, **Scolel Te** (the tree that grows), is the longest standing Plan Vivo project.

In 2002, development and governance of Plan Vivo was transferred from ECCM to an independent not-for-profit organisation called BioClimate Research and Development (BR&D), which was dissolved in 2008 when its activities and remit were wholly transferred to the **Plan Vivo Foundation**, a registered charity.

1.2 Who participates in Plan Vivo projects?

The key participants in Plan Vivo projects are the **producers and the project coordinator**.

The project-coordinator should be a non-governmental community-based organisation with strong links to local groups and, ideally, experience working with the target producers.

Eligible organisations include:

- Existing local or national environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
- Independent trust funds or not-for-profit companies (NFPCs) established specifically to deliver a Plan Vivo project.

The **project coordinator** is responsible for the overall management of the project. Specifically this involves recruiting producers into the project and coordinating training, overseeing technical aspects and conducting monitoring of project activities, coordinating carbon sales with producers, and reporting project activities to the Plan Vivo Foundation annually.

Producers are small-scale farmers, forest dwellers and land-users in developing countries with recognised land tenure or user rights who are part of or have formed organisations and groups such as cooperatives, associations, community-based organisations or other organisational forms.

Producers have a registered Plan Vivo for their own piece of land or are part of a group with a Plan Vivo for a piece of community-owned or managed land. **Producers should not be structurally dependent on permanent hired labour, and should manage their land mainly with their own and their family's labour force.**

1.3 How do Plan Vivo projects work?

Firstly, project coordinators identify who are the **target groups** of the project (i.e. communities or producer groups that are willing to engage in a project and recognise the need for it).

Producers then receive **training** and guidance from project technicians in order to identify which project activities they want to undertake (e.g. fruit orchard, agroforestry), and begin to plan those activities.

Each producer or producer group then draws up their own **Plan Vivo** which is **evaluated** by the project coordinator on the basis of its suitability for the land and

compatibility with the Plan Vivo Standards, modified if necessary, and **registered** if suitable.

A Plan Vivo or living plan is a **long-term plan for land management** drawn up by a producer (see figure 2). Plan Vivos incorporate carbon sequestration or emission reduction activities which are funded by selling VERs in the form of Plan Vivo Certificates.

Once a Plan Vivo is registered, the carbon credits from the sequestration or reduction activities can be calculated using the project's technical specifications (approved methodologies). The **carbon credits are sold** on behalf of producers by the project coordinator as Plan Vivo Certificates.

Producers then form **sale agreements** with the project coordinator for these carbon credits. Sale agreements place long-term obligations on producers to manage their land according to their Plan Vivo, and specify when monitoring will be carried out and payments made.

Monitoring of performance is carried out by project technicians who also provide producers with continued advice and support. If performance targets are met, a payment is made. **Payments** are made in instalments and disbursed over many years to cover establishment costs and incentivise the land-use change.

At the end of each monitoring and payment schedule projects send **annual reports** to the Plan Vivo Foundation, ensuring that projects continue to operate effectively and transparently.

This project cycle is summarised in figure 1.

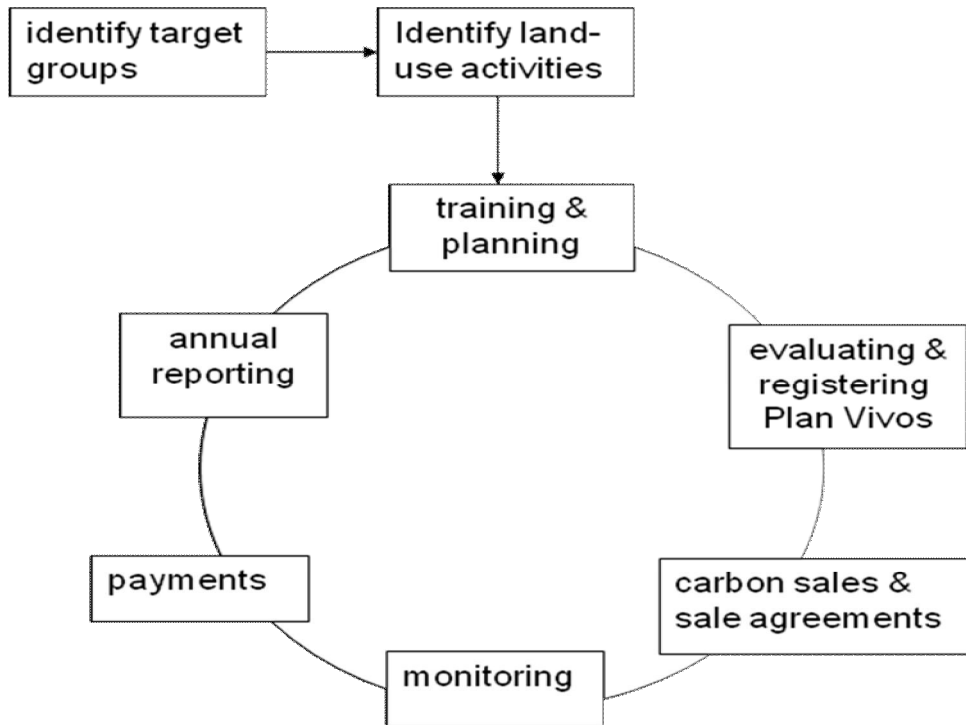


Figure 1: The Plan Vivo project cycle

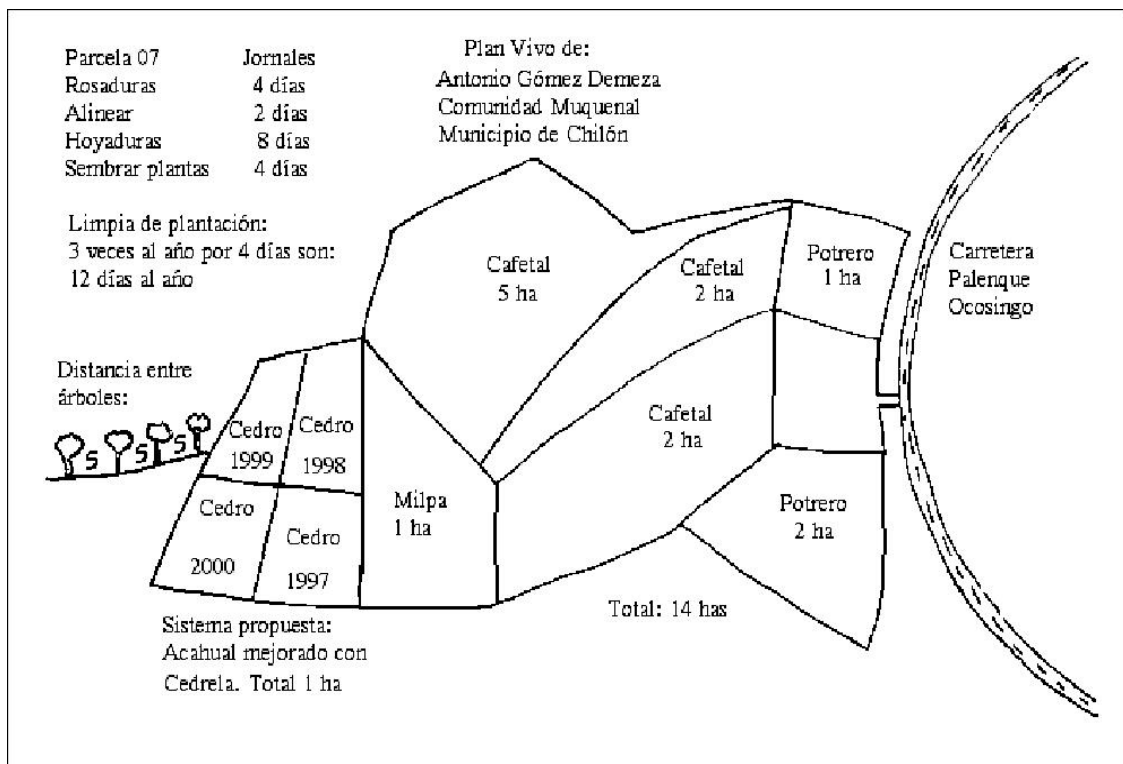


Figure 2: The first Plan Vivo, drawn up by Antonio Gomez Demeza, a producer in Chiapas, Southern Mexico, 1996.

1.4 What is a Plan Vivo Certificate?

A Plan Vivo Certificate represents the long-term sequestration or reduction of one tonne of carbon dioxide (CO₂), plus additional environmental and social benefits:

- Increased resilience and ability to adapt to climate change
- Conservation of threatened ecosystems and native species
- Strengthening of protected areas
- Biodiversity maintenance and improvement
- Watershed protection
- Soil stabilisation
- Regulation of regional micro-climates
- Poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods through e.g. improved agricultural productivity, income from timber, fruits, nuts and non-timber forest products, PES
- Improved social capital through participatory planning, capacity-building, transfer of knowledge and skills.

1.5 Applicability of the Standards

1.5.1 Start Date

Projects will typically use the Plan Vivo Standards from the outset. However, it is possible for a project that is already running to register as a Plan Vivo Project at a later date, but **no retrospective crediting is possible** for activities already implemented.

Projects validated under the first version of the Plan Vivo Standards will be deemed validated under the Plan Vivo Standards 2008. For verification purposes, projects must meet the standards as they currently stand.

1.5.2 Eligible Land Types

Plan Vivo projects are for rural communities with secure land-tenure over the following land types:

- ✓ Small-holder owned or leased farmland;
- ✓ Community owned land;

- ✓ Land for which communities have agreed use rights with the owner (e.g. state land where communities have forest use rights).

1.5.3 Eligible Activities

Projects must promote **sustainable land-use practices** that benefit communities in rural areas.

Sustainable land-use is defined as the planned use of land, consistent with meeting livelihood requirements, protecting soils, watercourses and biodiversity.

Eligible activities are:

- ✓ Agroforestry and afforestation, including small-scale timber, fruit or fuel-wood plantations;
- ✓ Restoration and reforestation of degraded or damaged ecosystems such as woodlands;
- ✓ Conservation of forests and woodlands under threat from deforestation. Forests shall be deemed to be under threat from deforestation where concrete and credible evidence is provided

All activities must be limited to the **use of native or naturalised species and promote the restoration or protection of native ecosystems.**

1.6 Payments for Ecosystems Services (PES)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have found that:

*Forest related mitigation activities can considerably reduce emissions from sources and increase CO₂ removals by sinks at low costs, and can be designed to create **synergies with adaptation and sustainable development**.¹*

The Plan Vivo System is designed specifically to create such synergies. It is designed for use by rural communities in developing countries, where the continued conversion of forested to non-forested land is a major cause of increased levels of GHGs in the atmosphere. Land-use change in these countries is accelerating the degradation of local ecosystems and undermining the well-being of rural producers.

In addition to climate change mitigation, Plan Vivo project activities improve ecosystems and rural livelihoods and increase the adaptive capacity of rural communities, who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Payments for ecosystem services (PES), in particular for carbon benefits, can provide the resources needed to help protect, restore and improve the ecosystems that rural producers depend on for food, fuel, materials, medicines, soil fertility and other aspects of wellbeing.

The Plan Vivo System also ensures that **payments go directly to producers**. Projects empower producers and build their capacity, enabling them to take control of their own resources and break negative spirals of poverty and degradation of natural resources. Payments are linked to **continuing incentives** and targets, enabling projects to deliver real, long-term land-use change.



¹ IPCC, 2007: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [B. Metz, O.R. Davidson, P.R. Bosch, R. Dave, L.A. Meyer (eds)], Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.

1.7 Plan Vivo Guiding Principles

1. Effective and Transparent Governance

Plan Vivo projects, and the Plan Vivo System itself need to have an effective and transparent governance structure. This is achieved by applying standardised procedures for registering, validating, verifying and reporting all project activities, so that information can be accessed and interpreted easily. Projects use databases for recording producer information, transactions, monitoring results and payments, submit annual reports (published online), and work in accordance with their approved project design document (PDD) and technical specifications.

2. Flexible and Robust Standards

The Plan Vivo Standards are designed to give high levels of assurance to purchasers and investors that multiple benefits will be delivered, whilst balancing considerations of rigour with the need for flexibility, accessibility and cost-effectiveness. Projects are encouraged to start small and scale up through a process of replication as the soundness of the project design is tested.

3. Quantifiable, Additional and Permanent Carbon Storage

Plan Vivo projects are highly additional; they work only with small-scale producers and communities in developing countries who would otherwise lack the financial, technical and organisational capacity to implement sustainable land-use activities that result in carbon sequestration and other ecosystem benefits. Activities are not eligible if they are the direct result of legislative decrees or commercial land-use initiatives likely to have been fully enforced or economically viable in their own right without payments for ecosystem services.

Projects will only succeed if land-use practices are viable over the long-term and provide sustainable economic benefits to communities over and above carbon payments. Activities need to have more than just long-term carbon sequestration benefits; they must be designed as part of an integrated plan for sustainable land-use which incorporates risk management. Producers are given extensive and regular support and training to ensure that ecosystem benefits and sustainable resource-use are not only initiated, but become embedded in the area.

4. Capacity-building, Diversification and Community-Led Design

The Plan Vivo System is geared towards transferring knowledge and skills to projects and reducing dependency on external support. Projects are required to show continuous improvement through capacity-building and high levels of community engagement. They document training and other processes such as verification or other reviews, to ensure that they learn by doing. Projects should also aim to diversify their activities and develop multiple income streams over-time to ensure that an over-reliance on PES is not created.

1.8 Governance of the Standards

The Plan Vivo Standards are managed, developed and overseen exclusively by the **Plan Vivo Foundation**, whose governance structure is summarised below.

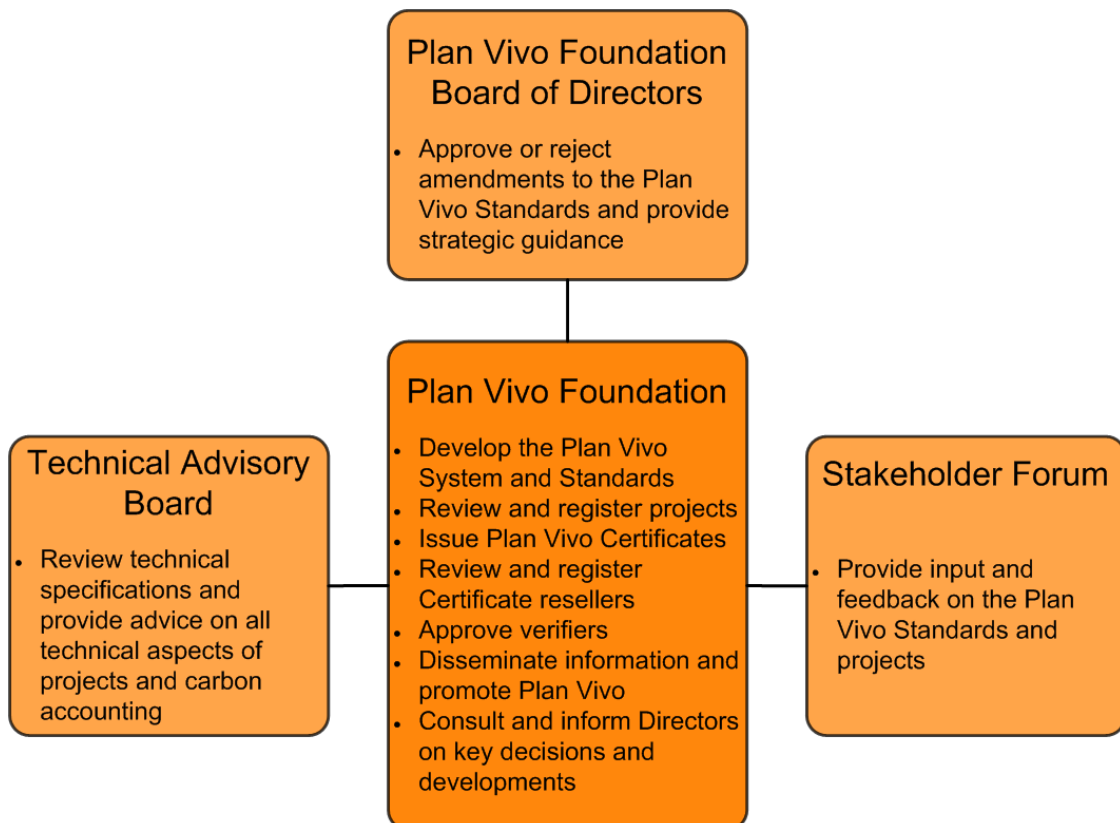


Figure 3: Plan Vivo Foundation Governance Structure.

1.8.1 Plan vivo Foundation

The Plan Vivo Foundation has the competence and responsibility to do the following:

- Take all decisions on the registration and status of projects;
- Annually review projects based on project self-assessment (annual reporting) and periodically audit projects through site visits;
- Approve technical specifications and coordinate reviews by experts;

- Issue Plan Vivo Certificates to purchasers of carbon credits on behalf of Plan Vivo projects and record all Certificate Issuances in a central database;
- Approve verifiers;
- Approve and register Plan Vivo resellers and provide resellers with quality information about projects;
- Review, update and develop the Plan Vivo Standards in consultation with stakeholders;
- Maintain and disseminate clear and up-to-date information about the Plan Vivo System, Standards and projects.

1.8.2 Board of Directors

All amendments to the Standards must be approved by the Plan Vivo Foundation **Board of Directors**. The Directors' expertise includes forest ecology and conservation, environmental management, international development, business administration, finance, climate change and environmental sustainability, bioenergy and project management. The Board of Directors meets a minimum of four times per year.

1.8.3 Technical Advisory Panel

The **Plan Vivo Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)** provides independent, advice to the Foundation on scientific and technical aspects of the standards and projects. TAP members are selected because of their professional expertise in forestry, land-use activities and monitoring as well as carbon accounting. The TAP meets no less than twice per year on an unpaid basis (expenses may be recovered) to discuss:

- The development of new technical specifications and carbon accounting methodologies;
- Outcomes of technical specification reviews;
- New developments in the science of carbon sequestration and climate change impacts;
- Other technical issues arising in Plan Vivo Projects.

1.8.4 Stakeholder Forum

The **Stakeholder Forum** is an informally constituted group representing the projects, members of the Plan Vivo Foundation, research partners and other users and stakeholders in Plan Vivo. It feeds into the consultation process to ensure the System develops in a pragmatic way and continues to meet the needs of those who use or have a stake in it.

Up-to-date information about the Board of Directors and TAP can be found on the Plan Vivo website.

1.8.5 Funding

The Plan Vivo Foundation is primarily funded through a levy imposed on the issuance of Plan Vivo Certificates and project and reseller registration fees. It is a registered charity so may also receive membership dues, donations, grants and funding contributions from the private and public sector.

See the Plan Vivo website for information about becoming a Plan Vivo member.

2 Actors

This chapter describes the roles and competences of the main actors in the Plan Vivo System, shown in figure 4 below.

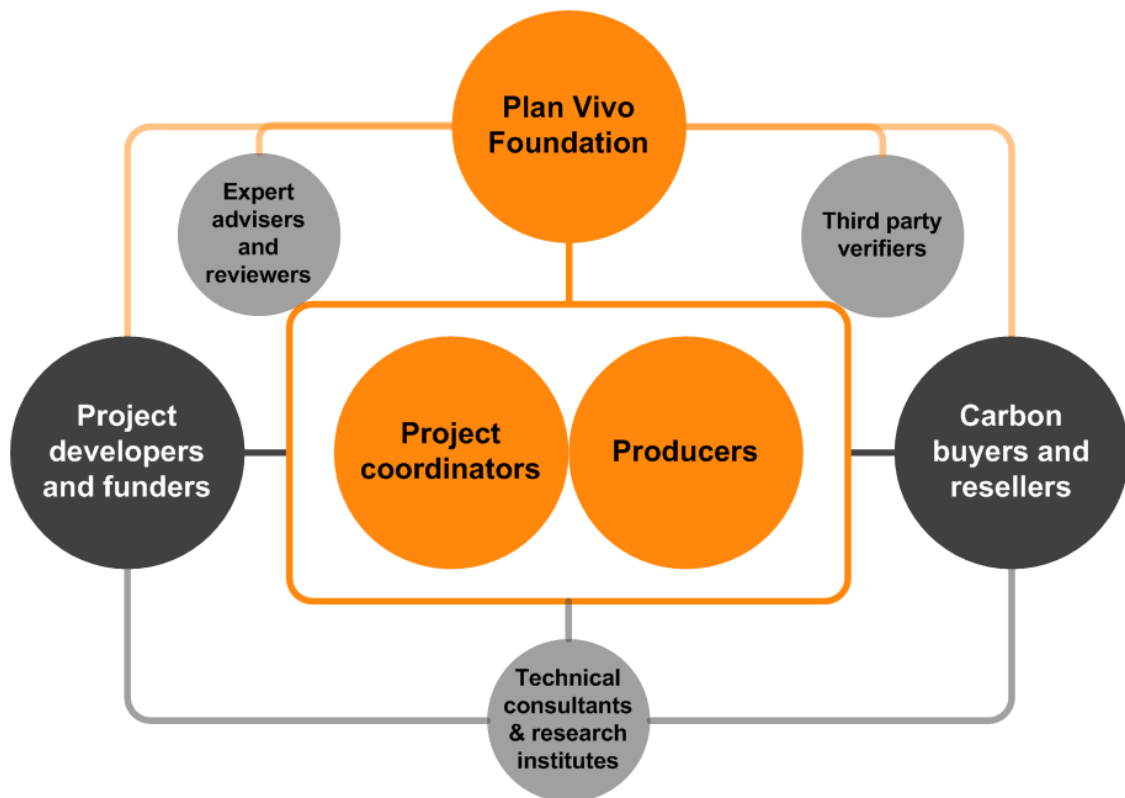


Figure 4: Actors in the Plan Vivo System

2.1 Plan Vivo Projects

2.1.1 The Project Coordinator

Plan Vivo projects are managed by a project coordinator. This involves recruiting producers into the project and coordinating training, overseeing technical aspects and conducting monitoring of project activities, coordinating carbon sales with producers, and reporting project activities to the Plan Vivo Foundation annually.

- **Project Administrative, Social and Technical Teams**

Projects must have an effective system of governance that includes administrative, technical and social capabilities. There is no prescribed structure for a Plan Vivo project as long as the governance structure is found to be effective, transparent and accountable, and able to support core project functions such as checking land-tenure, effective monitoring and training (providing technical advice) and coordinating community meetings.

2.1.2 Producers

Producers are small-scale farmers, forest dwellers and land-users in developing countries with recognised land tenure or user rights who are part of or have formed organisations and groups such as cooperatives, associations, community-based organisations or other organisational forms.

Producers have a registered Plan Vivo for their own piece of land or are part of a group with a Plan Vivo for a piece of community-owned or managed land. Producers should not be structurally dependent on permanent hired labour, and should manage their land mainly with their own and their family's labour force.

2.2 Plan Vivo Foundation

See [section 1.8](#)

2.3 Technical Consultants and Research Partners

Projects may require some external technical assistance, especially in the early stages, to design and implement land-use systems and develop technical specifications. The Plan Vivo Foundation can provide advice on suitable organisations to contact.

Research institutes may also be involved in providing technical information, helping to develop technical specifications and supporting project technicians with:

- Biomass surveys;
- Baseline studies;
- Carbon modelling;
- Advice on particular technical problems;
- Training workshops for producers;
- Biodiversity surveys.

Projects may also in later stages wish to conduct research into the wider social and/or ecosystem impacts of the project.

2.4 Project developers and Funders

Most projects will require external funding to cover initial costs of project design and implementation, such as developing technical specifications, building internal capacity and community meetings.

Once projects are ready to enter into sales contracts for ecosystem services, they become more reliant on this source of finance to fund operational expenses.

2.5 Expert Reviewers

The Plan Vivo Foundation may commission expert reviewers to validate new projects. They are chosen on the basis of their professional experience, knowledge or expertise in any of the following:

- Forestry and carbon sequestration projects;
- Carbon accounting;
- Native ecosystems and social dynamics of the host country;
- Organisations involved in the project.

Ideally, project validation will be carried out by another, well-established project coordinator in the project region. This contributes to the Plan Vivo goals of capacity-building and financial transfer to developing countries.

2.6 Third-Party Verifiers

Verifiers are third-party organisations that assess projects against the Plan Vivo Standards, based on terms of reference agreed between project coordinators, verifiers and the Plan Vivo Foundation. They are chosen by projects but must be approved by the Plan Vivo Foundation (see section 3.5).

Verifiers deliver a verification report to the project and the Foundation. Verification reports are published on the Plan Vivo website.

Projects should seek to build the costs of verification into the price of Plan Vivo Certificates.

2.6.1 Approval of Verifiers

The Plan Vivo Foundation will approve verifiers that:

- ✓ Have appropriate experience and expertise in forestry and carbon sequestration projects;
- ✓ Have appropriate experience working in developing countries;
- ✓ Have documented experience in verifying GHG reductions and using sustainability metrics;
- ✓ Are accredited by an international certification authority such as the CDM, ISO (14064), California Climate Action Registry, FSC or other forestry certification programmes deemed appropriate by the Plan Vivo Foundation.

2.7 Purchasers (Buyers and Resellers)

Purchasers can buy Plan Vivo Certificates directly from projects, through the project-coordinator (see the Plan Vivo website or contact the Foundation for project contact details), or use **registered Plan Vivo resellers**.

2.7.1 Registration of Resellers

Every purchaser wishing to resell Plan Vivo Certificates is required to register with the Foundation and agree to comply with the **Code of Good Practice**. The Code is designed:

- To prevent people from misrepresenting or double-selling Plan Vivo Certificates and ensure the multiple benefits of projects are communicated to purchasers;
- To ensure transparency and equal treatment of all resellers;
- To ensure the core proposition of Plan Vivo - channelling resources directly to rural producers - is fulfilled;
- To provide a high level of support to resellers by providing them with quality information about Plan Vivo and the projects.

The Resellers Code of Good Practice can be viewed online at www.planvivo.org

A list of current Plan Vivo resellers can be viewed on the Plan Vivo website, along with contact details. Organisations wishing to become resellers should contact the Foundation for more information.

2.7.2 Who Can Register?

Any company or organisation may register as a Plan Vivo reseller provided they are not directly involved in project validation or verification.

3 Project Stages and Processes

Figure 5 summarises how projects progress from the concept phase through to producing and selling Plan Vivo Certificates and becoming independently verified.



Figure 5: Stages of Plan Vivo Project Development

	Process	Carried out-by	Method	Result
CONCEPT	Project Idea Note (PIN)	Project coordinator	Define main aspects of project including target groups, activities, project area, aims and objectives	Submit PIN to Plan Vivo Foundation
	PIN evaluation and registration	The Plan Vivo Foundation	Desk-based review	PIN registration (entry into website register)

PROJECT DESIGN	Development of technical specifications and project design document (PDD)	Project coordinator and other partners (i.e. research institutes, external technical support) in consultation with producers and Foundation	Research and formulate technical specifications, design governance and administrative system, write PDD	Submit technical specifications and PDD to Plan Vivo Foundation
	Approval of technical specifications and PDD	Plan Vivo Foundation, Technical Advisory Panel and expert reviewers	Review of outputs by the Foundation	Approved PDD and technical specifications
REGISTRATION	Validation	Plan Vivo Foundation or expert reviewer chosen by the Foundation	Field visit to review project against Plan Vivo Standards	Project validation report
	Plan Vivo project registration	Plan Vivo Foundation	Desk-based review of PDD, technical specifications and validation report	Registered project competent to sell carbon sequestration benefits
ACTIVE PROJECT	Annual reporting	Project	Field assessments, compilation of sales, monitoring, and qualitative data	Annual report submitted to Plan Vivo Foundation f
	Certificate issuance	Plan Vivo Foundation	Review of annual report and issuance of Certificates against sales in that year	Certificates issued as confirmation to purchasers of delivery of ecosystem services

	Third-party verification	Approved third-party verifier	Complete desk-based review of project documentation, including PDD, technical specifications, database and field visit.	Verification report and corrective actions to strengthen the integrity of project and ensure continuous improvement
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3.1 Concept Phase

What is a Project Idea Note?

The first step towards becoming Plan Vivo Project is submitting a Plan Vivo project idea note (PIN).

A project idea note (PIN) defines the main elements of a proposed project and how it will contribute to sustainable livelihoods.

Before making any claim to develop a Plan Vivo project, project developers must first initiate a dialogue with the Plan Vivo Foundation with a view to registering a PIN.

Purpose

The purpose of PIN registration is to facilitate effective project design, and specifically to:

- Provide projects with access to information, support and specialist advice for development;
- Give projects a platform to attract investment and partnerships;
- Facilitate communication and information sharing between projects/prospective projects;
- Assess a project's long-term viability at an early stage and make recommendations about project design elements such as the institutional structure and roles, and the identification of effective local partners;
- Help project developers keep costs down by using tested project design methods;
- Ensure project developers have host-country approval;
- Identify potential risks;

Application Process

The applicant must compile specific information about the proposed project and submit a report to the Plan Vivo Foundation using the standard Plan Vivo PIN template, which can be accessed on the Plan Vivo website.

Project developers wishing to use the Plan Vivo Standards are encouraged to contact the Plan Vivo Foundation in advance writing a PIN in order to receive advice on whether the project may be eligible.

Approval and Registration

Evaluation of a PIN involves a desk-based review by the Plan Vivo Foundation.

For a PIN to be registered it is necessary that:

1. The proposed project has the **demonstrable potential to provide quantifiable ecosystem services and promote sustainable livelihoods over a long-term period**. The main criteria for this are:

- a) Organisational Capacity**

Project coordinator and partners have the organisational capacity to undertake a long-term community-led project. Organisational capacity may be demonstrated through history of project delivery where relevant administrative, technical and social functions have been carried out. Where no history of project delivery exists, the project coordinator must show how those functions will be fulfilled detailing the experience of relevant project staff, and how capacity will be built e.g. through induction programmes or partnership with a parent or other organisation.

- b) Land-tenure**

The project applies to land over which the target groups have ownership or long-term user rights. There are no significant disputes or issues in the proposed project area relating to land-use rights or any issue which could significantly affect the implementation or long-term viability of the project.

- c) Suitable land-use activities**

Project activities are eligible under the Plan Vivo Standards and will promote sustainable land-use and livelihoods, and produce quantifiable carbon benefits and additional ecosystem benefits.

2. The project developer agrees to comply with the principles contained in the Plan Vivo Standards. The application fee must be paid in full (for up-to-date information on fees see the Plan Vivo website, www.planvivo.org), which is a nominal fee to cover evaluation expenses.

3.2 Project Design Phase

3.2.1 Development of Technical Specifications

What are technical specifications?

A technical specification is a **project-specific methodology** for a land-use activity (or land-use system) in a Plan Vivo project.

Technical specifications:

- Calculate the carbon credits that the land-use activity will create (in tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare or tCO₂/ha);
- Prescribe management and monitoring activities;
- Include analyses of additionality, leakage and other risks to permanence and identify risk management measures;
- Assess ecosystem and socio-economic impacts.

Development

External consultants and local educational/research institutes may be required to source data and assist in developing technical specifications, and specifically to support the project technical team with:

- Biomass surveys;
- Baseline studies;
- Carbon modelling;
- Training workshops for producers;
- Biodiversity surveys.

3.2.2 Review and Approval

The Plan Vivo Foundation will approve technical specifications if they have been:

- Reviewed by an external expert reviewer to ensure the credibility of all assumptions used and calculations made;
- Assessed by the Plan Vivo Technical Advisory Panel and found to meet the requirements below. Tools for assessing aspects of technical specifications such as additionality and leakage are included in the **Plan Vivo Guidance Manual**.

Technical specifications are working documents and must be reviewed every five years and subject to re-approval by the Plan Vivo Foundation.

3.2.3 Requirements for Technical Specifications

The following table shows the requirements for approval of a technical specification by the Plan Vivo Foundation.

Theme	Requirement
Description of activity	Suitability of activity described, including map of geographic area, ecosystem type, climatic conditions (i.e. mean annual temperature and precipitation at given elevation), tree stocking and density information (e.g. trees per area) and social context (i.e. what livelihood benefits could be gained from the proposed activity)
Carbon Accounting	Crediting period defined and appropriate to activity (lower limit = 10 years, upper limit 100 years) with 10 year increments
	Transparent assumptions with justifications
	Best available evidence used
	Most conservative scenarios are used in calculations
	Implementation scenario included
	Estimates of leakage are subtracted from the expected carbon benefit
	Ecosystem variables considered
Baseline	Credible and comprehensive baseline scenario defined clearly using appropriate indicators
Additionality	Analysis of additionality thorough and convincing and satisfies financial, legal and barriers tests (see Standards p39)
	Assessment indicates very low risk of potential leakage

Leakage and other risks	
	Control measures likely to be effective and appropriate.
Management	Management objectives defined and appropriate to activity.
	Management requirements described properly and capacity to meet them is evident.
	Good practice measures identified.
Permanence	Risks to permanence of carbon stocks properly identified and assessed, expressly including consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risks from natural disturbance such as fire, drought or hurricanes; • risks of pests and diseases; • security of tenure; • risks from political or social instability both within the project and within the country or region.
	Measures to mitigate those risks are identified and practicable.
	Risk buffer recommendation included and appropriate in light of any potential risks of reversal.
Monitoring Procedures	Timeframes for monitoring are identified and appropriate (i.e. relevant to activity and cost-effective).
	Targets for monitoring are identified and appropriate.
	Crediting period for monitoring is identified and appropriate.
	Monitoring indicators are clear, cost-effective (e.g. live tree biomass

	<p>monitoring capable of being carried out by community technicians) and provide a sound basis for evaluating progress towards targets, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What carbon pools will be monitored and what field measurements that will necessitate • Field measurements are based on accepted principles e.g. IPCC Special Report on LULUCF (2000) • Resources needed for monitoring • How the monitored areas (i.e. Plan Vivos) will be sampled • Where community technicians are used, how their work will be verified (e.g. 10% checked by project technicians)
Ecosystem Impacts	Biodiversity impacts considered and likely to be positive
	Evidence that there will be no negative impact on water quality or water-tables
Community-led Design	Evidence that activities designed to meet the needs of target groups and are likely to have livelihood benefits over and above carbon payments.
	Evidence of participatory design (meetings).

3.2.4 Project Design Document (PDD)

Development

The Plan Vivo Project Design Document (PDD) (formerly Operational Manual) is a compilation of all key information on the project governance structure, its technical design and internal processes.

The Plan Vivo PDD template shows all information requirements and can be accessed on the Plan Vivo website.

The template provides:

- Fields for detailed information on project governance and plans for achieving community-led processes;
- A structure for presenting technical information to reflect the multi-site and multi-activity nature of Plan Vivo projects;
- A structure for updating information as the Plan Vivo project develops, scales up and expands from pilot scale to regional scale, as more producers and communities are engaged.

Review and Approval

Projects must submit their PDD for review by the Plan Vivo Foundation before validation. The PDD will be approved where:

- All of the required information is included;
- Procedures and systems described conform to the Plan Vivo Standards and guiding principles, in particular demonstrating an effective and transparent governance structure.

3.3 Validation and Project Registration

To register as a Plan Vivo project, a project must be validated and found to meet the Plan Vivo Standards as defined in Chapter 5.

A Plan Vivo project is a project the Plan Vivo Foundation has registered following validation that it is successfully implementing and developing the systems it requires to provide quantifiable ecosystem services and promote sustainable livelihoods.

3.3.1 Validation

Validation involves a field visit by an expert reviewer, chosen by the Plan Vivo Foundation, confirming the project is implementing systems in accordance with the Plan Vivo Standards.

3.3.2 Registration

Following a successful review of the validation report and approval of the technical specifications and PDD, the project will be entered into the **Plan Vivo Projects Register**. Once registered, projects can enter into sales contracts for Plan Vivo Certificates.

3.4 Annual Reporting and Certificate Issuance

3.4.1 Purpose

Annual reporting enables the Plan Vivo Foundation to oversee projects, certify that ecosystem services are being delivered and monitored and payments are being made to producers, review progress and facilitate their continued development.

The approval of annual reports triggers the **issuance of Plan Vivo Certificates**.

3.4.2 Process

Each Plan Vivo project has its own annual cycle for recruiting producers, implementing activities, monitoring and payments based on its geography and type of activities. Each project therefore defines its own annual reporting schedule, which it must comply with once it is defined.

For information about the annual reporting schedules of current projects see the Plan Vivo website (www.planvivo.org).

An **annual reporting template** is provided to all projects.

The Foundation will review annual reports **within two months of receiving the report**, unless reasonable circumstances exist for delay.

If a project has good reasons for delaying submission, it may apply to the Foundation for an extension of up to 30 days. Failure to submit an annual report and the project database by the end of the extension period may result in suspension of Plan Vivo status.

Where a project has failed to supply the required information, or the information is inconsistent or inadequate, the Plan Vivo Foundation will inform the project and give it a reasonable timeframe within which to provide further or improved information.

Where an annual report or project database shows a violation of Plan Vivo Standards, **corrective actions** shall be imposed on the project with a time-frame for compliance (e.g. within 30 days, by the time of the next annual report, or by the time of the next allocation of carbon sales to producers etc.). The imposition of corrective actions does not affect the Plan Vivo status of a project or the issuance of Plan Vivo Certificates (i.e. an annual report may be approved with corrective actions attached).

3.4.3 Suspension

Where a project is found to be operating in a manner that grossly contradicts the aims and principles contained in the Plan Vivo Standards, Plan Vivo registration shall be suspended until the issue is resolved. Failure to resolve the issue shall result in termination of Plan Vivo registration.

Where projects **fail to comply** with corrective actions within the specified time-frame, Plan Vivo Registration shall be suspended until the issue is resolved. Projects are not permitted to sell Plan Vivo carbon benefits while Plan Vivo registration is suspended. Where the issue is determined to be irresolvable, Plan Vivo registration shall be terminated.

3.4.4 Approval

Approval of a project's annual report and project database triggers the issuance of Plan Vivo Certificates. It also means automatic continuation of Plan Vivo project registration.

3.4.5 Certificate Issuance

Plan Vivo Certificates for ecosystem services are denominated in tonnes carbon dioxide (tCO₂). Each certificate has a unique serial code linking the Certificate to a specific project. The serial code is entered into a central registry (which is publicly available on the Plan Vivo website), to ensure traceability and prevent double-counting.



By issuing Plan Vivo Certificates, the Plan Vivo Foundation confirms that, based on all available information, the corresponding carbon credits plus additional benefits will be delivered in accordance with the Plan Vivo Standards².

² The Foundation does not take liability for Plan Vivo Certificates sold.

3.5 Third-Party Verification

Verification raises project credibility and reinforces the value of Plan Vivo Certificates. It does so by ensuring Plan Vivo projects comply with Plan Vivo Standards and identifying improvements required to ensure closer compliance with the standards. The verification process therefore provides greater certainty that ecosystem services are delivered and sustainable livelihoods promoted.

Verification is conducted by an independent, third-party organisation called a verifier. To verify a Plan Vivo project, the verification entity must be approved by the Plan Vivo Foundation (see section 2.6).

Projects are required to work towards verification **within the first five years or registration** by a process of continuous improvement and by scaling up through increased sales of Plan Vivo Certificates.

This approach ensures verification is a meaningful and useful process. As projects have gone through up to five annual cycles, they have generated enough information and experience for verification to make sense both economically and in terms of having sufficient information for verifiers to identify problems.

4 Plan Vivo Project Standards

This chapter contains the standards a Plan Vivo project must meet. Further guidance on how to meet the standards can be found in the Plan Vivo Guidance Manuals.

Certain standards and indicators may only be relevant for verification and review rather than initial validation, for example the existence of approved annual reports.

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
<p>Effective and Transparent Project</p>	<p>The project has established an effective governance structure. Roles and lines of accountability are clear. The project coordinator has the following core capabilities:</p> <p>Administrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and organisational framework with the ability and capacity to aggregate carbon from multiple land-owners and transact to purchasers, and monitor progress across all project operations. This must include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A legal entity (project coordinator) able to enter into sale agreements with multiple producers or producer groups for carbon services; 2. Standard sale agreement templates for the provision of carbon services; 3. Transparent and audited financial accounts able to the secure receipt, holding and disbursement of payments to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved PDD containing all statutes, articles and agreements stating individual and organizational roles and responsibilities, as well as documented processes for key project activities. • Evidence of individual/organisation's relevant experience. • Evidence of community meetings (e.g. minutes, lists of attendees). • Evidence of effective communication between project coordinators and producers (e.g. records of training days, meetings, emails).

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
Governance	<p>producers;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. All necessary legal permissions to carry out the intended activities; 5. Mechanisms for participants to discuss issues associated with the design and running of the project. <p>Technical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to assist producers in planning and implementing productive, sustainable and economically viable forestry and agroforestry systems, and provide support for silvicultural and other management operations. <p>Social:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to select appropriate target groups, inform groups about the Plan Vivo System and the nature of carbon and ecosystem services and establish effective participatory relationships with producers • Able to establish land-tenure rights through engaging with producers and other relevant organisations • Able to consult producers effectively on a sustained basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Populated, effectively managed database; staff able to explain and demonstrated database functions.

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
	<p>Projects must on an annual basis, according to the reporting schedule agreed with the Plan Vivo Foundation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately report progress, achievements and problems experienced; • Transparently report sales figures and demonstrate resource allocation in the interest of target groups. 	<p>Approved annual reports</p>
<p>Carbon Benefits</p>	<p>Carbon benefits are calculated using recognised carbon accounting methodologies and conservative estimates of carbon uptake/storage that take into account risks of leakage and reversibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities relate to one or more approved technical specifications which are being utilised by local technicians. • Baseline analysis. • Additionality analysis • Evidence of subtraction and recording of risk buffer from database. • Evidence of management regimes implemented to minimise risks.
	<p>Carbon benefits are measured against a clear and credible carbon baseline.</p>	
	<p>Carbon benefits are additional, i.e. the project and activities supported by the project could not have happened were it not for the availability of carbon finance.</p> <p>Specifically this means demonstrating, as a minimum:</p> <p>(1) The project does not owe its existence to legislative decrees or to commercial land-use initiatives likely to have been economically viable in their own right without payments for ecosystem services; and</p> <p>(2) In the absence of project development funding and carbon finance,</p>	

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
	<p>financial, social, cultural, technical, ecological or institutional barriers would have prevented the project activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential risks to permanence of carbon stocks are identified in project technical specifications and effective mitigation measures implemented into project design, management and reporting procedures. • Producers enter into sale agreements with the project coordinator agreeing to maintain activities, comply with the monitoring, implement management requirements and re-plant trees felled or lost. • As a minimum, a 10% risk buffer is deducted from the saleable carbon of each producer, where the level of buffer is recommended in the technical specifications according to the level of risk identified, and subsequently reviewed annually following annual reporting. <p>Potential sources of leakage have been identified and effective mitigation measures implemented.</p>	

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
	Carbon sales are traceable and recorded in the database.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database demonstrating effective data management. • Staff able to explain functions of database and data held in it.
	<p>Project has an effective process for monitoring the continued delivery of the ecosystem services, where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring is carried out against targets specified in technical specifications; • Monitoring is carried out accurately using indicators specified in technical specifications; • Monitoring is accurately documented and reported to the entity responsible for disbursing payments to producers; • Corrective actions are prescribed and recorded where targets are not met, and followed up in subsequent monitoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented procedures are consistent and in line with technical specifications. • Monitoring reports. • Field notes. • Evidence that errors followed up with corrective actions from field notes and/or project database. • Evidence of team training.

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
	<p>Producers draw up Plan Vivos as part of a voluntary and participatory process that ensures proposed land-use activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are clear, appropriate and consistent with approved technical specifications for the project; • Will not cause producers' overall agricultural production or revenue potential to become unsustainable or unviable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example Plan Vivos. • Discussions with producers and locals. • Staff able to explain process and criteria for evaluating Plan Vivos. • Evidence of recording systems.
Ecosystem benefits	<p>Planting activities are restricted to native and naturalised species.</p> <p>Naturalised (i.e. non-invasive) species are eligible only where they can be shown to have compelling livelihood benefits and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Producers have clearly expressed a wish to use this species; 2. The areas involved are not in immediate proximity to conservation areas or likely to have any significant negative effect on biodiversity; 3. The activity is still additional i.e. the producers in the area are not doing this activity or able to do this activity without the intervention and support of the project; 4. The activity will have no harmful effects on the water-table. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved technical specifications and example Plan Vivos. • Staff awareness of conservation aspects and priorities.
	<p>Wider ecological impacts have been identified and considered expressly including impacts on local and regional biodiversity and impacts on watersheds.</p>	

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
Livelihood Benefits	<p>Project has undergone a producer/community-led planning process aimed at identifying and defining sustainable land-use activities that serve the community's needs and priorities.</p> <p>Mechanisms are in place for continued training of producers and participation by producers in project development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of meetings and lists of attendees. • Training materials and team notes.
	<p>Project has procedures for entering into sale agreements with producers based on saleable carbon from Plan Vivos, where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers have recognised carbon ownership via tenure or land-use rights; • Agreements specify quantity, price, buyer, payment conditions, risk buffer, and monitoring milestones; • An equitable system is in place to determine the share of the total price which is allocated to the producer; • Producers enter into sale agreements voluntarily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved PDD; • Records of existing sale agreements or templates including type of landholding. • Staff are able to explain sale agreement conditions and process. • Records of consultation/ training meetings with producers. • Verbal evidence from producers.
	<p>Project has an effective and transparent process for the timely administration and recording of payments to producers, where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments are delivered in full when monitoring is successfully completed against targets in sale agreements; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved PDD; • Evidence of legally constituted and financially audited Plan Vivo Fund/ Account.

Theme	Standard	Indicators for Validation/Verification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments are recorded in the project database to ensure traceability of sales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database with evidence of data management and back-up systems. • Staff able to explain processes for sale agreements and producer payments. • Other evidence of payments (e.g. financial audit reports, verbal evidence from producers).

