



# REHABILITATION AND CONSERVATION OF NYAPALMS

AT CAM THANH COMMUNE,  
HOI AN CITY, QUANG NAM

VN/SGP/UNEP-SCS/09/02

- **Project Implementation Years:** 2010-2013
- **Project Site:** Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City, Quang Nam Province
- **Implementing Organization:** Cam Thanh Communal Association of Farmers, Hoi An City, Quang Nam Province
- **Beneficiaries:** Cam Thanh communal community, and fishermen from Hoi An City and coastal districts in the vicinity of Thu Bon River and local people engaged in tourism services in Hoi An city, Quang Nam province.
- **Area of Biodiversity:** the Cam Thanh nipa palm ecosystem



*Nipa palm is a mangrove species found predominantly in the downstream of Thu Bon River, particularly in Cam Thanh commune, Hoi An City. Nipa palm forest supports a diversity of aquatic organisms and bring in income for local people, who depend on the catching of economically valued species of fish, shrimp and crab. Unfortunately, there is a growing trend in decrease in natural resources due to unsustainable nipa palm harvesting activities taking place in recent years, and this has resulted in the decline of income that local people who depend on fishing in nipa palm forests for their livelihoods.*

*From 2010 to 2013, Cam Thanh Communal Association of Farmers (of Hoi An city) implemented a project on “**Rehabilitation and conservation of nyapalms at Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City, Quang Nam**” with financial assistance provided by the GEF SGP in Viet Nam in order to protect land in the Thu Bon River mouth from erosion caused by waves and winds and contribute to Cam Thanh nipa palm conservation and sustainable natural resources exploitation in this area.*

## ■ PROJECT CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

### Specific Objectives of the project included:

- 1** Rehabilitate Cam Thanh nipa palm forest ecosystem;
- 2** Improve local capacity to manage the nipa palm area effectively;
- 3** Implement sustainable natural resources exploitation in the protected area.

Cam Thanh commune is three km south-east of the central Hoi An city. It has a total area of 894, 43 ha and eight villages as its administrative units. Cam Thanh includes an area of wetland of importance and natural resources such as nipa palm forest and sea grass grounds. Cam Thanh nipa palm forest is one of the rich mangrove forest ecosystems found in the downstream of the Thu Bon River and is a rich habitat for species of aquatic fauna in this estuary. Cam Thanh nipa palm forest is also home to various species of aquatic fauna, and it serves as a windbreak and a shelter to protect fishermen and fishing boats along canals from typhoons. Cam Thanh nipa palm forest not only supports the sustainable development of local coastal fishing economy, it also contributes to the development of a community based eco-tourism system.

However, due to unsustainable exploitation activities over recent years, there is a trend in decline in local resources and this has resulted in decrease in incomes from fishing in the nipa palm forest which local people depend on. In 2010, 68.8% of local people's livelihoods depended on fishing in nipa palm forest, by 2013 this figure had reduced to 55.5%.

The GEF SGP funded project on “*the rehabilitation and conservation of Cam Thanh nipa palm forest for eco-tourism and sustainable development*” was implemented from 2010-2013. The objective of the project was to protect and reforest nipa palm forest ecosystems in order to conserve Cam Thanh nipa palm forest, support sustainable use of local natural resources, and contribute to mitigating environmental pollution and contribute to developing eco-tourism.

## ■ MAIN ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

1. Undertake field surveys and organize community based workshops to discuss about local nipa palm conservation; Organize community based workshops on the planning of local nipa palm zoning and management rules for a working team; and develop regulations on nipa palm management.
2. Mobilize local communities to participate in the rehabilitation of nipa palm forest; develop mechanisms for sharing benefits among communities in land areas where nipa palms are naturally rehabilitated; establish a nursery of nipa palms; and organize the planting of nipa palms over an area of 15ha.
3. Establish a community based network of voluntary watchmen; provide them with facilities and equipment; organize study-tours; launch communication campaigns to raise awareness of benefits from sustainable nipa palm forest protection and harvest.
4. Search for and pilot relevant technical solutions to sustainable nipa palm leaf harvest; launch consultations with local communities about local livelihoods; provide technical and financial supports for local communities to demonstrate alternative income forms.
5. Organize demonstrations and training of community based eco-tourism initiatives; involve local communities in the design of training programs for local eco-tourism development.



## ■ RESULTS AND IMPACTS

### IMPACTS OF BIODIVERSITY

#### **Natural Ecosystem Conservation**

- The project has contributed to the conservation a native species *Nypa fruticans* Wurmb (or “Bay Mau” in local language) over an area of about 84 ha in Cam Thanh commune. Nipa palms are now grown along major rivers and small canals in rows of 3-20 meters wide, providing a rich habitat and breeding ground with high biodiversity and economic values.
- The establishment and development of Cam Thanh nipa palm protected area, Hoi An city, in addition to a cluster of Tam Hai coral reef ecosystem protected area in Nui Thanh and the Cham Island’s MPA, has created a network of marine conservation in Quang Nam. This network contributes to conservation and the sustainable harvest of its natural resources offers more sustainable livelihoods for local fishermen.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

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### Social Impacts

- Through the implementation of project's activities, local people and authorities have become aware of the importance of nipa palm forest and as the result, they have taken active actions to rehabilitate the forest.
- The project has involved all the stakeholders, especially local communities in directly harvesting nipa palms. Through the implementation of project's activities, local communities have realized various values of nipa palm forest and have voluntarily participated in the protection and management of the forest.
- The project has mobilized the participation of local communities in the development of local eco-tourism.

### Economic impacts



#### *Rational Natural Resource Exploitation and Expansion of Production Scale*

- The conservation of Cam Thanh nipa palm forest has efficiently supported local community's livelihoods and local socio-economic development, through nipa palm land/seascapes tourism, fauna and flora resources in the nipa palm forest and harvest of nipa palm leaves. At present, there are 20% of households in Cam Thanh commune rely on harvesting of nipa palm leaves for their livelihoods. Nipa palm leaves are used by local people to make thatched rooves for houses.



- During the project implementation and upon its completion, Cam Thanh has developed and provided the tourist service of homestay in its nipa palm forest (there are about 50 households engaged in this service). Average monthly income from the homestay service accounts from 9 to 12 million VND. Incomes are also earned from other tourist activities such as the rowing of coracles (small traditional boats) in the nipa palm forest provided by the Van Lang village's tourist group (of 27 members), which operates in accordance with rules established by its community. The rowing of coracles is now considered by the villagers a new livelihood that enables the improvement of their daily income. The rowing of coracles has provided another livelihood option for the villagers and increased their income by 21% monthly.

- The income of local people depending on natural materials has increased considerably compared to past years. This can be attributed to the growing demand of customers, stable inputs and outputs, increasing sale prices, and expanding production scales. The highest income of those households engaged in producing products made of bamboo and/or nipa palm accounts from 10 - 15 million VND per month (approximately 23% of the total households). Most of households (46%) earn from 3 - 4 million per month, and 31% earn 6 - 7 million per month. However, the income from the production of products made of bamboo and nipa palm is not enough to cover a household's living costs and therefore many people must do additional jobs to earn more income for their families.

### ***Eco-tourism Development***

- In Cam Thanh commune, eco-tourism is based on the principles of nipa palm conservation and sharing of benefits among local people. The local community are important players in the conservation of nipa palm forest that serves as base for maintaining local eco-tourism.

- Products made of bamboo and nipa palm by Cam Thanh craft village now are unique tourist products. The conservation of Cam Thanh nipa palm forest has created a stockpile of these materials for the craft village. Therefore, the planning of the craft village development needs to take into consideration the benefits gained from the conservation of nipa palm forest.

- The rowing of coracles in the Cam Thanh nipa palm forest is a prospective livelihood. In recent years, the number of local households engaged in this tourist service has been increasing and this has resulted increased income from this service. Average monthly income of households engaged in providing coracle rowing service increases to 4.5 million VND from 3.7 million VND they earned before this tourist service was offered.



## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

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- A community group of 27 tourism operators operate in accordance with rules discussed and agreed to by the local community. The local eco-tourism has been developed based on the principles of nipa palm forest conservation and benefit sharing among local people.
- The project has involved local communities, authorities and businesses participating in the exploitation of resources from the nipa palm forest in a well coordinated manner to support local livelihoods and eco-tourism development.



## THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT

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- Upon the completion of the project, there are four community groups established in Cam Thanh commune, which are engaged in aquaculture, bamboo and nipa palm craft, rowing of corals and tourism service. Every year, the city provides three training courses for local people (about 25-30 participants each of course) in order to improve their capacity in eco-tourism operation. In addition, every year the commune also holds three meetings to provide all members of the community groups and opportunity to exchange their experiences in eco-tourism operation.
- Every year, Cam Thanh receives 10,000 tourists, and most of them are provided with services by local hotels, travel companies, or “homestay” operators. There are few opportunities for local people to earn incomes from these tourists and thus, few or no funds are available to invest in the rehabilitation and conservation of local natural resources and/or land/seascapes as common community assets. The locality has proposed to extend a system” for charging entrance fee to the Cam Thanh ecological buffer zone in order to diversify financial resources to facilitate the community participation.
- During the project implementation and upon its completion, there were many research projects developed and undertaken. The results produced by the projects are the beginning of eco-tourism development in the Cam Thanh nipa palm area contributing to the improvement of local community’s livelihoods and socio-economic conditions as well as regional biodiversity conservation.

## ■ LESSONS LEARNT

1

It is necessary to integrate benefits of the community groups with the conservation and sustainable utilization of nipa palm forest in Cam Thanh, Hoi An.

2

Further study and analysis of benefits gained from the Cam Thanh nipa palm forest need to be undertaken in order to involve local people, stakeholders and authorities participating in integrated natural resources management of the estuary of Hoi An city.


## ■ KEY ACTORS



- Farmers' Association of Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City, Quang Nam Province
- Cam Thanh Communal PC, Hoi An City, Quang Nam Province
- Communities in villages of Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City, Quang Nam Province
- Local Tourism Businesses and Services

## ■ SOURCES OF DATA & INFORMATION

- ▶ Seminar/workshop documents and reports, videos and photos of project's field activities provided by Cam Thanh Communal Association of Farmers.
- ▶ Website of the Cham Island MPA and the Cham Island –Hoi An Biosphere Reserve <http://www.culaochamppa.com.vn>
- ▶ Project's reports.



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