



**THINK GLOBALLY - ACT LOCALLY**

## **VAN LONG WETLAND NATURE RESERVE COMMUNITY'S CONSERVATION AREA**

*Developing a community project to contribute to biodiversity conservation of  
Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve in Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh Province  
(VIE/01/008)*





## BACKGROUND

Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve is located in Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh Province. The Reserve is home of the Delacour's langur which is listed by the IUCN – Primate Specialist Group as a critical endangered species and on the list of the 25 world's TOP most endangered primate's species. Due to the community low environmental awareness and low standard of living, the local community has overexploited the Reserve resources for their daily livelihoods, resulting in the biodiversity loss and deforestation.

In addition, illegal hunting from local residents and outsiders is also a big problem in the area and a major threat to biodiversity conservation. Although the Province has designated the area as a local nature reserve, there is very limited investment in the Reserve management and protection.

## KEY ACTORS

- ◆ Farmers' Association of Gia Van Commune, Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh Province
- ◆ Commune authorities and Farmers' Association of the seven participating communes
- ◆ Van Long Nature Reserve Management Board
- ◆ Provincial Department of Agricultural Extension and of Veterinary Services
- ◆ Farmers' Association and Department of Agricultural and Rural Development and of Education of Gia Vien District
- ◆ National University and the Ecological Associations of Viet Nam

## MAIN PURPOSE AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The project aims to develop a model of integrated conservation and development which promotes the community participation in the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources and the riverine wetland ecosystem of Van Long nature reserve.

1. Contribute to the Reserve management and protection by establishing community guard teams, developing community regulation, and building local capacity in nature reserve management.
2. Reduce community pressure on the natural resources of the Reserve by creating alternative livelihoods for the local community, hence contributing to poverty alleviation in the area.
3. Raise environmental awareness and improve knowledge and understanding of the community, local leaders, and other key stakeholders on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development; and about GEF and GEF/SGP.
4. Strengthen the capacity of the Commune Farmers' Association in environmental project management and build the partnership of local stakeholders to support and strengthen community and the Commune Farmers' Association to address environmental problems and promote sustainable development.



## NATURE OF ACTION - ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIONS

1. *Building local capacity in nature reserve management and protection. Organise training workshops and study tours on nature reserve management and protection, skills in organizing environmental awareness raising activities.*
2. *Establishing community guard teams and develop community regulation in reserve management and protection.*
3. *Carrying out environmental awareness raising and environmental education activities.*
4. *Providing technical and financial assistance to targeted local community to undertake income-generating activities at the household level.*



## ACHIEVED RESULTS, INSTITUTED CHANGE, IMPACT ON POLICY

Photo by Le Bich



1. Mechanisms to promote participation of local authorities and communities in the Nature Reserve management and protection developed. 7 commune guard teams were established and have been well-cooperated with the Nature Reserve Management Board in the protection of the Nature Reserve. Community regulation on the Reserve management and protection was developed and adopted by the participating commune authorities, and applied in all participating communes.

2. Capacity in nature reserve management, especially in organizing awareness raising activities and eco-tourism, of participating communes strengthened. The project has targeted commune leaders, mass organizations and commune guard teams in its capacity building activities. It has organized a series of training workshops and study tours aiming to broaden their knowledge and improve their skills in nature reserve management. A system of loudspeakers was installed and has effectively promoted propaganda, including raising community awareness about the Reserve and the Government policy/programmes.

3. Environmental awareness raising and environmental education activities organized. The key target groups include young school children and public in general. An environmental education curriculum and school extra activities was developed and tested at primary and secondary schools. Biodiversity conservation is integrated in relevant subjects, such as biology, geography, chemistry, etc. at primary and secondary schools, using the Nature Reserve as an example for school teaching and learning activities on environment and biodiversity conservation. Environmental contests and campaigns were organized to commemorate environment days such as world environment day, biodiversity day, etc. These events have attracted active participation of the community.

4. Income-generating activities were identified and tested, aiming to reduce pressure on exploitation of natural resources of the Nature Reserve. The project has provided technical assistance (through technical trainings and study tours) and financial assistance (through a revolving loan programme) to targeted local community (100 households) in animal husbandry activities, a major source of income of the community in the project area. New varieties of cows and pigs were introduced, technical trainings organized in veterinary service and breeding. In order to treat animal waste, biogas model was developed. Seven (7) biogas was built for demonstration and 70 households have been given a loan to install biogas.

5. Skills and capacity of project partner and experts strengthened. The grantee has had opportunities to participate in training activities on project management and exchange visits to GEF/SGP projects. The project success has contributed to improving their credibility with the local authorities and community. The grantee has developed a good working partnership with the Reserve Management Board and other relevant local government agencies, such as the Provincial Department of Science, Technology and Environment, the Provincial Department of Agricultural Extension, and the scientific institutions at the central level, such as the National University and the Ecological Associations of Viet Nam.

## OBSTACLES AND PROBLEMS SOLVED

The project grantee has faced difficulties in project planning and budgeting, and seeking financial committed contribution from the provincial people's committees. The main reason for the problems is the limited capacity of the grantee in project management. As a Farmers' Association, they lack expertise and experience in environmental education and conservation activities. In addition, the project has been implemented in the 7 communes, which is also difficult for the project grantee in project M&E and in cooperating with participating authorities and Farmers' Associations of other communes.

Measures to address the key issues included the followings.



- ◆ GEF/SGP identified good local sources of technical assistance and assisted the project grantee in developing TORs for these services.
- ◆ GEF/SGP together with the local relevant agencies, such as the Department of Agricultural and Rural Development and of Education, and the Van Long Nature Reserve Management Board assisted the grantee in project planning and seeking financial committed contribution from the provincial and commune people's committees
- ◆ The project has developed and adopted a mechanism for cooperation among the seven communes in project implementation. The principles of participatory, transparency and democracy in project management have been applied.
- ◆ GEF/SGP provided the grantee with training opportunities in project management.





## KEY LESSONS

1. The task of raising public awareness of GEF and GEF/SGP among local authorities, relevant agencies and community where GEF/SGP projects take place is of major significance. It needs to be carried out in the first place and in a regular manner. It is crucial to raise awareness and understanding among GEF/SGP partners and key stakeholders through the dissemination of information on the GEF/SGP criteria right at the stage of project development.

2. The community's ownership, response, acceptance and participation into the process of project development and implementation is a decisive factor for the project success and sustainability. The linkage between conservation activities and sustainable livelihoods should be made to ensure the project's sustainability. The revolving loan programme managed by the grantee's organisation proves to be suitable to income-generating activities, ensuring equality, raising awareness and responsibilities, getting rid of dependability among both the community and the local government, as well as the mechanism of begging-giving, and promoting the financial sustainability of the projects.

3. Building the GEF/SGP partners' capacity through training workshops on project development and implementation plays a decisive role in enhancing the quality of project proposals and the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation.

4. Full participation of local key stakeholders, including local authorities and relevant agencies, and communities, in project development and management is an important factor contributing to the project success. The role and the pledged contribution by local governments is very necessary for the project implementation, replication and sustainability. Ownership of GEF/SGP projects by local governments is very important and is one of the elements that could contribute to project sustainability.

5. The GEF/SGP assistance in project development and implementation is very necessary, significantly contributing to enhancing the project quality and implementation efficiency. In project implementation, it is necessary to assist grantees in building detailed project workplans suitable to the local conditions in order to ensure the progress of project implementation and achievement of project objectives within the project timeframe.



## PROJECT LOCATION

7 communes in the buffer zone of the Nature Reserve, Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh Province

## PROJECT BUDGET

**Total project budget:**  
US\$ 78,144

**Contribution from GEF/SGP:**  
US\$ 50,000

**In-cash cofinancing:**  
US\$ 6,950

**In-kind cofinancing:**  
US\$ 21,194

## PROJECT DURATION

June 2001 – June 2004

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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