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NAM HA ECOTOURISM PROJECT

Lao People's Democratic Republic



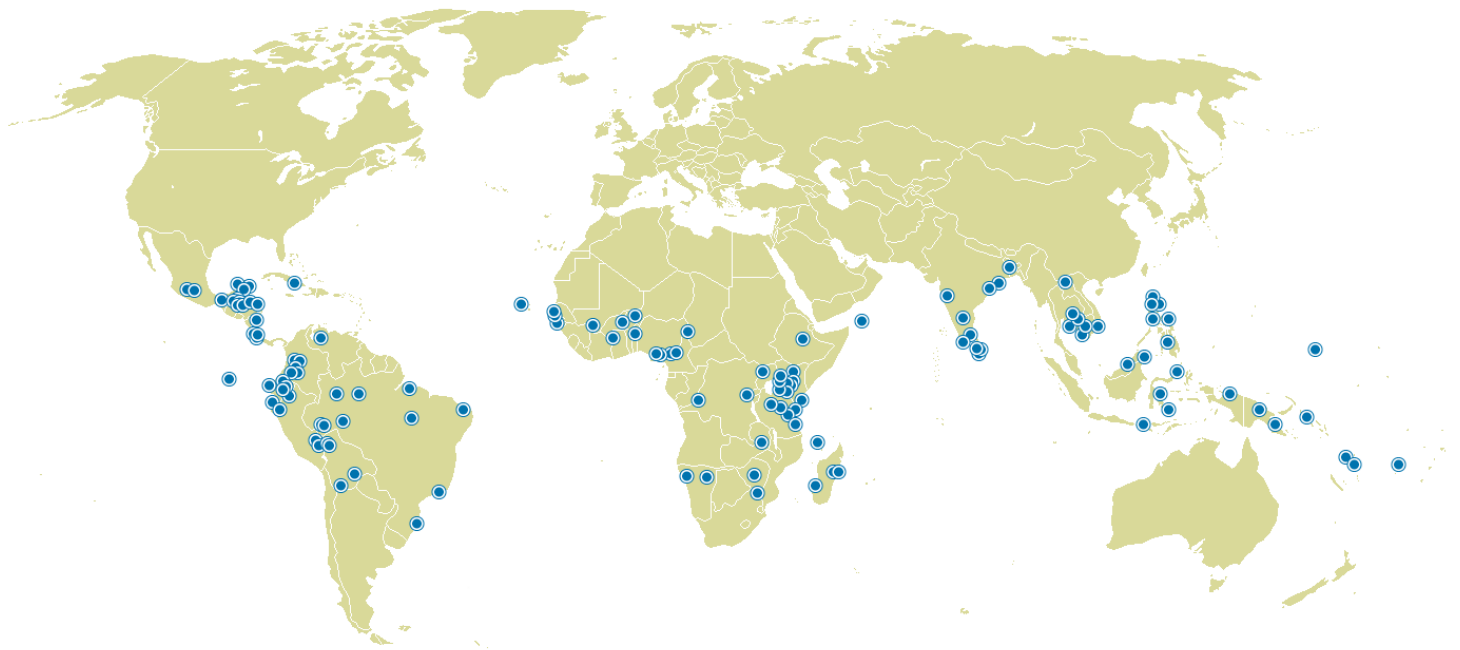
Equator Initiative Case Studies

Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities

UNDP EQUATOR INITIATIVE CASE STUDY SERIES

Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative.

To mark its 10-year anniversary, the Equator Initiative aims to fill this gap. The following case study is one in a growing series that details the work of Equator Prize winners – vetted and peer-reviewed best practices in community-based environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. These cases are intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to take local success to scale, to improve the global knowledge base on local environment and development solutions, and to serve as models for replication. Case studies are best viewed and understood with reference to *'The Power of Local Action: Lessons from 10 Years of the Equator Prize'*, a compendium of lessons learned and policy guidance that draws from the case material.



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PROJECT SUMMARY

Located in the remote northern province of Luang Namtha on Lao PDR's border with China, the 222,400-hectare Nam Ha National Protected Area includes some of the country's most significant wilderness areas. Altitudes range from river valleys and plains to northern highland peaks, supporting a broad range of habitats and biodiversity.

Since 1999, conservation efforts in the area have been linked to improving the potential of local ecotourism, which now underpins the economy for the area's 57 villages and 3,451 households. Community members are trained as eco-guides and operate village-based lodges and forest camps. They are also trained to monitor threats to biodiversity in the protected area, supporting the work of the critically under-resourced Protected Area Management Unit. The project has provided a model for co-management of Laos's protected areas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background and Context	4
Key Activities and Innovations	6
Biodiversity Impacts	9
Socioeconomic Impacts	10
Policy Impacts	11
Sustainability	12
Replication	12
Partners	12

KEY FACTS

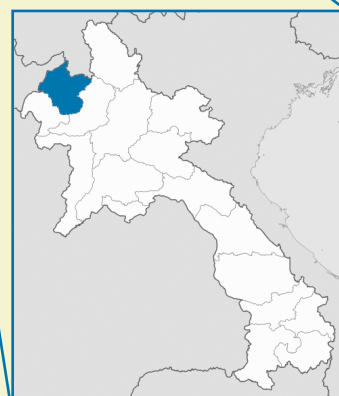
EQUATOR PRIZE WINNER: 2006

FOUNDED: 1999

LOCATION: Luang Namtha Province, northern Laos

BENEFICIARIES: Over 21,000 people in 57 villages

BIODIVERSITY: 222,400 ha National Protected Area



Background and Context



The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project, a project of UNESCO-Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA), has provided a model for the development and operation of community-based ecotourism in Lao PDR's National Protected Areas (NPAs), based on the principles of local ownership and stewardship of natural resources. The Nam Ha project has provided alternative employment and income-generating opportunities to communities living in and around the 222,400 hectare Nam Ha NPA, allowing them to reduce unsustainable use and harvesting of natural resources in the NPA.

Nam Ha is located in the remote northern province of Luang Namtha on Lao PDR's border with China, and includes some of the country's most significant wilderness areas. Altitudes range from river valleys and plains to northern highland peaks, supporting a broad range of habitats and biodiversity.

The majority of the NPA is covered by mixed secondary deciduous forest, while the northern mountain range is home to patches of primary evergreen forest mixed with secondary forest and large patches of Imperata grassland. Mammals of significance include clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), and tiger (*Panthera tigris*). There are also small populations of gaur (or Indian bison), Asian elephant, and Muntjac deer. The area is home to an estimated 288 species of bird and a high degree of botanical biodiversity.

Three large rivers – Nam Tha, Nam Fa, and Nam Long – drain southwards to the Mekong fed by a dense network of tributary streams. Initially established in 1993 with an area of 697 km², the NPA was extended to 2,224 km² in 1999. As an area of outstanding natural beauty and cultural interest, the site was incorporated in the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Heritage Park programme, begun in 2003.

The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project began in October 1999 with the aim of creating a community-based ecotourism model that would re-

lieve local pressures on the NPA forest ecosystem, generate income and employment opportunities for local communities, and could be replicated and extended throughout Lao PDR. Using a threat assessment methodology, the NPA Management Unit identified and ranked a number of direct threats to the ecological integrity of the protected area in 1999. The threats identified included slash-and-burn agriculture, harvesting of non-timber forest products for sale and consumption, and hunting of wildlife for consumption, all of which were primarily conducted by residents of the NPA.

Other harmful activities were predominantly carried out by outsiders, including the hunting of wildlife for sale and free-ranging domestic animals that disturbed wildlife populations through competition for habitat and the spread of diseases. Timber harvesting was also rife, while road construction had reduced habitats while simultaneously improving access for hunting and harvesting by outsiders.

Ecotourism in Luang Namtha has created local economic and employment opportunities contributing to the protection of natural and cultural heritage. Nam Ha guides and village-based tourism providers are drawn mostly from ethnic minority communities in Luang Namtha, one of the poorest provinces in Lao PDR. The project includes 57 villages, home to 3,451 families - a total target population of 21,227 people. Community members are trained as eco-guides and operate village-based lodges and forest camps. They are also trained to monitor threats to biodiversity in the protected area, supporting the work of the critically under-staffed and under-resourced Protected Area Management Unit.

Extensive ecotourism information and education campaigns targeted at policy-makers, the private sector and local communities enhance the sustainability of tourism in Luang Namtha. As a result of these campaigns, the NPA's various stakeholders have been able to work collaboratively to create regulations that protect the cultural and natural resources that underpin the province's growing and profitable ecotourism sector.

Local communities work closely with the NPA management authorities to create cooperative agreements that define stakeholder responsibilities in protecting the natural and cultural resources upon which the ecotourism ventures are based; provide guidance on the harvesting of non-timber forest products and other forest resources; prohibit the unlicensed hunting or sale of wildlife; and set aside tracts of village-managed forests as bird, wildlife and plant sanctuaries. The Nam Ha eco-guides have also worked with the Nam Ha NPA management to introduce a 'trekking and NPA user permit' fee system that was the first of its kind in Lao PDR, and is now being introduced throughout the country's system of twenty NPAs that cover approximately 13 per cent of its land area.

The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project's community-based model has been widely replicated for national tourism development initiatives and Luang Namtha is now established as a leading sustainable tourism destination. The project has gained international attention for its work in alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable use of biodiversity, winning a British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award in 2002 and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Equator Prize in 2006. After the conclusion of the pilot phase of the project in 2002, and an external review of its progress, the project's second phase began in March 2005, funded by the Government of New Zealand, the Government of Lao PDR, and UNESCO. The project's principle implementation agency is the Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Department.



Key Activities and Innovations



The Lao National Tourism Administration is a ministerial level organization within the Prime Minister's Office, and is the main government agency concerned with guiding the development and regulation of Lao PDR's tourism industry. This involves collaboration with a large number of other ministries at both the national and provincial levels. The country's 16 provinces and the capital city, Vientiane, each have a Provincial Tourism Department. In Luang Namtha, the provincial office works in close conjunction with the Nam Ha NPA Management Unit. This includes ensuring the safety of visitors to the NPA, setting policies and regulations for the tourism industry, coordinating with local stakeholders in monitoring and enforcement of the NPA's regulations, collecting data on the health of the area's cultural and natural heritage, and facilitating the process of licensing local tourism businesses.

The NPA Management Unit receives a limited annual budget to carry out its duties, which include district patrolling, manning roadside wildlife checkpoints, conducting environmental awareness training in villages, and overseeing the NPA. However, the Management Unit has little capacity to punish those found illegally clearing forest or selling wildlife, severely limiting its ability to deter infractions or enforce regulations. In total, the Management Unit comprises 32 staff members, with 16 at the provincial level, and a further 16 in individual district offices. Although funds are generated for use by the NPA management from trekking fees, the lack of human resources constrains its ability to effectively utilize these funds.

The management of individual cultural and natural tourist sites is performed directly by local communities that have historically acted as stewards of these resources, and their day-to-day operation is in the hands of village authorities. A portion of revenues generated from entrance fees is shared between the Tourism Department and the community to fund marketing activities, publication of interpretative materials, monitoring, and maintenance of infrastructure at the sites. Since the introduction of the first community-based ecotourism programmes by the Nam Ha Project in 1999, there are

now more than 30 established tour circuits, involving some 50 communities. Participating communities have been prepared to provide services to tourists with support from the Nam Ha project management, using a community-based ecotourism methodology that includes extensive community awareness-raising and skills training.

Integrated Conservation and Development Initiatives

Individual community-based projects are classified as 'Integrated Conservation and Development Initiatives' and typically comprise community agreements or concessions that provide revenue sharing mechanisms, income and infrastructure for the villages in exchange for improved local environmental management or forest conservation schemes. These agreements, approved by the Provincial Tourism Department, village and candidate tour operator, assign a single operator exclusive access to a community-based tour circuit or host village based on rules governing the maximum size and frequency of tour groups. The agreement also set a schedule of fees that the operator must pay the village for food, lodging, village-based guides, transportation, handicrafts and trail maintenance etc. The agreement defines the areas that are off-limits to tourism activities and also sets fee schedules for user permits, entrance fees and taxes. In the event of conflicts between parties to the agreement, the Tourism Department mediates to solve the problem.

Four examples of these Integrated Conservation and Development Initiatives include:

Ban Nam Dee development & community concession

Nam Dee waterfall is located 4.5 km from the provincial capital of Luang Namtha, in an area of forest that is a critical watershed for the town's public water supply. The waterfall has been marketed as a destination for visitors to the NPA for its natural beauty. The village signed an agreement to protect the watershed and manage the site

in exchange for assistance with marketing and infrastructure development. The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project co-financed the construction of walkways, bridges, a parking lot and toilets.

Bor Kung shrimp pool and dam

Bor Kung is a sacred spring near the town of Vieng Phoukha known for its shrimp. The project has financed the construction of a dam to create a larger pool that allows villagers to bathe and wash separately from the spring. While the site is yet to draw large visitor numbers, the bathing area has improved the wellbeing of the local community and has preserved the spring in its natural state.

Khao Rao Cave with Ban Nam Eng community concession

The Khao Rao cave, the most visited in the province, is about 12 km from Vieng Phoukha. The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project supported the surveying of the site for development activities, before financing the installation of a lighting system, generator and walkway. A community concession agreement is in place which stipulates that the village may retain 50 per cent of the entrance fees in return for ensuring that the cave formations are not damaged, that a local guide accompanies all groups into the cave, and that a 200-metre area of forest between the cave and roadside is not degraded.

Ban Nalan water system

Ban Nalan was one of the first villages included in tourism activities in 1999, and has become a success story for community development and tourism management. A clean water system was installed in the village with four standpipes, while the village has a general community agreement governing local tourism service provision.

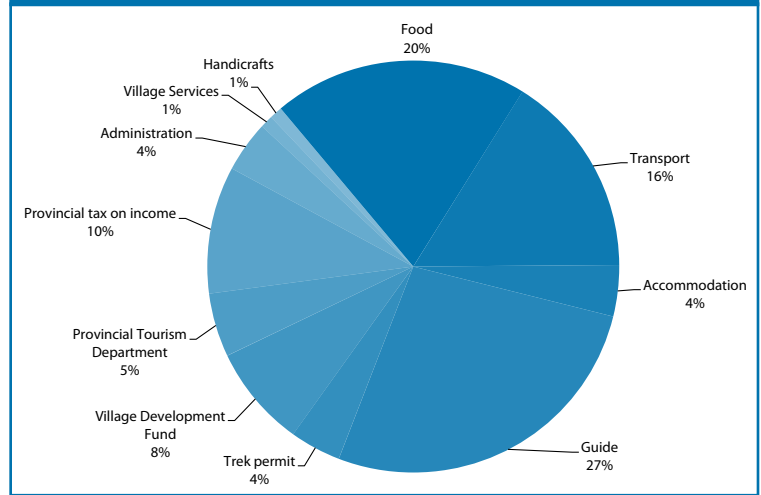
All visitors to Luang Namtha are targeted by information and education campaigns that encourage cultural and environmental sensitivity. The use of posters, a handbook, a website, and written behavioural guidelines displayed in tourist information centers, sends a clear message regarding appropriate behavior, in a number of languages. Much of the material used to develop these messages was contributed by host communities. Guide training also involves a component on how to facilitate culturally appropriate interaction between tourists and host communities.

Regular contact between officials and communities to monitor the economic, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism is a critical aspect of the NPA's management. Monitoring activities measure impacts at three levels: (i) the wider macroeconomic effects of tourism on the provincial economy, (ii) the collective impacts of tourism at the village level, and (iii) individual household perceptions of tourism's economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts within communities. NPA management staff members and local guides have been trained in data collection and analysis, with on-going monitoring activities providing a flow of information to decision-makers and community leaders that allows them to identify and remedy problems in tourism management when they arise.

Generating funds and sharing revenue

One of the major achievements of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project has been the institutionalization of tourism revenue-sharing schemes, generating public funds for tourism management, village development, and conservation activities. The Eco-Guide Service Unit, for instance, has a strict revenue-sharing arrangement for the use of trekking fees paid by visitors. These percentages cannot be changed without agreement between the Provincial Tourism Department, the Governor's Office, and the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office.

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Ecoguide Service Unit Revenue



Source: Nam Ha Ecotourism Project

All tourism revenues from activities in Luang Namtha contribute to a number of public funds, including:

Provincial Tourism Department Tax (5%)

This is a tax mandated by the Lao National Tourism Administration on tourism activities nationwide. The Provincial Tourism Department can request contributions from this central fund; the Luang Namtha provincial office has used these funds for marketing activities and to support the District Tourism Offices.

Village Development Fund (8%)

Managed by the Provincial Tourism Department, this fund is used to repair tourism infrastructure or purchase equipment for village lodges and cooking. There is no formal mechanism for villages to apply for its use.

Provincial Tax on Income (10%)

The Provincial Tax Office charges a flat tax of 10 per cent on income. This does not go towards any conservation, tourism management or development activities, but instead contributes to the Provincial Treasury.

Nam Ha NPA Trekking Permit (4%)

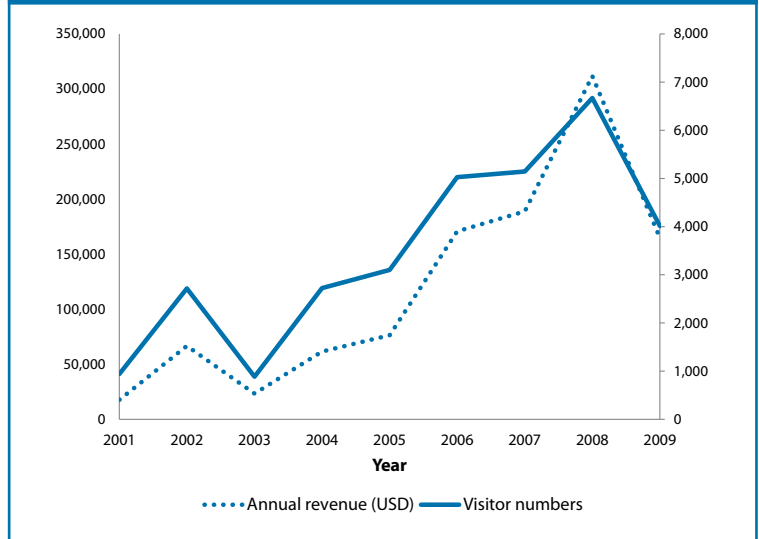
A USD 1.00 per person, per day trekking permit fee is levied on all tours, whether or not they pass through the protected area. In Muang Sing and Vieng Phoukha these fees are paid to the District

Agriculture and Forestry Offices for use by the district-based NPA Management Unit staff, and in Luang Namtha the fees are paid to the provincial NPA Management Unit. These fees fund conservation activities such as patrolling, trail maintenance and conservation awareness-raising activities in villages.

According to 2010 figures from Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Department, visitor numbers and annual ecotourism revenue grew steadily between 2001 and 2008. Of this income (totalling almost USD 1,000,000 between 2001 and 2009), 27 per cent has been directed to public funds. Other than local taxes and Provincial Tourism Department expenses (used for the information centre, meetings and administration) the remainder has been paid to villages, local guides, transport operators, and for local food and handicrafts. If all tourism spending in the province is taken into account, the total revenue from tourism accruing to local communities is much higher.

The project has identified a number of innovative strategies as being fundamental to its community-based tourism, conservation and development methodologies. Chief among these is the integration of tourism and natural resources management into the Luang Namtha provincial government strategy and priorities. Political support for tourism development and environmental protection goals has underpinned the Nam Ha Project from the outset. Secondly, the project's transparent revenue sharing and cooperative agreements have distinguished it from many similar efforts. Thirdly, responsive gender awareness-raising has been an important component of the management of Nam Ha NPA.

Fig. 2: Visitor number and ecotourism revenue 2001-2009

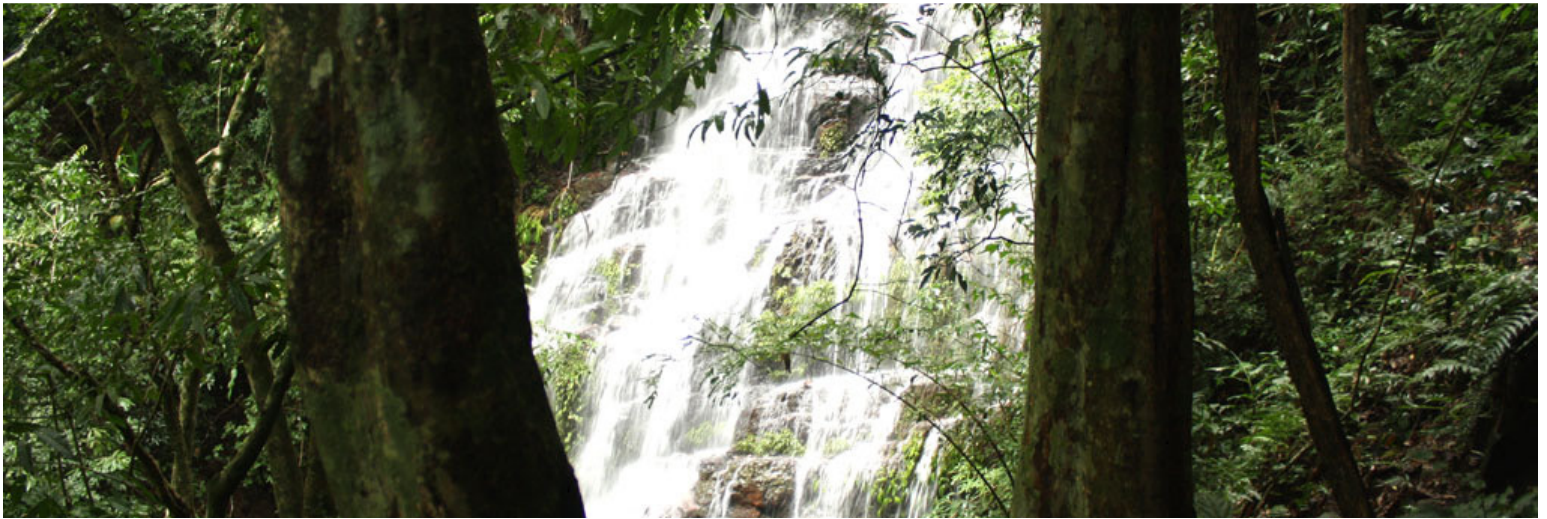


Source: Nam Ha Ecotourism Project

Finally, the project has played a proactive role in developing diversified village livelihood activities. Tourism numbers for Luang Namtha declined in 2009, possibly as a result of the global economic crisis, while the community of Ban Nalan has faced increased competition from private tour operators. It has therefore been important to develop supplementary livelihood strategies for the NPA communities by reinvesting revenues from tourism.



Impacts



BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

Adding value to natural resources

The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project has contributed to the conservation and sustainable use of the NPA's biodiversity in a number of ways. Through the development of alternative livelihood opportunities, the Project has reduced pressure on the natural resources of the NPA, with over 100 local people now employed as guides, cooks, handicraft producers and accommodation and transportation providers in the 17 villages that host community-based ecotours.

Additionally, the development of community-based tourism projects has conferred a new type of value on the ecosystems and biodiversity of the NPA in the following way: a community member that would formerly have harvested wild orchids for USD 0.20 per kg can now lead a group of tourists to these orchids as a village-based guide for USD 5 per day. The same principle holds for former hunters who are now employed as guides leading tourists to birds and wildlife. Local communities can now see a direct link between the economic benefits of forest-based ecotourism and conservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources upon which it is based.

Generating funds for conservation

Ecotourism has also generated funds for protected area management and conservation extension work. The guide service alone has generated over USD 8,000 for this since 1999, while other tour operators in Luang Namtha that are required to pay NPA user fees have paid over USD 10,000 to the NPA Management Unit since 2002. This source of revenue has helped to support this otherwise underfunded office.

Another benefit for the NPA management has been the devolution of monitoring, reporting and enforcement for conservation to the Provincial Tourism Department, the ecoguides, and the tourism net-

work throughout the NPA. This wide network of stakeholders had reinforced conservation and wildlife protection messages. Villages are more likely to report poaching or forest clearance transgressions to the Provincial Tourism Department, which in turn coordinates with the district-level or central NPA Management Unit. The NPA management staff is also permanently stationed within the project area, helping to integrate conservation principles into tourism activities. The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project has helped to market and advocate for the Nam Ha NPA, raising the profile of its conservation benefits at the provincial and national levels.

The establishment of village-based sanctuaries, meanwhile, has created small 'islands' within the forest too allow for the regeneration of non-timber forest products and small wildlife species. The development and enforcement of cooperative agreements between communities, tour operators and NPA managers has ensured that communities are invested in maintaining their local heritage and receive a fair share of the economic benefits that this generates. Fi-



nally, village-based monitoring teams and the presence of tourists on walking trails in the NPA has discouraged illegal activities such as poaching and illegal harvesting of non-timber forest products.

Threats to the protected area remain, however. Tracts of forest have been cleared for rubber cultivation in recent years by private investors. While some attempts have been successfully resisted with the support of the Governor's Office, the capacity of the NPA Management Unit and provincial Forestry Division to effectively police and enforce these concessions has been undermined by a lack of resources. A Forestry Conservation Fund has been created at the national level, with funds being made available for investments in infrastructure, reforestation, information signs, bush fire check points, and hiring staff, but to date, these funds have not reached the Nam Ha NPA. More rigorous monitoring systems are necessary to effectively halt further deforestation, and this will require considerable funding and political support.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

Alternative livelihoods and job creation

Ecotourism generates significant revenue for the local economy. Community eco-guides and associated service providers have received over USD 600,000 since 1999 from the Eco-Guide Service Unit treks alone. This represents significant additional income for a province where the GDP per capita is USD 389, versus USD 678 nationally.

Tourism has supplemented traditional village livelihoods, allowing community members to diversify their occupations, save money, purchase household items and pay school fees. For instance, women used to spend one or two days collecting bamboo or rattan shoots and then another day transporting them to market by foot, and could expect to earn USD 1-2 per day. These women can now spend two to three hours preparing a meal for tourists, and earn USD 3-6, without having to venture far from the village. The remaining time can be used for childcare or other household or economic activities.

In terms of job creation, the accommodation sector employs more than 300 people in Luang Namtha, while there are 172 full and part-time guides active in the province. Several hundred additional community members derive part-time employment from community-based tourism activities as food and accommodation providers. Throughout the province, the tourism sector is estimated to support more than a thousand additional job opportunities in restaurants, on tourism-related construction projects, in tour agencies, transportation, producing handicrafts, or supplying agricultural products to the tourism supply chain, making it a prominent source of local employment.

By training local people as guides for more than ten years, and establishing realistic and achievable guidelines for local small-scale tourism investment, the Nam Ha Project has supported private sector expansion and development in Luang Namtha. To date, four new private eco-guide service units have been launched in connection with the Nam Ha National Protected Area.



Channeling revenue to communities

In 2006, the Nam Ha Eco-Guide Service Unit sold 359 tours for a total of 1,787 persons, and generated USD 56,940 in gross revenue. This revenue accrued to participating communities in the following ways:

Communities and Merchants Selling Food & Water

On all tours, food and water is purchased at a set rate of USD 1.50 per meal, per person for a set menu. A small fee for cooking and firewood is included in this price.

Accommodation in Villages

The price of village-based accommodation was raised to around USD 2.00 per night in 2007. This money is paid directly to the village. Villagers receive a portion of the fee in return for housekeeping, with the remainder going into a village fund for lodge maintenance and other communal activities.

Transportation

Transport costs vary from USD 6-20 per trip depending on the distance and mode of transportation. Fees are paid directly to the driver, boatman or owner of the vehicle.

Guide Fees

Lead guides are paid USD 10-15 per day; assistant guides USD 9 per day, and village guides USD 5 per day. With groups of four or more tourists there are three guides per trip.

Handicrafts

A simple traditional handicraft is included in the price of each tour, and is presented to the tourists as a gift by one of the villages on the tour route. Villages that are designated to supply handicrafts are usually the last village on a tour circuit. A set price of USD 1.75 for the handicraft was negotiated in 2006 between communities and

tour operators. Additional sales are often made by the designated handicraft village or other villages.

Village Service Fees

Some villages on tour routes are asked to boil water, prepare picnic sites in the forest, or perform other small logistical support tasks for tour groups. They are paid for these services each time.

These categories represented USD 41,069 in total trip expenses paid to local service providers in 2006. The balance of USD 15,871 was paid into public funds, including Village Development Funds and taxes, and covered the Nam Ha Eco-Guide Service Unit operations and maintenance costs.

Including women and minorities

The Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Department and Nam Ha Eco-Guide Service mainstream gender issues into all tourism-related activities in the province. Monitoring data is disaggregated by gender and ethnicity, and shows that women and ethnic minorities have a high rate of participation in community-based tourism ventures run by the Nam Ha Eco-Guides. For instance, in 2006, 20 per cent of the guides were women and 95 per cent were members of ethnic minorities. Luang Namtha province has over 20 ethnic groups, representing about 66 per cent of the provincial population. The Nam

Ha Guide Service has played a leading role in the provincial Ethnic Minority Participation Programme, which encourages the inclusion of ethnic minorities in conservation and development activities.

POLICY IMPACTS

The UNESCO-LNTA Nam Ha Ecotourism Project has formed a core part of national policies for both rural development and Lao PDR's tourism sector. The latter is guided by the Lao PDR National Tourism Strategy for 2006-2020 which emphasizes the development of tourism products and services based on the country's cultural, natural and historic attractions. This strategy is exemplified by the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project's approach - it is estimated that more than half of the value of the Lao tourism industry is derived from nature- and culture-based activities.

The positive role tourism plays in national development, with specific reference to sustainable tourism models in Luang Namtha, has been identified and elaborated on in the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy, the Sixth National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006-2010), the National Tourism Strategy, the National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan (2006-2010) and the National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. The NPA Management Unit remains under-funded, however, and requires strengthening to improve the sustainable management of the protected area's resources.



Sustainability and Replication



SUSTAINABILITY

While the sustainability of Nam Ha Ecotourism Project is contingent on many financial, environmental and social factors, its transparent organizational structure has been of paramount importance in its sustained success. The development of ecotourism has ensured that many programme areas are self-sustaining. For example, the Nam Ha Eco-Guide Service Unit has been financially sustainable since 2002. Furthermore, financial management of the Project is transparent.

Ecological sustainability, meanwhile, has been ensured by the use of practices that minimise waste generation such as use of biodegradable packaging and non-imported foods, reduction in the use of fuel and use of renewable solar and micro-hydro energy in village lodges. Tour groups are usually kept to less than ten people to minimise environmental and cultural impacts on villages and trails.

Local communities' strong support for the project relies on several institutional factors, including participation of women and ethnic minorities in service provision and management, reinvestment of a substantial portion of revenue into village development activities, and ability to cover all operations and maintenance costs without subsidies or external funding. Specific regulations regarding management and supervision of the service have been developed in collaboration with guides, communities and provincial and national level authorities.

REPLICATION

Based on success of Nam Ha's Eco-Guide Service model, guide services have been initiated in two additional districts in Luang Namtha Province, while three services were opened in three separate provinces in Lao PDR between 2004 and 2006. In part, replication of the Nam Ha model has been facilitated by tourism awareness seminars held in the province for policy-makers and tourism service providers.

PARTNERS

At the provincial level, many stakeholders are involved in the development and management of Nam Ha Ecotourism Project. The main bodies involved in the ongoing implementation of the project include:

The Lao National Tourism Administration: Provides training and certification for guides, accommodation, restaurants and transportation providers; monitors and enforces tourism-related rules and regulations; assists with marketing and promotional activities; and screens investment proposals. The Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Office also provides the Nam Ha Guides with office space, equipment and a facility from which to coordinate and sell their tours.

The Nam Ha National Protected Area Management Unit: Conducts conservation awareness and patrolling in and around the protected area, using permit fees generated by the Nam Ha Eco-Guides. The management unit is also responsible for enforcing rules and regulations regarding the use of protected area resources, promoting ecotourism, and conducting research within the park.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Has provided technical assistance and monitoring with financial support from the New Zealand Government since 1999. For Phase II of the Nam Ha Project, this funding totaled USD 408,992.

Private sector tour operators and tourists: Adhere to the operational rules and regulations regarding visitor behavior, including prohibitions on wildlife consumption and the purchase of antiques, limits on tour group sizes and weekly departures, and requirements to use local guides, pay NPA permit fees, remove all waste, consume only village-produced food on all tours, and respect local cultural beliefs and customs. Tour operators are also involved in impact monitoring and in training and career development.

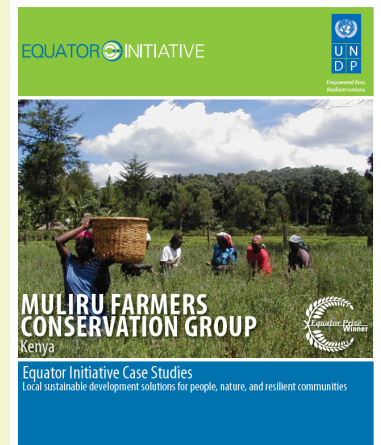
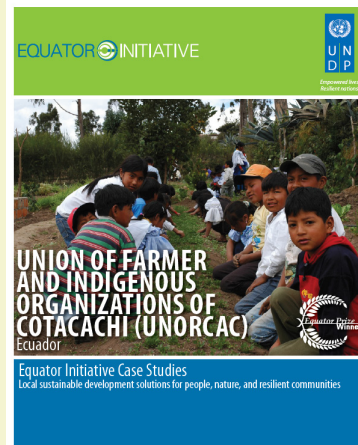
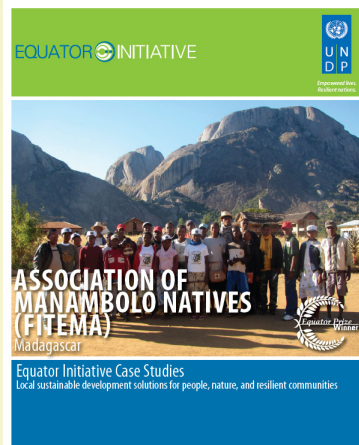
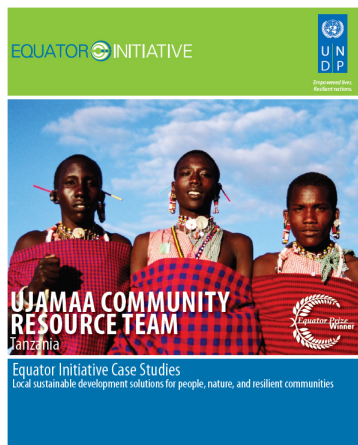
Additional stakeholders that play less direct roles in the operation and management of the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project are listed below:

- *Provincial Governor's Office:* sets tourism development policy, approves rules and regulations on tourism development and management.
- *Provincial Tourism Department / District Tourism Offices:* licenses and regulates tourism businesses, promotes tourism investment, including investment in small-scale community-based tourism, provides tourism-related training to the public and private sectors, undertakes destination marketing and promotion, monitors impacts.
- *Communities:* actively participate in and benefit from tourism activities, participate in the creation of operational rules and regulations for tourism in villages, conserve and manage natural and cultural resources.
- *Land Use Planning and Management Office:* performs land use planning and land use allocation, registers land and issues land ownership certificates.
- *Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices:* regulate tourism development and management in the NPA, supervise the conservation and management of the NPA
- *District Agriculture and Forestry Offices:* monitor and enforce forestry and land-use laws, disseminate rules and regulations on the conservation and management of the NPA for local people, identify tourism development zones, promote agricultural extension and food production activities
- *Department of Information and Culture:* promotes conservation activities related to local culture and traditions, and archaeological and historic sites; manages cultural resources including museums, cultural tourism sites and antiquities.
- *Science, Technology and Environment Office:* Oversees the environmental impact assessments process, collaborated with PTO to set up environmental management plans and regulations, establishes systems for managing solid waste and wastewater, and monitors impacts.
- *NGOs and Donor Agencies:* provide technical and financial assistance where needed and requested.
- *Department of Planning and Investment:* reviews and approves investment licenses, promotes investment in the tourism sector.
- *Department of Communication, Transport, Post and Construction:* surveys, designs and approves construction of tourism infrastructure
- *Tourist Police:* coordinate with PTO to regulate tourism businesses, issues rules and regulations on safety and security for visitors, regulate tourist guides according to government rules, and assist tourists with legal matters and lost property claims.
- *Army:* is consulted when zoning areas for tourism, is involved in controlling access to and patrolling the NPA.
- *Women's Union:* promotes gender equity and gender mainstreaming in the tourism sector, encourages local participation by women and ethnic minority women in tourism activities.
- *Department of Industry and Commerce:* promote handicrafts and local products, licenses small businesses, constructs and regulates market places.
- *Lao Front for National Construction:* helps encourage local participation to protect and conserve natural and cultural resources; helps resolve conflicts in and between villages.
- *Lao Youth Union:* conduct awareness building activities on how to mitigate negative impacts of tourism on youth.

FURTHER REFERENCE

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