



**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED
NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-VIE-09-331 – Promoting Active Participation of Civil Society in
Environmental Governance in Vietnam**

Date: 14 August 2013

on environmental protection into HCMPA's

officials and civil servants (ToT scheme for future trainers at level sub-academies) must have been predictable. Based on our comments on impact and efficiency, we recommend to the grantee to remind HCMPA/VIHR that it already issued a detailed integration plan, which recommended the introduction of lectures based on the]: [b & q Á ã ~ ã for the 2012-2013 school year (see also An} ^ ç Á G Á [- Á @ Á * ! ã ç ^ q Á ã ã narrative report).

f Both IUCN and HCMPA/VIHR officials were

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

i. The project and evaluation objectives

(iii) Development context

In 1986 Vietnam launched the Đổi Mới (Renovation) campaign, which marked the beginning of its transition from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. The economy grew at an annual average rate of 7.3%¹. During the same period (1990 - 2011), the per capita income grew more than six fold (from USD 220² in 1990, via USD 480 in 2003, to USD 1,400 in 2011³), catapulting an originally extremely poor country up to lower middle-income level.

Since attaining the middle-income country status, Vietnam has continued to sustain comparatively high growth rates, even during macro-economic instability in 2011 and against a backdrop of global economic uncertainty. The annual GDP growth rates were 5.9% in 2011 and 5.3% in 2012, hence lower than in 2010 (6.8%), but still robust⁴. According to newly established poverty lines for 2011-2015, the household poverty rate was still 20.7% in 2010⁵. While efforts to reduce poverty and economic achievements of Vietnam are impressive, new and increasing population (estimated at 88.78 million in 2012)⁶ have generated a variety of environmental issues. Among these are most importantly deforestation and forest resource depletion, rapid deterioration of soil quality and arable land per capita, reduction of marine resources, water and air pollution, loss of biodiversity, but also the harmful effects of war (especially toxic chemicals)⁷. All of these and the impact of global climate change have serious consequences for the natural environment, thus negatively affecting both the

Recent assessments made by the World Bank (WB) estimate that environmental pollution costs Vietnam 5.5% of its national GDP annually⁸. Xà dạt qđ [c'] { ^ } Á@!^ [!^Á@e Á] [[c' Á%^^ } Á'] [, @E& qđ * ÁÁ [& • Á] Á@Á ~ qđ Á - Á@ ÁÁ&á^ } qđ } cđ [{ ^ } cđ

the 1993 Law on Environmental Protection in November 2005. More specific laws and regulations were put in place, targeting e.g. land use, water utilization and management. The 2012¹⁰. Sustaining environment and natural resources while implementing legal and institutional reforms, enhancing the role of civil society in the protection of the environment: this highly commendable ambition of the Vietnamese government, however, so far has produced statements of programmatic character rather than practical solutions.

The 2005 amendment of the Law on Environmental Protection increased the obligat

they are currently given the power to do so.

At the time of this report, MoNRE is about to complete a draft that will once more amend the existing Law on Environmental Protection. This involves a consultation process to allow stakeholders to provide their comments. The submission to the government and National Assembly is expected for July and October 2013 respectively¹³. While the details of the final draft are not known yet stakeholders are reportedly advocating for the inclusion of significantly improved rules to facilitate the participation of the public in the protection of the environment.

¹³ Source: [http://vea.gov.vn/en/news/news/Pages/Mobalizing-resources-to-complete-the-draft-Law-on-Environmental-Protection-\(Amended\).aspx](http://vea.gov.vn/en/news/news/Pages/Mobalizing-resources-to-complete-the-draft-Law-on-Environmental-Protection-(Amended).aspx)

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

(i) Project strategy and approach

The overall objective of the Governance+ project, as defined in the Project Document (UDF-VIE-09-331) in September 2010, was to improve environmental conditions in Vietnam through increased participation of civil society in environmental monitoring and reporting.

The project approach aimed for three key outcomes:

- f Increased high-level government support for NGO participation in environmental monitoring and reporting;
- f Improved environmental media coverage;
- f Formation and support of a network of local environmental NGOs through networking, information sharing, and IUCN membership.

through targeted advocacy, but these private, voluntary and non-profit organizations remained few in number and displayed limited levels of institutional capacity. While these NGOs aspired to achieve independent oversight and appropriate levels of government accountability, the extent of their actual contribution was limited, given the lack of knowledge, skills and the main reasons why forests continued to degrade, the illegal wildlife trade thrived, dams were built without adequate consultation, and environmental safeguards were widely ignored.

Striving to enhance environmental conditions in Vietnam, IUCN had particular expectations from its close cooperation with VIHHR, CETAC and CIFOR:

- f the introduction of a revised environment and human rights curriculum by the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (HCMPA), which trains
- f an expanded news coverage and analysis/reporting of better quality by environmental journalists.

The project is fully consistent with IUCN's mission statement for Vietnam, which is the organization was among the first NGOs to open a local office in Hanoi in 1993. However, engagement in the country started as early as 1984, by providing support to the development of biodiversity conservation and environmental protection laws and policies. Contributions were made, among others, to the Forest Law (2004), the Environment Law (2005) and the Biodiversity Law (2008). The present UNDEF-funded project illustrates a shift of strategic focus from policy formulation to policy implementation, by exposing the Vietnamese government to pressure, but also by supporting it, to increase transparency and accountability vis-à-vis environmental concerns.

¹⁴ Source: http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/asia/asia_where_work/vietnam/about/

(ii) Logical framework

The Project Document translates IUCN's programmatic approach into a structured plan of project activities and intended outcomes, including the achievement of the project's overall and specific objectives. The framework below aims to capture the project logic systematically, also attempting to eliminate confusion between activities, intended outcomes and impacts, whic

the delivery of the curriculum (through co-authorship), the project grantee aspired to increase support and demand for civil society participation among senior government officials and thus to improve the enabling environment for local environmental NGOs.

3. Local Environmental NGO Capacity Building

Despite IUCN's long-standing involvement in environmental protection in Vietnam, its membership base remained small over the past years. It is understood that the focus during its earlier period of involvement in Vietnam, which aimed to influence environmental policy, was probably perceived by local NGOs as a need for close collaboration. IUCN addressed this by seeking to share information, by forging joint initiatives and by offering advice and financial support to non-member NGOs.

Accordingly, the project-funded project was to offer non-member NGOs more opportunities of operational support in those areas in which they most often lack capacity. For example, NGOs e.g. in strategic planning, financial management, and communications, thus helping them to meet key donor standard criteria. It was also hoped that the activities would convince some beneficiaries that IUCN membership would be advantageous for the achievement of their organizational objectives in the long-term.

(ii) Effectiveness

The project's final narrative report describes a generally successful project. As a matter of fact, the project completed all of its scheduled activities within the extended project implementation period. However, at the time of the evaluation visit, the integration of the training manual on the Rights-Based Approach to Environment

!^] !^•^} cœã^•Á Áœ(^!•qã) áÁ [{ ^} qÁ } ã } •, was integrated in the final version of the training manual, of which 2500 copies were produced by IUCN.

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from across a variety of disciplines has started to make use of the manual, as and when appropriate. However, evaluators have noted that the grantee (upon UNDEF recommendation) organized two additional workshops to provide local NGOs with the opportunity to demonstrate the practical benefits of their environmental protection work to 88 officials (representing different levels of governance similar to the groups of participants above) and to directly discuss with them the barriers they face when trying to support civil society participation.

2. Media Engagement

Under this component IUCN planned, among other outputs, to provide training and a refresher workshop for 20 journalists. This being a key output, the grantee clearly exceeded this target figure. Three different workshops on sustainable forest management, marine and coastal ecosystems, and water resources management (including field trips to Hanoi, Son La, Hue, Quang Nam, and Dong Thap Province) were followed by 45 journalists and involved also the participation of 13 experts/resource persons and 9 local authority

Participants of the Media Training on representatives. Instead of the planned refresher activity, an awareness-raising trip to Co To Island in Quang Ninh Province was

jointly organized with Green Viet Nam Journey, a government initiative that takes journalists around the country to see environmental problems at first hand. Promoting the use of biologically degradable bags instead of plastic bags the trip demonstrated how to make paper bags and included a joint beach cleanup initiative with coast guards and students from the universities of Hanoi and Hai Phong.

Among prominent examples of effectively increased media coverage produced by local journalists after these journalist trainings are:

- f* Articles on biodiversity in Vietnam on 19 April 2012 and 18 Jan 2013, based on interviews with IUCN, WWF, MARD, VEA/MONRE and other local institutions;
- f* Two documentary films on mangroves restoration and conservation in Quang Nam Province, broadcasted on Da Nang VTV in February 2013.

The fact that workshop participants in post-training surveys rated field trips as most useful highlights the understanding they have effectively achieved of the importance of local research and interviews. Disappointment about the short duration of some fieldtrips confirms their desire for more opportunities to engage in investigative environmental journalism. Given this feedback evaluators consider the project has effectively generated new potential for environmental media coverage of improved quality.

including costs for workshop organization and for contractual services for piloting the manual with selected government officials and for conducting a journalist training needs assessment). Supported the networking with and among local environmental NGOs, a further 18.3% of the budget was committed to NGO capacity building and IUCN membership development (including environmental advocacy meetings, IT and communications support, and preparatory assistance for IUCN membership application).

In terms of training expenditure, breaking the amount spent (USD 63,500) over the total number of 155 direct beneficiaries¹⁷ provides an acceptable average cost of approximately USD 248 per training beneficiary¹⁸. Breaking the amount spent for the preparation and production of the environment and human rights training manual (USD 35,000)¹⁹ over the total number of 88 direct beneficiaries²⁰ provides a high average cost of approximately USD 398 per beneficiary. Including 700 Bachelor's degree candidates (i.e. the number of high-level government o

IUCN and the partnership incurred no expenses for equipment. Given the extent of logistics required to arrange (1) trainings for government officials and journalists and a number of meetings with local NGOs across various locations in Vietnam, the expenses allocated for travel (6.3%) and miscellaneous purposes (8% covering sundry and audit) appear reasonable.

(iv) Impact

baseline findings, the grantee's monitoring and reporting efforts revealed that the effects IUCN originally aimed for were almost achieved.

- f Raising high-level political awareness (expected: CSOs invited to participate in 2 major national target programmes): IUCN reports that CECR in 2012 was invited by the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations to provide feedback on a draft version of the Law on Natural Disaster Risk Protection.
- f Media engagement (target: increase from 50 medium quality to 100 enhanced quality environmental articles per year): the project generated 50 news articles, films, and radio programmes, which demonstrated that participating journalists had gained an understanding of complex issues, such as forest management. A second media monitoring report (January - June 2012) shows that information and cover issues have increased, highlighting that journalists now tend more to combine various information sources to investigate and report environmental issues. However, it also found that compared to

However, implementation partners still have to live up to realizing their commitment of full integration of the human rights and environment manual into the curriculum of HCPA, to enable the project to realize ultimate impact, i.e. increased support and demand for civil

- While the above demonstrates that future political elite will become open to civil

**Journalists previously focused on existing issues
and were not used to undertake independent investigation**

(v) Sustainability

V. CONCLUSIONS

i. We found that the combination of activities aiming to (a) raise high-level political awareness, (b) improve media engagement, and (c) support the capacity development of local NGOs, were appropriate to facilitate the generation of favorable conditions for a more sustainable development of Vietnam. Our findings related to the human rights and environmental training manuals show that these were designed to ensure that graduates dispose of a better understanding of the benefits of civil society participation. Exposure to practical examples of journalism drawing public attention to emerging environmental problems in our view was suitable to inspire journalists in the use of independent research methods and sources of investigation. In addition, capacity building addressed donor key-expectations in (i.e. strategic planning, financial management, and communications), which non-member NGOs lacked capacity. We therefore conclude that **the project's design was relevant** to

iv. In terms of the project's efficiency, the cumulative expenditure for the preparation and production of the environment and human rights training manual results in a high average unit cost of USD 398 for each of the 88 direct beneficiary [-Á@Á]! b&a Á@ @ level political awareness raising component. As we found the project struggling to achieve its ultimate impact, which is the provision of human-rights based environmental protection courses, the]! b&a 500-700 indirect beneficiaries at this point cannot be taken into consideration. Therefore the **potential benefit of efficient project conduct is at risk**. If the project's outputs came to use in the very near future, the average cost per beneficiary would decrease to USD 50.

v. Five months after the project closing date, VIHR has not yet officially

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the outcome and similar projects in the future, evaluators recommend to UNDEF and project grantees:

i. The pertinence of the findings among others owed to (a) workshops in which local NGOs were able to directly discuss with officials representing different levels of governance the advantages and barriers of civil society participation; and (b) field trips which provided many journalists with a first-time-ever opportunity to speak to citizens whose livelihoods were affected by environmental pollution and to subsequently discuss with local government representatives the question how these issues have been addressed. In accordance with our findings on relevance and effectiveness, we therefore recommend to UNDEF to encourage applicants promoting civil society participation in environmental governance to foresee both CSO and media exposure in order to maximize awareness among future political leaders, decision makers, journalists and the local

agreed final objective; and (b) UNDEF could have required the grantee to include their representatives in a Project Steering Committee supervising

iv. We have noted considerations by the grantee and implementation partners (not necessarily connected to each other) to apply for further donor funding to support the future

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

UNDEF

- f* Final Narrative Report
- f* Mid-Term/Annual Progress Report
- f* Project Document
- f* Extension Request Form
- f* Milestone Verification Report

IUCN

- x Agendas: workshops on draft manual; media trainings on forest management and coastal/maritime ecosystems

Other sources

- f* Vietnam annual GDP growth in percent, World Bank, <http://databanksearch.worldbank.org/DataSearch/LoadReport.aspx?db=2&cntrycode=VNM&sercode=NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG&yrcode=>
- f* Statistical Year Book of Vietnam, General Statistics Office of Vietnam, Hanoi (1995)
- f* Vietnam GDP per capita in current USD, World Bank, <http://databanksearch.worldbank.org/DataSearch/LoadReport.aspx?db=2&cntrycode=VNM&sercode=NY.GDP.PCAP.CD&yrcode=>
- f* Implementation of Socio-Economic Development in 2012, Government Annual Report, <http://chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/tinhhinhtuchien>
- f* Poverty Reduction in Vietnam: Remarkable Progress, Emerging Challenges, World Bank (January 2013), <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/01/24/poverty-reduction-in-vietnam-remarkable-progress-emerging-challenges>.
- f* Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey, General Statistics Office of Vietnam (2010), http://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=515&idmid=5&ItemID=12426
- f* Vietnam Environment . Current Issues (2013), http://www.indexmundi.com/vietnam/environment_current_issues.html
- f* State of Environment in Vietnam (2001), http://www.rrcap.ait.asia/pub/soe/vietnam/summary/key_issue_summary.htm
- f* Environmental pollution costs Vietnam 5.5% of GDP, Nhan Dan Online (April 2013), <http://vn.nhandan.org.vn/cmmlink/nhandan-online/homepage/sci-tech-environment/environment/wb-environmental-pollution-costs-vietnam-5-5-of-gdp-1.400959>
- f* Mobilizing Resources to Complete the Draft Law on Environmental Protection, Vietnam Environment Administration (MoNRE, March 2013), [http://vea.gov.vn/en/news/news/Pages/Mobilizing-resources-to-complete-the-draft-Law-on-Environmental-Protection-\(Amended\).aspx](http://vea.gov.vn/en/news/news/Pages/Mobilizing-resources-to-complete-the-draft-Law-on-Environmental-Protection-(Amended).aspx)

National Laws, Policies

- f* Law on Environmental Protection, promulgated by the President with Order No. 29/2005/L-

- f* Resolution of Vietnam 9th Party Congress (January 2011),
<http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/NuocCHXHCNVietNam/ThongTinTongHop/noidungvankiendaihoi dang?>
- f* Vietnam Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020, approved by the Prime Minister with Decision 432^Đ -TTg (April 2012),

ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

Hanoi,

