

Bridging Economic Development and Biodiversity Conservation through Value Chain Approach in Viet Nam

A Success Story

Background

Viet Nam is one of the region's richest countries in biodiversity. It harbors an astonishing range of habitats, from rain forests and dry forests to mangroves and coral reefs, and is home to an unusually rich array of plants and animals. In fact, there are currently 8 national parks declared as ASEAN Heritage Parks in Viet Nam. However, threats to biodiversity still exist, halting the nation's economic development, also because the potential of biodiversity for a country's economy is often still unknown.

Ba Be National Park, located in Bac Kan Province, named after Ba Be Lake, Vietnam's largest and highest, natural freshwater lake. The Park and is the centerpiece of a landscape dominated by limestone mountains and covered in thick forest making it a premier tourist site in northeast Viet Nam. The National Park, also declared as ASEAN Heritage Park, covers 10,048 hectares and was established to conserve important ecosystems and rare plant and animal species.

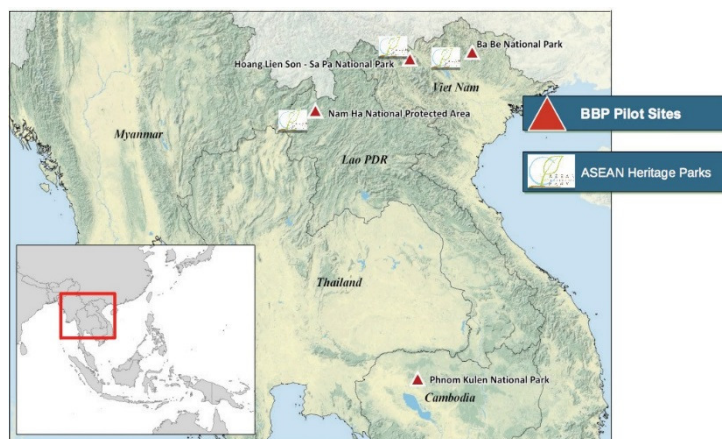
Hoang Lien Sa Pa National Park, with a total area of 29,845 hectares, is in the northwestern boarder region of Vietnam. It is home to the Fansipan mountain lording at 3,143 meter above sea level in the northern section of Viet Nam, the highest mountain of Indochina and a major tourist attraction. It hosts the most abundant flora and fauna due to the varying landscapes on diverse range of latitudes. It was declared an ASEAN Heritage Park in 2002 and the following year, as one of the four UNESCO Asian Heritage Parks in Viet Nam.

However, despite their tourist attractions, life is not easy for the local people living in and around the mountainous national parks in Vietnam's Northern area. Lack of agricultural land and low education leads to high poverty rates, which often leads to unsustainable exploitation of the forest areas.

The project

In order to bridge the urgent need for sustainable economic development for the villagers and for the protection of biodiversity, the project "Biodiversity –based Products (BBP) as an Economic Source for the Improvement of Livelihoods and Biodiversity Protection" is supporting local communities in the buffer zones of protected areas to generate sustainable income through the promotion of biodiversity-based value chains.

Funded by the Federal Government of Germany through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the BBP project is being jointly implemented in Cambodia,



Lao PDR and Viet Nam by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and GFA Consulting Group GmbH.

In Viet Nam, the project is implemented in cooperation with the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA) of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the management of Ba Be National Park and Hoang Lien Sapa National Park for the development of 4 biodiversity value chains in the 2 ASEAN Heritage Parks.

Biodiversity Value Chains

Four biodiversity value chains were supported in Viet Nam. All these products are highly demanded:

- **Bo Khai Vegetable in Ba Be National Park:** Whether boiled or stir-fried, the vegetable bo khai, has been enjoyed by the people of Vietnam for years. It has been used for treating diseases related to the liver and kidney and rheumatism. However, bo khai's availability in the wild began to decline as the people were not aware of the sustainable means of harvesting. To meet the high demand and to support income for local communities, sustainable household cultivation for bo khai was supported by the project and the villagers established a business partnership with San Ha cooperative, specialized on marketing of bo khai.
- **Honey Production in Ba Be National Park:** Bee keeping is one of the most important agricultural activities in the world and very suitable around the park. Farmers have been involved in the craft using traditional methods in bee keeping and the collection of honey. The BBP project established beekeeping for 44 new households through provision of local bees and modern honey extractors, trainings in advanced bee keeping techniques as well



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as support in business planning and marketing and branding.

- **Giao Co Lam Tea in Hoang Lien National Park:** It is well known that drinking Giao Co Lam tea provides many health benefits. The plant used to be abundant in Hoang Lien Sapa and some locals overharvested it for tea production so the plant was almost extinct in some areas. The BBP Project supported the sustainable growing and harvesting of the Giao Co Lam in home garden as well as in forest areas and linked the villagers to the professional CatCat Cooperative as business partner which was also supported in advanced business planning and a modern dryer and vacuum packaging machine.
- **Medicinal Bath Herbs in Hoang Lien National Park:** Traditionally, people have experienced the relief brought about by medicinal bath herbs such as muscle pain. This is the reason why herbal baths have been promoted to locals and tourists in Hoang Lien. The BBP project supported local communities in expanding the growing area on their land, especially at the edge of the forest with high quality seedlings and through premium sales-purchase contracts with a professional bath herb producer who will also expand the model to other villages.

Project Milestones and Successes

- Four production groups or clubs have been formally organized, one for each product. Group formation included the formulation of group regulations, which also regulates the management of the resources, prohibits harmful / destructive practices, use of pesticides etc., which were officially recognized and approved by local governments.
- Capacity building measures improved knowledge and capacity of local villagers on better sustainable planting, tending and harvesting practices for better biodiversity protection. It also improved knowledge on food safety and packaging/handling of raw material and products and business planning and negotiation skills.
- The establishment of nurseries and seedling production have enhanced in situ and ex situ planting, the latter focusing on establishing or supporting home garden areas for villagers so that the pressure on the forest resources is reduced.

- Giao Co Lam, medicinal bath herbs and bo khai were re-introduced to the forest areas where they were extinct or nearly extinct.
- The project also connected the local community members with better markets and business partners that enables them to receive a premium price through guaranteed consumption contracts or sales-purchase agreements with buyers or producers (processing companies), to continue also after the project end.
- Market access for producers including marketing, branding and labelling was supported as well as the improvement of production equipment.
- Food safety certification was awarded to the bo khai producers
- While the BBPs are rarely the sole source of income for households, they contribute significantly to the overall improved income situation of the households and biodiversity protection in and around the national parks.

The pilot projects in Viet Nam have shown that sustainable management of natural resources and economic development can go hand-in-hand. The value chain approach brings together government, private sector and communities to find better ways in reducing poverty by using but not depleting the natural resources and providing new opportunities for local communities in remote areas around protected areas.

Quick Facts

ASEAN Heritage Park	Value Chain	Number of Households	Business Partners
Ba Be National Park	Bo Khai Vegetable	111	San Ha Cooperative
	Honey	44	Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry
Hoang Lien National Park	Giao Co Lam Tea	52	CatCat Cooperative
	Medicinal Bath Herbs	93	Hung Dung Company

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