HCVNetwork

2024 Annual Report

Photo: Arif Prasetyo / HCVN

hcvnetwork.org

Contents

Photo: Courtesy of Adobe Stock

Global's Director Message

Looking back at 2024, one truth emerges with striking clarity: our environmental and social challenges are not isolated problems but interconnected threads in a tapestry that requires holistic, urgent solutions. Biodiversity is collapsing, climate extremes are accelerating, forests and communities are under duress, and inequality is widening. None of these challenges can be tackled in isolation. If we are serious about protecting what matters most - nature, people, and the future of our planet - then we need systemic solutions, built on shared responsibility and grounded in action.

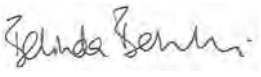
2024 included a major step forward at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP in Colombia: Indigenous Peoples were recognised not just as stakeholders, but as essential stewards of the planet's remaining biodiversity. The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund was launched to channel more resources into nature protection, especially in the Global South.

In the fast-moving and often fragmented sustainability space, the HCV Approach provides both clarity and credibility. It's a pragmatic, science-based methodology that brings together communities, companies, non-profit organisations, donors and governments to protect and enhance critical environmental and social values in real landscapes, making nature protection more scalable, verifiable and enduring.

2024 was a year of action for the HCV Network. We launched a bold new strategy and an innovative collaborative governance model. We helped shape the evolution of global standards and sustainability frameworks. We advanced jurisdictional-scale and assurance work across Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America. And we laid the groundwork for an HCV impact framework and future biodiversity credit engagement.

We didn't do this alone. It was made possible by a network of passionate experts, collaborative partners and committed members who share a belief in what's possible. We're proud of how far we've come and inspired by the potential that lies ahead. Because, if we are to meet the world's sustainability goals and fairness to future generations, we must find better ways to link global ambition with grounded action. And that's where the HCV Approach shines.

Let's continue this vital work together, transforming our shared vision into measurable impact for nature, communities, and generations to come.



Belinda Bowling, for the HCV Network Secretariat

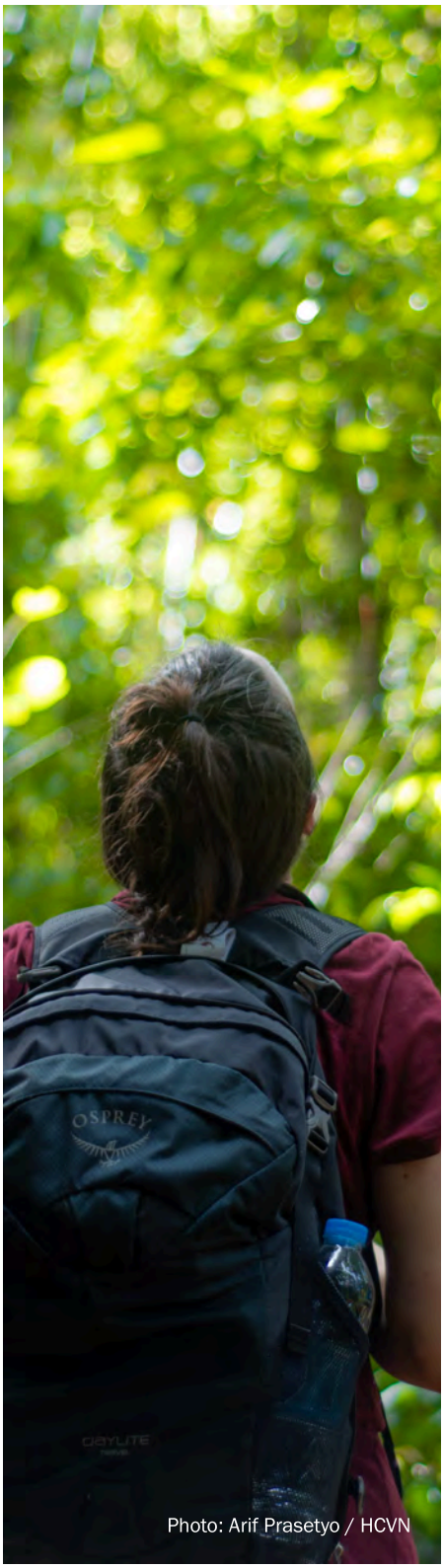


Photo: Arif Prasetyo / HCVN

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About the HCV Network

The HCV Network is a global, member-based, non-profit organisation working to protect the world's most important biological, ecological, social and cultural values, known as High Conservation Values (HCVs). We do this by advancing and promoting the HCV Approach: a practical, science-based methodology for identifying and safeguarding these values, especially in commodity production landscapes. Tested and refined over more than two decades, the HCV Approach is now embedded in nearly 20 certification standards and hundreds of corporate sustainability policies. Our work contributes to global efforts to address biodiversity loss and climate change and supports the achievement of many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our network at a glance

Science-based ⟷ Locally grounded ⟷ Globally connected

Photo: Ruth Silva / HCVN

Our membership

We are a multidisciplinary network:

Sustainability standards | Non-profit organisations | Companies | Technical organisations

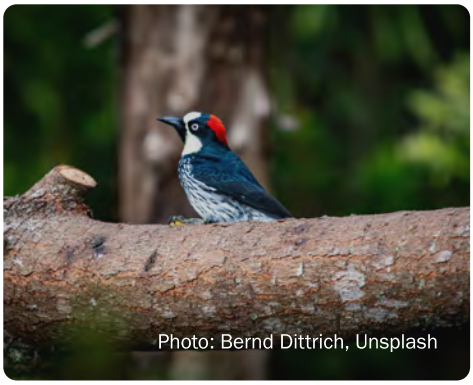


Photo: Bernd Dittrich, Unsplash

Where we work

Geographies: Global

Ecosystems: Forests, grasslands, peatlands, agroecological mosaics

Scales: Smallholder farms, production management units, jurisdictional landscapes, national planning processes


Photo: Annie Spratt, Unsplash

What we do

Agriculture: Palm oil, cotton, rubber, soy

Forestry: Timber, pulp and paper

Finance: ESG, biodiversity credits, carbon

Conservation and landscape management

Mining: Emerging area

Photo: Courtesy of Adobe Stock

Expand: Scaling the reach and relevance of the HCV Approach

Credible delivery is a cornerstone of the deforestation-free and nature-positive commitments that inform sustainability-related business actions. In 2024, our focus was on outcomes that strengthen the long-term consistency in use of the HCV Approach so that it continues to serve as a trusted reference point for organisations seeking to meet sustainability expectations. As scrutiny intensifies around green claims and biodiversity targets, the HCV Network made concrete progress in strengthening and expanding the HCV Approach across standards, regions and initiatives that matter.

We extended our reach into new sectors and landscapes. We made progress integrating HCVs into government-led spatial planning efforts in Indonesia and the Republic of Congo, showing that the methodology can scale from farm-level assessments to national policy tools. The Network also worked collaboratively to explore how HCV assessments could contribute to strengthening biodiversity credit mechanisms.

Our work with commodity sustainability standards or platforms

Standard or platform	HCVN's Role	Outcome or Progress
Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)	Partnership MoU signed with RSPO. Member of the Biodiversity and HCV Working Group and of the Independent Smallholder No-deforestation Taskforce.	HCVs explicitly referenced in 2024 revised Principles & Criteria
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)	Technical paper on HCVs in the FSC system and member dialogues	Input to development of Motions and initiation of discussion on assessment of loss of HCVs
Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber (GPSNR)	Executive Committee term completed and technical inputs to emerging assurance model	Contribution to Shared Investment Mechanism
Benchmark Mineral Intelligence (BMI)	Criteria proposal accepted	HCV assessments now part of biodiversity index
Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA)	Review of standard and feedback on draft text	Proposed integration of HCV language
Better Cotton	Recommendations for updating guidance materials for cotton growers	Updated guidance to implement revised land use change indicators in the Production Standard V3

Evolve: Modernising the HCV Approach to meet future needs

In 2024, we began the most significant update to the HCV Approach methodology since its inception. Building on twenty years of learning and member experience, we are making the HCV Approach more responsive to current and future sustainability challenges – from biodiversity loss and deforestation to land rights, nature finance and ESG accountability.

This work sets the stage for the full roll-out of 'version 2.0' of the HCV Approach by 2027 and ensures that the HCV Approach continues to serve as a bridge between science, policy, and implementation. The process is both a strategic and a technical one. Applying a continuous improvement approach to the methodology ensures it will remain a trusted and practical tool – not only for certification and fieldwork, but also for land-use planning, disclosure frameworks, and nature-related financial mechanisms.

What we delivered

- Through member consultation, we initiated a needs assessment of what an updated global interpretation of HCVs should address in order to better reflect current challenges, drawing from member experience across commodities and geographies.
- We explored with HCVN members how HCVs could be a part of emerging biodiversity credits methodologies, so they are better valued and linked to conservation finance.
- We provided guidance and training on the new 2023 HCV-HCSA Manual for assurance of HCV-HCS assessments required for RSPO palm oil certification, which comes into force in March 2025.
- We supported pilots testing new applications for documenting and monitoring HCVs in landscape settings and jurisdictional contexts.

Impact: Demonstrating that HCVs are protected and enabling others to do the same

The HCV Approach is widely used across commodity supply chains, certification systems, and government-led land use planning. Yet, despite this reach, there is still limited visibility of what the impacts are on HCVs. Data is scattered across a diverse range of data owners, with variability in how it is used. The full contribution of HCV protection to biodiversity, climate and livelihoods remains under-acknowledged.

In 2024, we took our first steps toward addressing these gaps. We began defining the purpose and structure of a shared HCV Impact Framework, gathering case studies and examples of data use to shape practical tools for planning and M&E, and aligning with broader disclosure and reporting conversations, ensuring the framework can support members in meeting external requirements. The Impact Framework will eventually enable users of the HCV Approach to quantify their impact on HCV outcomes in a consistent, credible way.

Why an HCV Impact Framework matters

An impact framework will help ensure that efforts to protect HCVs are not only delivered, but also recognised. It will:

a. Provide a common structure to track and measure HCV outcomes consistently across sectors and geographies.
b. Set out indicators and metrics for evidencing HCV maintenance or enhancement.
c. Support stronger planning, monitoring and adaptive management.
d. Enable public reporting that links actions on-the-ground to secure HCVs to global sustainability targets on climate, biodiversity and livelihoods goals.

Photo: Stephan Wulffraat, HCVN

Photo: Courtesy of Unsplash

Impact of our assurance services for certified palm oil

Global scale achieved

A total of 491,052 hectares were assessed, bringing the cumulative total to 2,784,174 hectares across 281 reports by December 2024. In 2025, we will achieve the 3-million-hectare milestone.

Of the areas assessed in 2024, approximately 40% were designated as HCV management areas for conservation management. This is equivalent to approximately 275,000 football fields, highlighting the real-world scale of conservation being implemented.

In 2024, the average area per assessment was 12,276 hectares, with the largest covering 57,294 hectares and the smallest 321 hectares, reflecting the wide range of project scales reviewed.

Credibility reinforced

40 assessment reports were evaluated as satisfactory, supporting robust, credible results for conservation efforts. 98% of these reports were evaluated on or before the deadline.

Protecting people and nature

In Indonesia, Nigeria and Papua New Guinea, many assessments overlapped with local peoples' lands, reinforcing the profound intersection between conservation initiatives and traditional territories.

Investing in expertise for the future

We licensed five new assessors with regional expertise in Indonesia, Peru, Thailand, and Colombia, bringing our total to 65 licensed professionals across 16 countries and strengthening the global capacity for high-quality, independent HCV assessments.

Strategic geographic reach

Assessments spanned 8 countries, concentrating efforts in key commodities such as palm oil and pulp wood. Indonesia led with 65% of all assessments and nearly 75% of the total area assessed (over 330,000 hectares). Conservation assessments also extended into Papua New Guinea, Ghana, Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Canada.

The table below shows the range of purposes and contexts for HCV and HCV-HCSA assessments reports published in the past year.
In addition to those assessed for oil palm under RSPO, assessments were conducted for FSC certification, No Deforestation No Peat No Exploitation (NDPE) policies, and Indigenous-led land stewardship initiatives.


Photo: Courtesy of SIPFOR

Purpose of Assessment	Number of reports	Area assessed	% of total area assessed	HCV Management area identified	% of all HCVMA identified
NDPE Policy of grower or buyer	8	121,092.64	24.66	49,442.02	25.18
FSC	2	88,678.00	18.06	61,224.52	31.18
First Nations*	1	24,675.00	5.02	24,675.00	12.57
RSPO NPP	19	132,151.28	26.91	20,620.94	10.50
RSPO Existing Plantings	9	123,681.55	25.19	40,328.14	20.54
RSPO R&CP, grievances	1	773.39	0.16	48.62	0.02

Total Number of reports
40

Total area assessed
491,051.86

HCV management areas identified
196,339.24

* In 2024, the Tsay Keh Den Nation (TKDN) commissioned the production of a HCV assessment for the Chuyaza area with the following goals: (1) Communicate with forestry, mining and other industry actors who may seek to operate in TKDN Territory the importance of protecting or enhancing the HCVs that exist in the Chuyaza area. (2) Develop a plan for Chuyaza that inscribes TKDN knowledge, values, and wisdom into long-term provisions for the management of cultural, ecological, spiritual, and ceremonial interests. Read more here

Photo: Jason Cooper, Unsplash

Collaborate: Reimagining how we work together

In 2024, we designed and implemented a fundamental shift in how decisions are made, and work is delivered, across the HCV Network. Our new collaborative governance model, approved by our members in June, replaced the centralised Management Committee structure with a decentralised system built around shared purpose, distributed leadership, and mutual accountability.

The core of the new model is a series of 'Action Groups', namely timebound, member-led teams focused on delivering specific strategic priorities. In 2024, we launched two Action Groups: one exploring the potential role of HCVs in biodiversity credit methodologies, and another shaping the HCV Impact Framework.

A third Action Group, focused on revision of the HCV Interpretations under the Evolve objective, launched in early 2025.

To manage governance and risk-related issues, we activate time-bound, constituency-representative Risk Groups to review, deliberate and respond to these issues as and when they arise. Two such Risk Groups were launched in 2024, one of which completed its work before the end of the year.

Together, these steps mark a shift not just in structure, but in culture. We are modelling what implementation-focused, inclusive, and nimble multistakeholder governance can look like, and setting a new benchmark for collaborative leadership in the sustainability space.

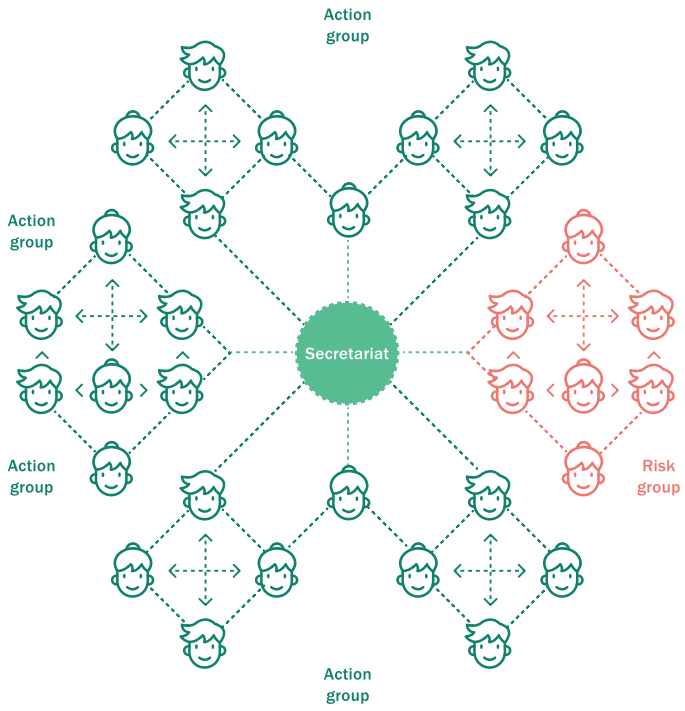
A new membership model for collaboration and shared leadership

In 2024, the HCV Network launched a bold new governance system. Instead of a centralised decision-making body, we adopted a distributed structure built around Action and Risk Groups, shaped and led by members.

It's a 'snowflake' model - a decentralised, interconnected system that enables the network to respond to complex sustainability challenges with agility, participation and shared responsibility.

At its centre is a compact Secretariat, supporting a constellation of member-led groups that co-create solutions and deliver strategy. This model is already generating results: faster decision-making, more diverse participation, and greater alignment between strategy and implementation.

It's an experiment in a new kind of leadership — one that shifts power, builds trust, and brings technical rigour and collaborative energy to the heart of systems change.



Secure: Laying the foundations for long-term growth

Strengthening our financial sustainability is essential to delivering the HCV Network's mission. In 2024, we grew our income, improved our internal capacity, and created some foundations for more robust resource mobilisation.

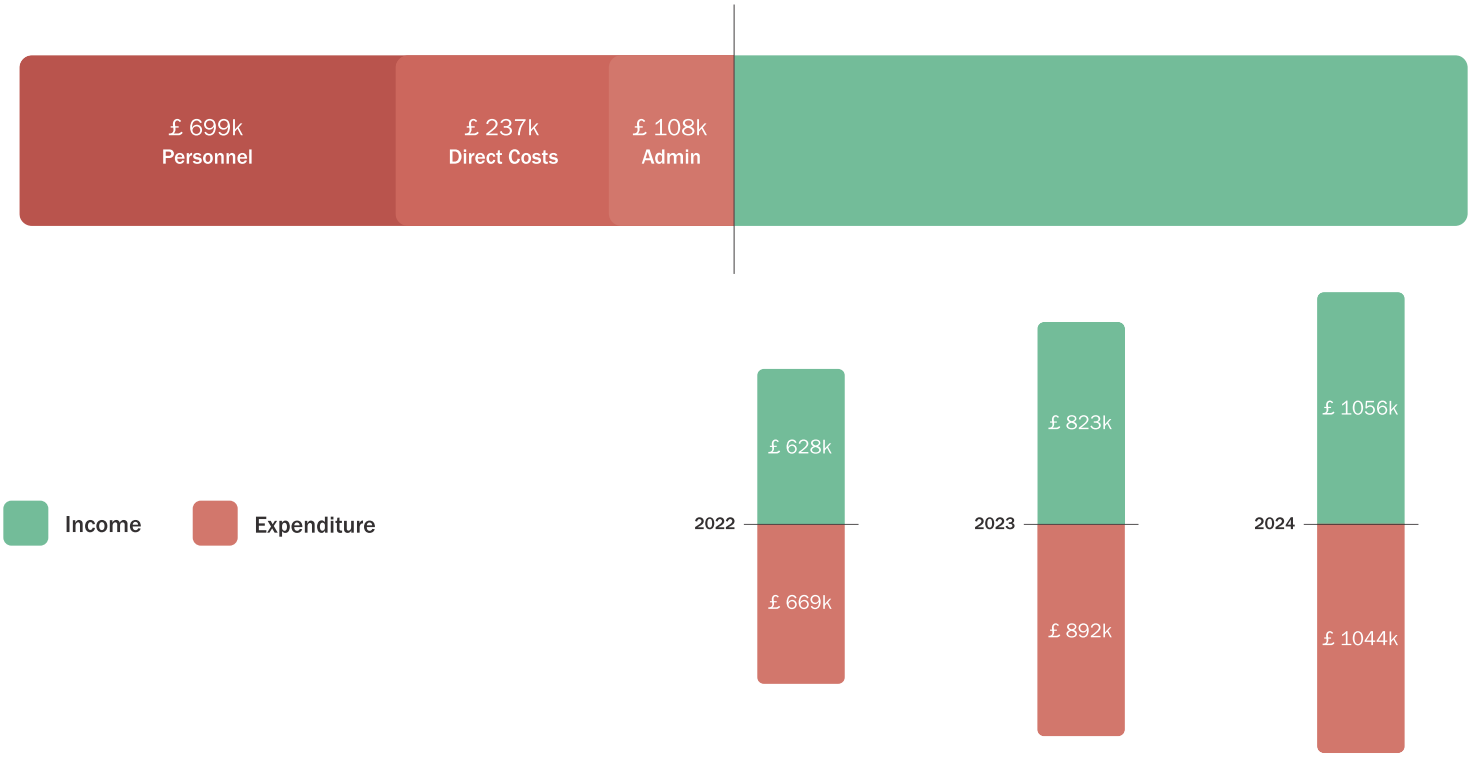
Our income increased by 28% year on year, with a significant reduction in deficit.

Expenditure

£ 1044k

Income

£ 1056k



Collaborations have made it possible to continue our important work in 2024. We are especially grateful to the following funders and collaborators:

Our members

We are proud to have a diverse range of organisations, skills, experience and talent in our membership, united behind the Network's mission.

Non-profit organisations

- Lingkar Temu Kabupaten Lestari (LTKL)
- SE Asia Rainforest Research Partnership
- Kaleka
- Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber
- The Wilderness Society Australia
- GIZ
- Forest Peoples Programme
- Fauna and Flora International
- World Resources Institute
- World Wide Fund for Nature

Companies

- April
- OLAM
- Asia Pulp and Paper (APP)

Sustainability standards

- Bonsucro
- Better Cotton
- Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
- Round Table on Responsible Soy Association
- Rainforest Alliance
- Forest Stewardship Council

Technical organisations

- PT. Merdeka Sejahtera Persada (Dassa Corp)
- HCV Africa
- PT Gaia Eko Daya Buana
- Tropenbos Indonesia
- Preferred by Nature
- Ecotrop
- BioAp
- Nativa
- Earthworm
- Remark Asia
- Proforest
- Ekologika
- Daemeter
- Aksenta
- Aequatic

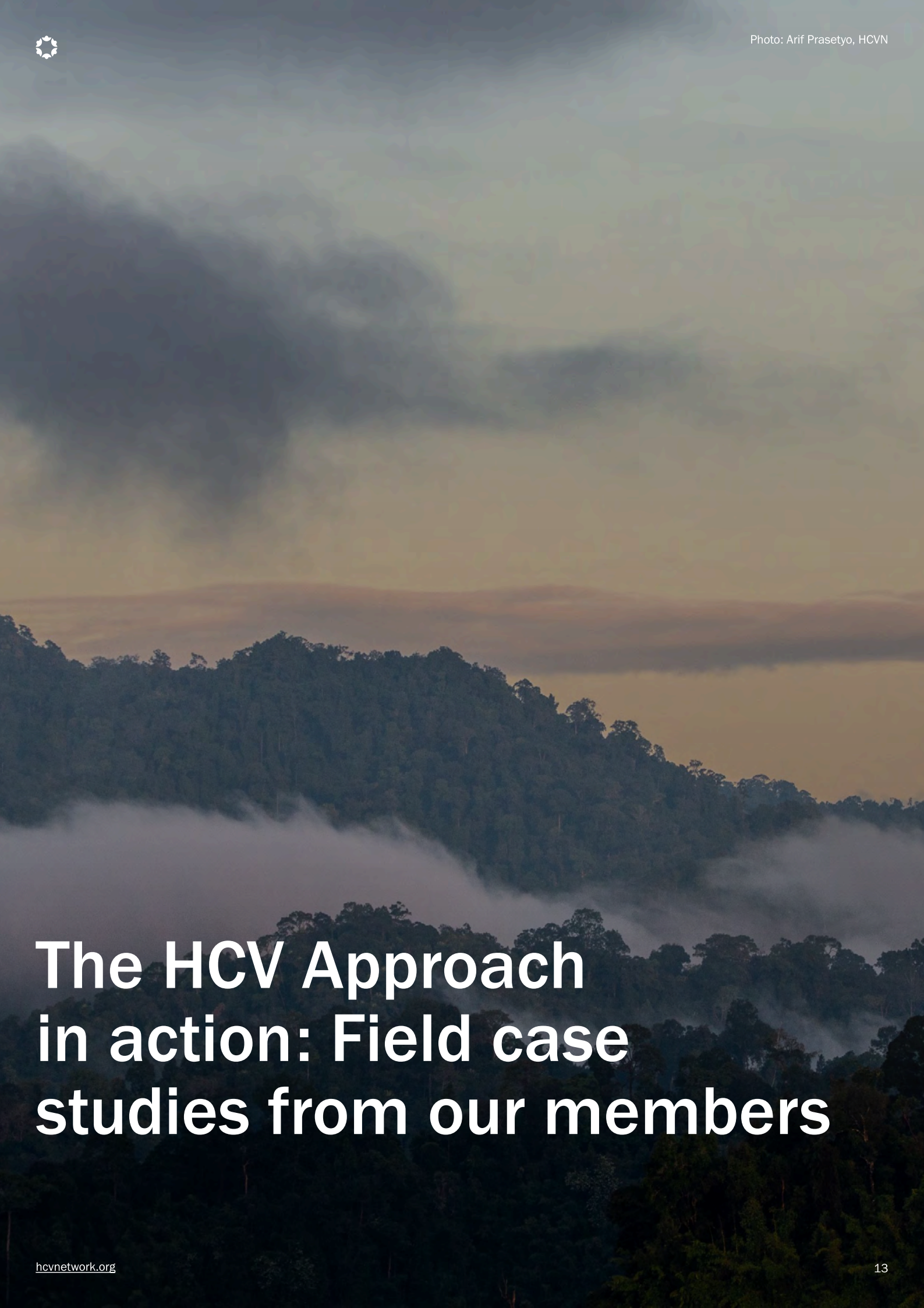


Photo: Arif Prasetyo, HCVN

The HCV Approach in action: Field case studies from our members

Photo: Courtesy of Better Cotton

Photo: Courtesy of HCV Africa

Better Cotton

Aligning standards and finance for forest protection

Although globally cotton is not a major driver of land use change in recent years compared with other agricultural commodities, Better Cotton takes its role and responsibility as a voluntary sustainability standard on this topic seriously. This commitment is two-fold: ensuring alignment with emerging industry standards and market legislations and credibly contributing to the protection and enhancement of the environment, as well as safeguarding human rights of those who traditionally use these lands.

During our last standard revision, with support from the HCVN Secretariat, we strengthened our existing approach to land conversion. We introduced a new requirement, including a cut-off date of 31st December 2020 for non-conversion of natural ecosystems aligned with EUDR. We focus on natural ecosystems and go beyond deforestation, as this is more relevant in cotton production. Additionally, we revisited our existing HCVN risk-based approach for Smallholders/Medium Farms and Large Farms to learn from the past.

However, as with all topics, we understand that the work is not done by simply adjusting the standard. We are eager for this season's roll-out of the new indicators, which include strengthened requirements to prevent conversion of natural ecosystems, and application of the updated guidance for growers, and are committed to refining and strengthening our implementation, monitoring, and assurance approaches. We look forward to tapping into the experience and knowledge of other HCVN members to co-learn and co-create solutions for this important, yet very complex, topic, to ensure we balance credibility and sustainability ambitions rightly with feasibility of implementation for our Producers.

HCV Africa

Long-term monitoring of biodiversity and critical HCVs

In Uganda and Cameroon, HCV Africa have been working on HCV Screening, specialist terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity studies, and HCV monitoring with the objective of updating and monitoring changes in the areas of HCVs, including critical habitat, over time.

Annual or bi-annual surveys, and imagery and comparison modelling, during different seasons (wet/ dry) with detailed reporting for each monitoring report is now in its seventh year. Through the use of drone surveys, rapid biodiversity assessments, transects over all previous sample areas, and management interviews of concession holders, HCV Africa is building a picture of what is happening on the ground to help best mitigate threats.

Those threats are significant: unsustainable hunting, illegal logging, and poaching remain highly prevalent. This illustrates the highly complex and volatile context in which commodities can be produced, and the importance of holistic approaches and securing long-term engagement and investment to address these threats. Additionally, many parts of Africa are experiencing a population boom, with rapid growth in the absence of comparable growth in work or resources. Population pressure throughout Africa is another major cause of impact on the biodiversity and HCVs.

Future plans for HCV Africa include continuous HCV updates and monitoring, discussions with organisations on what and how local government can support the protection of critical ecosystems, vital to supporting even growing economies and communities, and eco-guard planning for security and anti-poaching measures.

Daemeter

Advancing deforestation risk mitigation in Siak, Indonesia

In 2024, as part of its commitment to reducing deforestation under the Siak Hijau initiative, the Siak Regency Government acted to assess HCV areas in support of achieving a deforestation risk mitigated landscape. Daemeter and Proforest, who facilitated the Siak Pelalawan Landscape Program (SPLP) in Siak district, Riau Province Indonesia, alongside the Earthworm Foundation which also has an ongoing program in Siak District, assessed an indicative HCV area of 789,350.59 hectares by the end of the project's HCV Screening intervention.

The collaboration focused on developing Indicative Conservation Area screening documents using HCV and HCS approaches to help identify and prioritize areas for conservation. These assessments aim to provide a structured approach for recognizing areas of environmental and social importance, ensuring that conservation planning is based on transparent and science-based criteria.

Stakeholder meetings introduced the assessment objectives and input was gathered from local actors, including government agencies, companies, and NGOs. Companies operating in Siak Regency were engaged to understand existing land-use practices, while discussions with NGOs helped align the work with broader conservation efforts in the region. Desktop studies, field data collection, social HCV assessments, the resulting analysis, and consultation on screening results means that the project is now at the next step to formalize the findings through a Regent Regulation.

This process will involve drafting the regulation in collaboration with the Siak Regency Government and environmental experts, followed by consultations with key stakeholders, including government agencies, companies, NGOs, and local communities, to ensure practicality and alignment with existing initiatives like Siak Hijau. Once complete this should ensure that conservation priorities are integrated into local policies and land-use planning. Challenges were encountered in the process and mitigation measures identified for each. Largely, these revolved around reconciling different sources of existing information on HCV assessments already conducted in the landscape, and a need to decide how best to access and use these sets of information.

The integration of conservation planning into broader landscape management remains an ongoing effort, requiring collaboration across multiple stakeholders to address challenges such as deforestation and land-use pressures. By incorporating both ecological and social considerations, this work contributes to more informed decision-making on land use in Siak Regency.

Learn more

GIZ

Protecting ecosystem services through participatory land-use planning

In Setunggul village, Kapuas Hulu district, West Kalimantan province, Indonesia village communities generally have a good understanding of the context, situation, and available resources in their area, as well as the potential opportunities for development. Taking this into account, GIZ-GRASS initiated a program on participatory land-use planning, due to run until the end of 2025, enabling village communities to actively participate in and contribute to the data collection of village boundaries. This data can then be a shared source of information at the village, sub-district, and district levels, as well as help to obtain an official Village Boundary Decree from the Kapuas Hulu district government.

Although not yet fully recognised in Indonesian legislation, village spatial planning is an innovative, bottom-up approach, with GIZ-GRASS supporting Setunggul Village in this using a participatory approach. Satellite imagery is interpreted with community members, followed by ground-truthing with GPS, both simultaneously serves as hands-on training for villagers. GIS maps are created collaboratively with the villagers from the collected data and aligned with the district spatial plan.

Challenges could well emerge for these village communities. Threats to resources could arise from rapid palm oil expansion in the surrounding area, when raising awareness raising among the local population about the importance of critical ecosystem services is ongoing.

The support for village spatial planning focuses on defining administrative boundaries, accessibility, land use, and protection areas. A key aspect of the protection area is maintaining a vital water spring, which includes a small dam and an open waterway supplying water to a hamlet in Setunggul Village. The surrounding area is classified as HCV 4, as it provides essential ecosystem services critical for local water security. The project plans to support the drafting village regulations on spatial planning and water spring protection, whilst promoting the integration of the village spatial plan into the district spatial plan, and enhancing the water spring and waterway with local plant species and fish.

Learn more

Photo: Courtesy of GIZ


Photo: Courtesy of Earthworm

Earthworm Foundation

HCS-HCV scoping study in the Aguaytia Landscape, Ucayali, Peru

In early 2024, Earthworm Foundation carried out an HCV/ HCS scoping assessment over 49,274 hectares within the province of Padre Abad, Ucayali region, Peru – the supply zone of the Farmer Association 'Shambillo Palm Producers' (ASPASH). The objective was to provide crucial data for project design of this potential new hub of the Longitudinal Landscape in the Peruvian Amazon, and prepare for a potential future full HCV/HCS study.

Primary data was generated from interviews and a small-scale, field-based HCS forest inventory, and secondary environmental, social, and economic data gathered as well. Sampling points focused on various land cover classes, particularly Young Regenerating Forest (YRF) and Scrub (S). Initial land cover classification used recent high-resolution satellite imagery (Sentinel-2, Planet) and national datasets (e.g. MINAM maps). This was followed by field validation across 38 circular plots (500 m² each), conducted by a multidisciplinary team over five days. Field assessments included visual interpretation, species identification, and photographic documentation. The process concluded with a desktop analysis for land cover classification and plot data interpretation.

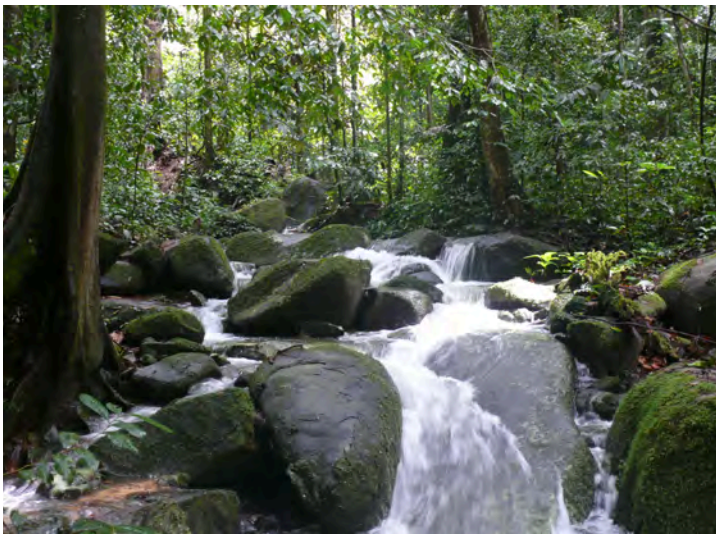
Palm production is just one of several crops in the area. In the Aguaytia Landscape, any project, like this one in the initial phase focusing on land use character of the area of interest (AOI), should consider participation of actors from other supply chains such as bananas and cocoa, as these are the main economic activities in the Padre Abad district.

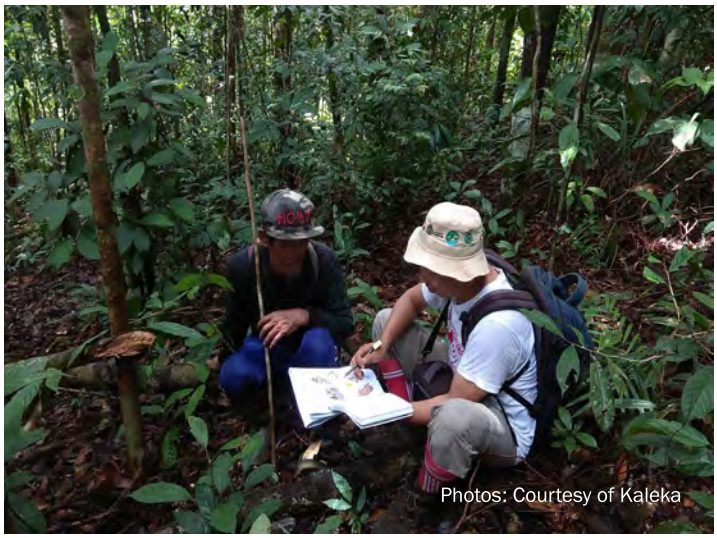
While the scoping study only covered a small sample of field plots, should a full-scale HCV/HCS study be conducted in the future, accessing farm plots and forest patches not belonging to oil palm farmers will be challenging unless other supply chain actors present in the AOI are engaged.

For a future full-scale study aligned to established practice for HCV-HCS assessment it will be especially important to meet with indigenous federations and the three indigenous communities present in the AOI to publicize the HCV/HCS full study objectives, to consult their participation in it, and to receive their feedback. Discussing with local stakeholders the differences and similarities between the HCV/ HCS indicative maps and other National and local zoning maps such as the Ecological and Economic Zone Map (ZEE), and the Forest Zone Map ZF will be key to ensure there is an understanding of different methodologies for conservation of those HCS and HCV areas that are not classified as forested or protected areas. Aligning HCV/HCS results with official ZEE and ZF zoning is not always straight-forward as it requires not only a technical alignment process but also a political engagement process.

Any robust future project design or full-scale HCV/HCS study needs to consider information of the socio-economic study, as that is where a stakeholder influence mapping exercise identified which actors need to be contacted for meetings and discussions in the future. There are also vital technical design elements for the field phase of a forest inventory of future full-scale HCV/ HCS study. This confirms the presence of HCV 1-6, particularly on indigenous community lands concerning the verification of HCV 5 and 6 areas. Hiring local guides, who know the farmers and their farms is key to establishing a bias free sampling design with guaranteed access to producer farms and evaluation areas.

Looking ahead – stakeholders will be able to make use of the results of this assessment to plan potential future project interventions, and whilst as yet not made concrete, it opens the door to exploration of future HCS/HCV studies.





Photos: Courtesy of Kaleka

Kaleka

Mapping HCVs for jurisdictional certification in Indonesia

Kaleka has been working in Seruyan District, Central Kalimantan, applying landscape screening and HCV management and monitoring tools to promote sustainable land use planning in the entire district. The Mosaik Initiative is trying to find a model for a large-scale transition toward sustainability. The work began in 2015, as Seruyan District became a global pilot of the RSPO Jurisdictional Approach for Certification. The plan is to continue until the district is certified by the RSPO, and further as the district committed to expand sustainability for other commodities.

Making the production of commodities more sustainable and inclusive is the intention, so districts can generate revenue to protect and restore landscapes while improving the welfare of farmers and indigenous people. Implementation is taking place through several steps: the establishment of a government-led multistakeholder forum; a common goal and working plan to achieve sustainability; a system to monitor the progress; and finally, incentives.

These processes can take time and require resources – all whilst taking place in a dynamic political context at national, district and local levels. To help with resourcing, Kaleka plans to develop co-financing agreements, secure green finance, and explore carbon credit schemes for long-term funding. Kaleka has started to engage with central government to align Seruyan's best practices with national policies as a bottom-up process, such as the Indonesian Environmental Protection and Management Plan. At the same time, to ensure that HCV designations maintain local communities' rights to access forest and resources, Kaleka, in collaboration with FPP and the HCVN Secretariat, developed FPIC-aligned guidance for the Jurisdictional Approach and applied it through a participatory methodology to identify and assess HCV areas at the village level, ensuring community rights are respected and their voices are central to the process.

To date, the district has completed an indicative HCV map, covering just over 960,000 hectares. While not intended as a definitive "Go/ No-Go" map, it serves as an important reference to guide discussions within the multistakeholder platform and as a tool for negotiating future land use. Final decisions on development or conservation areas will be made through a stakeholder-led negotiation process.

Kaleka's analysis of land use change at the jurisdictional level showed that between 2005–2023, over 121,000 hectares of forest were converted into other land uses. With this level of deforestation, it is vital that HCVs are identified and protected, so the HCV mapping outputs have provided a shared entry point for stakeholders to develop actionable plans. These plans outline conservation, resource management, and land-use optimisation strategies, aligning with RSPO standards and broader sustainability goals. The identification of "No-Go" zones will highlight areas where development is prohibited for palm oil expansion, ensuring the protection of critical values. Clear guidelines and implementation frameworks will be integrated into action plans to operationalise these zones effectively.

Seruyan Jurisdictional Certification Working Group (JCWG), supported by HCVN, Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond Internationaal (CNV-I), Forest Peoples Programme and Kaleka, established a Jurisdictional Entity (JE), which comprised 11 members and made up of plantation companies, farmer associations, and 3 representatives of NGO: HCVN, CNV-I and Kaleka.

As the formal body leading Seruyan's journey toward RSPO Jurisdictional Certification, the JE represents a breakthrough in collaborative governance, bringing together diverse actors to drive systemic change. Its work is laying the foundation not just for certification, but for a model of sustainable, inclusive land-use governance that can inspire other districts across Indonesia and beyond.

Photos: Courtesy of Proforest

Proforest and Socfin

Biodiversity and ecological assessment of PSG's HCV 1 area

As part of measures to meet the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification requirements and Socfin's Responsible Management Policy, Plantations Socfinaf Ghana Limited (PSG) commissioned a High Conservation Value (HCV) assessment of its concession for palm and rubber plantation in the Western Region of Ghana. The assessment, which was carried out by Proforest in 2020, identified HCV categories 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 as present on the concession. To ensure that the status of the identified values was maintained or enhanced, Proforest worked with PSG to develop an HCV Management and Monitoring (M&M) plan in 2023 that provided specific prescriptions for effective management and monitoring of the identified HCV areas. Given the time lapse post the HCV assessment, the HCV M&M plan recommended the need for a biodiversity and ecological assessment of the HCV 1 area to ascertain the state of fauna and flora, the ecological conditions and threats, to serve as baseline data for subsequent monitoring.

The biodiversity and ecological assessment was conducted by Proforest in the first quarter of 2024 and involved a desk and field study of flora and fauna, community consultations and forest condition assessment including signs of physical disturbances resulting from human activities. The forest condition was assessed using a qualitative approach developed by Hawthorn and Abu-Juam (1995) and widely used by Ghana's Forest Services Division (FSD).

Bio-quality assessment of the flora community was based on species diversity, species lifeforms, and ecological guilds. The conservation significance of the flora community was determined using the IUCN Red List and the Star Rating System for Ghanaian plant species (also developed by Hawthorne and Abu-Juam in 1995).

The fauna assessment focused on large mammals, birds and herpetofauna using direct and indirect observations along belt transects. The conservation significance of the fauna community was determined using the IUCN Red List whereas the national protection was determined by the Ghana Wildlife Conservation Regulation classification. Consultations with PSG staff and local community members including hunters and farmers provided useful information on existing and potential threats which complemented observations made in the field by the survey team.

A comparison of the biodiversity survey results for 2020 and 2024 showed higher species diversity and richness as well as higher number of Rare, Threatened and Endangered (RTE) species for both flora and fauna species in 2024. This was attributed to a more rigorous sampling methodology used for the 2024 survey and reinforced the basis for designating the area as HCV 1. A very significant portion of the HCV 1 area was found to retain forest in relatively good condition, despite being increasingly threatened by illegal mining, illegal logging, unsustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and farming among others. Overall, the biodiversity and ecological assessment underscored the importance of conserving the HCV 1 area given its critical role in supporting biodiversity at the sub-national and national scale.

Photo: Courtesy of WWF

WWF and Interholco

Leading the way on biodiversity protection in production forests

WWF is working with the company Interholco (IHC) to promote the benefits of safeguarding and verifying ecosystem services in their forest concessions, aiming to enable the company to market them to downstream companies and funders.

FSC-certified forest concessions in the Congo Basin are often in remote areas that are harvested under reduced impact logging principles in a decades-long rotational pattern, which allows large mammals to roam and thrive. This holds true for IHC's concessions totalling 1.16 million hectares in the Republic of Congo, bordering Odzala-Kokoua National Park. The company is working with WWF on innovative ways to increase the value of responsible forestry on the basis of maintaining the high conservation values of their forest.

IHC was granted FSC Ecosystem Services certification – a first for the Congo Basin – based on the large populations of great apes and forest elephants effectively protected within its concession and for maintaining ecosystem integrity. More specifically, IHC's management actions allow the maintenance of populations of priority species (gorillas, chimpanzees and forest elephants) and the ecological integrity of the forest, while offering significant economic revenues to the State and local populations.

Roughly 70% of the concession can be considered both HCV 1 and 2 with high biodiversity and significant landscape level ecosystem. The forests contain large and stable populations of forest elephants and great apes. These values are protected through a range of measures:

- Applying reduced impact logging harvesting techniques
- Over 300,000 hectares of the forest are protected and conservation areas
- Biodiversity monitoring and wildlife
- Protection and enforcing the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities
- Together with these communities enabling wildlife protection.

Additionally, IHC has demonstrated how its forest management techniques quantifiably reduce carbon emissions compared to a regional average through the implementation of The Nature Conservancy's RIL-C methodology of selective logging in the tropics.

IHC is now seeking contributors to strengthen their biodiversity protection measures.

Looking head:
From momentum to impact

In 2025, we'll leverage the foundations for growth laid in 2024 to scale our delivery and impact. We will promote further integration and visibility of the HCV Approach into global standards and policy frameworks. Members will be encouraged to take a leading role in applying the HCV lens to their work, helping to scale our collective reach and impact.

We'll make significant progress towards version 2.0 of the HCV Approach, launch the first version of the HCV Impact Framework, and explore how HCV data can support dashboards, maps and disclosure tools. Work will continue on shaping how the HCV Approach can contribute to credible biodiversity credit systems.

We'll diversify our assurance services, leveraging experience gained from the RSPO HCV-HCS assessment assurance system.

Our governance model will expand, with new Action Groups driving strategy delivery and Secretariat systems evolving to support them. We'll also improve our fundraising and communications systems to ensure the network is better resourced, more visible, and prepared to navigate the uncertainties of a rapidly changing geopolitical order.

2025 is a milestone year for the HCV Network: it's our 20 year anniversary! It will be a year of consolidation, creativity and shared momentum. We invite you to join us in advancing the HCV Approach as a trusted tool for protecting nature and people.

Photo: Belinda Bowling, HCVN

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