

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Vietnam Country Office

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): Balancing Conservation and Development in the Northern Highlands Limestone through Policy Dialogue, Capacity Development, and Regional Planning: Phase 1

Implementation Partners for this Project: Agricultural and Forestry Research and Development Center for Northern Mountainous Region of Vietnam (AFRDC) at Thai Nguyen University (TNU)

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): August 1, 2009 to December 31, 2010

Date of Report (month/year): April 2011

II. OPENING REMARKS

This project aimed to address one of the most intractable issues facing conservation in Vietnam: how to influence developing planning and investments that invariably favor economic growth over conservation. This conflict is particularly intense when it comes to mining and other extractive industries that have such large environmental impacts. The Northern Highlands Limestone (NHL) is both home to the largest areas of contiguous forest in northern Vietnam and a wide range of globally threatened plants and animals, and is the target of a growing number of large and small-scale mining projects.

The purpose of this project was to start to engage Bac Kan and Tuyen Quang provincial authorities in a dialogue over development planning in order to promote approaches that would minimize the unnecessary negative impacts of large-scale infrastructure development with a particular focus on areas outside national parks and nature reserves. This landscape-level approach complemented site-specific work undertaken by other CEPF grantees in the NHL. Because of its experimental nature, the original proposal was redesigned to focus on two (Bac Kan and Tuyen Quang) rather than all five provinces in the NHL (including Ha Giang, Lang Son, and Cao Bang).

III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT IMPACTS

Long Term (per log frame): Balance development needs and conservation priorities in the NHL by mainstreaming conservation considerations into development planning.

Achievements:

1. Increased likelihood of coordinated management of the Na Hang-Ba Be conservation corridor and consequently the opportunity to establish a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) agreement with the Gam River dam in line with the new national PES decree.
2. Working relations established between local and international NGOs that in past had little if anything to do with each other.
3. Pan Nature and CODE's work on the environmental impacts of mining documented and incorporated in the curriculum of Ho Chi Minh Political Academy, which trains 500-750 high-level government officials every year.
4. IUCN's relationship with MONRE strengthened and apparent acceleration in nomination of Ramsar sites.

Short Term (per log frame): Mitigate threats to NHL by working with provincial governments, researchers, businesses, and conservation groups, to map development activities, and analyze and advocate policies to promote biodiversity conservation in the NHL.

Achievements:

1. Political support built for the Ba Be-Na Hang corridor as a policy objective for the two focal provinces.
2. Ba Be National Park designated as Vietnam's third Ramsar site.
3. Vertically integrated high-resolution GIS database produced that is accessible to all users for a wide range of applications development.
4. Provincial staff trained in how to use GIS for analysis and not just map making.
5. Relationship with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) established that will serve as the basis for IUCN's future work in the Ba Be-Na Hang corridor.
6. Working relationships established with CEPF grantees that have fed into a United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) project to strengthen the role of local NGOs in environmental monitoring and reporting.

Describe the success of the project in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators.

The project's main output was a 1:50,000-scale GIS database of the two focal provinces that includes features in the national map series with the addition of a 30-m grid digital elevation model and 15-m ASTER images taken in 2001 and 2009 that cover most of the two provinces (and bracketed the construction of a dam on the Gam River that flooded 800 hectares). The regional database is vertically integrated and topologically correct. Production proved to be much more time consuming than expected because the national map series was produced using Map Info, which is not based on a topological model. As a result, features did not connect, attributes were not linked to features, etc. Nine provincial government officials were trained in the use of the database.

The key policy achievement was the decision by both provinces to start to cooperate on the design of a conservation corridor linking Ba Be and Na Hang National Parks. The Vice-Chair (now Chair) of Bac Kan People's Committee is a particular strong advocate. Establishing such a corridor was a recommendation from the 2007 IUCN evaluation of the Ba Be World Heritage Site bid. In March 2011, Ba Be, Vietnam's largest natural mountain lake, was designated as Vietnam's third Ramsar site, a step that may signal greater interest on the part of MONRE in wetlands conservation. Building on this success, IUCN has been asked to advise MONRE on the nomination of Tram Chim as the next Ramsar site.

Another important policy achievement was the greater awareness on the part of the provincial authorities of the environmental impacts of formal and informal mining. Mining has growing rapidly in the NHL over the past five years. This is largely the result of the decentralization process that allows provincial authorities to issue mining licenses without MONRE's prior approval. The result has been a rapid increase in the number of unregulated small and medium size mines. Of particular concern in the NHL is the boom in small-scale mines that tend to be located along water ways. As other CEPF grantees have reported, these operations are extremely dangerous to both the miners and downstream communities. Much of this sector's production is exported illegally to China.

Another factor behind the mining sector's environmental impacts is the fact that the provincial authorities (or VINACOMIN, the state-owned company that directly or indirectly controls 95% of Vietnam's mines) face a conflict of interest between their role as owner and regulator. With funding from UNDP/Global Compact, IUCN engaged the Vietnam Cement Association (VNCA) to better understand, and start to influence, state-owned cement companies. Key Cement Sustainability Initiative (CSI) reports were translated into Vietnamese, distributed to companies, and posted on IUCN's web site. Based on this experience, IUCN provided comments on the draft mining chapter of the World Bank's Vietnam Development Report (VDR).

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

No.

IV. PROJECT COMPONENTS

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p>Component 1: Enhance AFRDC's role as a regional information hub by compiling and sharing information on development plans and projects in two focal NHL provinces: Bac Kan and Tuyen Quang</p>	
<p>Indicator 1.1: AFRDC GIS unit is equipped and supported to serve as NHL information center and knowledge hub</p>	<p>The MOU between IUCN and AFRDC was signed in December 2009. According to the MOU, AFRDC is the primary point of contact with each provincial focal point on GIS data collection and on negotiating with the PC to ensure access to data and information.</p> <p>A rapid needs assessment for AFRDC was carried out in November 2009. The priority need was technical assistance with GIS database design. (GIS is primarily used as a map making tool.) IUCN and Spatial Decisions, an Indian GIS company with an office in Hanoi, provided the necessary support. AFRDC had no equipment needs.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.2: AFRDC signs MOUs with provincial focal points ensuring access to data and information on development plans and projects</p>	<p>AFRDC did not sign MOUs with the two provinces because it was easier to work through personal contacts. But in that case, the data would have been unofficial and could not be formally distributed. IUCN therefore worked directly with the PPCs to secure official permission. In effect, IUCN was unable to work through AFRDC on data access and distribution policy.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.3: GIS database on settlements, poverty, roads, mines, dams, reforestation projects, and other development plans and projects is designed and built</p>	<p>Version 1 of the regional database was completed in July 2010. It included base map data (22 tiles, 7 thematic layers) from MONRE and project data from provinces, digital elevation data from ASTER, and ASTER images for 2001 and 2009 covering about half of the two provinces.</p> <p>Version 2 of the NHL GIS database was completed in November 2010 after extensive quality control. In October 2010, nine DARD and DONRE staff from Tuyen Quang and Bac Kan participated in a 1-week advanced GIS training course in Hanoi.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.4: GIS database is shared with CEPF grantees and other conservation groups working in the NHL for review and application</p>	<p>In May 2010, IUCN hosted a meeting with all five CEPF NHL grantees (IUCN, Pan Nature, WARECOD, FFI, PRCF). There was strong support for integrating IUCN's work on data and information with PRCF and FFI's field projects and Pan Nature's media work.</p> <p>Version 2 of the database was converted into ArcView and ArcGIS formats and copied to 4GB USB for easy distribution. Meetings were held with GIZ and PRCF to present the data and its applications; meetings will be held with ICRAF and other potential users. IUCN will explore how to post the database online.</p>

<p>Indicator 1.5: AFRDC is engaged in project and policy review discussions with focal points and in regional outreach and communications events</p>	<p>A kick-off meeting was held in Bac Kan in December 2009 with the participation of the two provinces, AFRDC, IUCN, and Spatial Decisions. At the meeting, Tuyen Quang DONRE, the provincial focal point, expressed reservations about working through AFRDC and asked for a direct relationship with IUCN. They also claimed jurisdiction over all mapping activities in the province.</p> <p>Meetings with DONRE and DARD officials from Tuyen Quang and Bac Kan were held in January and March 2010. These led to much improved relations with Tuyen Quang and the effective start of project activities in that province.</p> <p>An end of project workshop was organized in Na Hang in December 2010 for DONRE and DARD officials. AFRDC presented an analysis of threats and opportunities to the proposed Na Hang-Ba Be conservation corridor.</p>
<p>Component 2: Identify policy issues and options and initiate dialogue between local government and relevant stakeholders on alternative development scenarios in focal provinces</p>	
<p>Indicator 2.1: Database is used to identify policies and projects that represent major conservation threats and opportunities</p>	<p>In August 2010, AFRDC prepared a policy brief of key conservation and development issues in Vietnamese and English. The brief highlighted the impacts of formal and informal mining (gold, lead-zinc) and limestone and sand quarrying.</p> <p>Analysis of the ASTER images showed high levels of forest loss between 2001 and 2009: 14% of closed forest were converted to open forest or agriculture; 13% of open forest was converted to scrub or agriculture; and 33% of scrub was converted to agriculture. However, the rates of forest loss were significantly lower in and around the Ba Be-Na Hang corridor. These results were presented at the CEPF stakeholder consultation in July 2010. IUCN will write up the results of this analysis as a peer reviewed paper.</p>
<p>Indicator 2.2: Meetings held with government focal points and CEPF grantees to discuss alternative development scenarios</p>	<p>At the March 2010 meeting in Tuyen Quang, major policy issues, notably large and small scale mining, were discussed. DONRE called for more stringent regulation of formal mining operations and suppression of informal operations.</p> <p>In the second half of 2010, a series of discussions were held with GIZ to integrate the results of this project into their new <i>Conserving Biodiversity in Forest Ecosystems in Viet Nam</i>, which includes Ba Be as a pilot site. This project will be the vehicle by which the objectives of this project will be advanced.</p>
<p>Indicator 2.3: Government focal points incorporate results and recommendations in sector plans</p>	<p>A component of the GIZ project is mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into sector plans and annual revisions of the provincial SEDP. We will work with GIZ to ensure the data and analyses of this project support this process with a focus on the Na Hang-Ba Be corridor.</p>

Component 3: Build relationships with local governments and civil society organizations and introduce regional planning process in Ha Giang, Cao Bang, and Lang Son	
Indicator 3.1: Tuyen Quang and Bac Kan governments invite counterparts in Ha Giang, Cao Bang, and Lang Son to meetings to learn about project goals and benefits	This deliverable was not achieved because the level of effort needed to complete the regional database meant that it could only cover Tuyen Quang and Bac Kan; and because of the growing focus on the Ba Be-Na Hang corridor as a key policy objective. For these reasons, participation was restricted to the two focal provinces.
Indicator 3.2: Provincial government representatives attend NHL workshop at which results of database and policy dialogue are presented	At workshops in July and December 2010, the regional database and policy analysis were presented. These served as the basis for a broad ranging discussion about the how to keep the database "alive", provincial policies for licensing mines, the need for cross-provincial coordination, etc.
Component 4: Engage donors and businesses to improve investment planning and secure co-funding for second phase covering all five NHL provinces	
Indicator 4.1: Documents on NHL projects funded by IFAD, ADB, World Bank, etc. acquired and incorporated into GIS database	Project data were incorporated into the regional GIS database. The mining chapter of the World Bank's VDR 2011 included comments that IUCN provided based on experience gained from this project on the environmental impacts of mining.
Indicator 4.2: Discussions held with donors and businesses on opportunities to mainstream conservation into development planning	Experience from this project fed into a UNDP/Global Compact-funded project to engage Vietnam's state owned cement companies in discussions on improved corporate social and environmental responsibility.
Indicator 4.3: Co-funding secured for a second phase that covers all five NHL provinces	\$225,000/2-year grant from UNDEF was secured and is now being used to document and support environmental monitoring and reporting by local NGOs, including CEPF grantees WARECOD and Pan Nature.

Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.

The project was a definite success in terms of building a high-resolution, integrated GIS database for the region, in training provincial government officials in use of the database, and in using the database to promote the Ba Be-Na Hang conservation corridor as a realistic policy objective. The project also succeeded in establishing links with GIZ that will allow these impacts to be sustained under separate funding. But for the reasons explained below, the project did not succeed in establishing AFRDC or TNU as a regional GIS applications development center. The opportunity to do so may yet emerge and thanks to this project IUCN will be in a position to support such a move.

Were any outputs unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?

The main flaw in the project design was our assumption that AFRDC was willing and able to take on a proactive role in compiling data, analyzing policy options, and providing training opportunities. This reflects partly AFRDC's institutional weaknesses but also the preference of the provinces (especially Tuyen Quang) to work directly with IUCN. These issues were addressed in the LOI for phase 2 (see below).

V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS

NA

VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT

Integrating conservation into development planning is a long-term objective and beyond the scope of a single organization or project. More time and additional partnerships are required. In January 2011, IUCN's Ms. Ly Minh Hai who managed this project joined GIZ as their PES advisor. IUCN's partnership with GIZ is the vehicle by which the learning and relationships of this project will be sustained, with a particular focus on the Ba Be-Na Hang corridor.

The key lesson learned was the reluctance of AFRDC to provide a regional GIS applications development and training service, which would have served as the project's exit strategy. However, feedback from the provinces and CEPF grantees suggests that a less centralized information system may be more appropriate. This might involve IUCN continuing to compile data and information at the regional level but in a more decentralized or networked fashion.

The project therefore highlighted the (now well documented) difficulties that Vietnamese universities face in establishing operational partnerships with external bodies such as IUCN. The basic problem is that what makes sense in terms of intellectual progress often conflicts with what is politically possible. This was why TNU was never able to establish a GIS applications development center despite having signed an MOU committing it to do so.

Provinces use GIS as a map making not as an analytical or modeling tool. This means that the underlying data are often poorly/incompletely structured. As this project shows, a great deal of data cleaning and quality control is needed to convert the spatial data into a vertically integrated GIS database.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/failure)

N/A

Project Execution: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/failure)

N/A

VII. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
DGIS	A	\$55,000	
UNDEF	A	\$15,000	Started October 2010
UNDP/Global Compact	A	\$25,000	
Spatial Decisions	C	\$10,000	In-kind contributions

****Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:***

- A** *Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- B** *Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)*
- C** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*

D *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.

IUCN and PRCF collaborated on a LOI for a phase 2 that would have built on the achievements of the first phase to establish a networked regional environmental information system with a focus on securing the Ba Be-Na Hang conservation corridor and establishing a sustainable financing system based on a PES agreement with the Gam River dam. Although the LOI could not be submitted by the deadline, the data and information from this project have already fed into the GIZ project *Conserving Biodiversity in Forest Ecosystems in Viet Nam*, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A

VIII. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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